

Transformational Inclusion of the “Why”

Hi, my name is Rhonda Rosenberg, executive director of the Multicultural Council of Saskatchewan. I'm filming this from Treaty 4 Territory, traditional lands of the Nehiyawak/Cree, Anishinaabek/Saulteaux, Dakota, Lakota, and Nakoda, and the Western Region 3 of the Métis Nation.

We have partnered with the Saskatchewan High School Athletics Association to discuss the changes they're making in an effort to work toward Transformational Inclusion.

To begin, we want to discuss why this is important.

Saskatchewan is growing. And as our population increases, so does cultural diversity. Understanding and working effectively with cultural diversity involves both knowledge and skills. It also promotes a growing awareness of other diversities including gender, sexuality, abilities, faith, income, and more.

So why is this important? For a number of reasons. As you all surely know, schools reflect the diversity of our communities. However, not all students, staff, volunteers, and families are fully respected and reflected in all of their identities within school sports, the SHSAA's district executives, or the provincial board.

As an organization, we're able to make better decisions when there are more diverse voices around the table. When we have decision-makers who reflect the diversity, we have in our schools we're ensuring we're better equipped to accommodate differences and to deal with issues of racism, discrimination, and more. Greater diversity will result in better decisions and better opportunities for our students.

Done well, inclusion creates opportunities for more voices at the table (functional inclusion or diversity), builds relationships that create a climate of safety (social inclusion), and makes changes at many levels for equitable reflection and provision of services across the community. Genuine transformational inclusion will result in an organization that fosters a sense of belonging, reflects the

community, and focuses on the future. The research this model is based on comes from the work of Patricia Bradshaw and Christopher Fredette.

The SHSAA board wants to value the contributions of everyone involved in school sports and create an environment where everyone feels welcome to participate in ways that are appropriate for them. In order to do that, we need to recognize groups that are often marginalized, oppressed and/or excluded. This allows us to take direct steps to identify and remove barriers to access and engage with people from these communities. This policy has emerged from discussions about why and how to engage students who are underrepresented in the work of SHSAA.

This resolution to change membership is working on the functional inclusion axis. It has the intention of bringing voices to the table who are not currently there. The SHSAA board understands that some of the changes may need to come in the future and will only be clear when people who belong to communities that live with oppression are able to share their experiences and make decisions within SHSAA. In order for those decisions to be made at the SHSAA board table, the membership, and especially delegates present at annual meetings, need to better reflect the diversity of Saskatchewan schools and communities. This change to the members at the District level is intended to encourage district representatives to seek members, not only to check the box that they are there but to build relationships and a climate of open conversation.