



Council of Agencies Serving South Asians (CASSA)

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Provincial Consultations Submission: CASSA

On October 25th, 2018, the Council of Agencies Serving South Asians (CASSA) and a dedicated group of volunteers, organized and held a consultation at Maple High School in Vaughan, ON. This discussion provided a supportive space for **30 racialized young women** between grades 10-12 to share their experiences on the barriers and challenges they continue to face in accessing sports in their school and communities. The session was a space created for women, by women and offered a supportive environment in which participants could share their individual experiences with their peers without judgement. The consultation consisted of a panel, small group discussion, large group discussion, and written submissions. The event was organized through CASSA's Intercultural Collaborative project. A volunteer notetaker compiled the following notes from the session.

In general, issues around accessibility, racism, gender, and equity were most prevalent among the experiences shared by the group. These issues were also impacted by social and gender norms placed on women and girls. Participants were from different racialized backgrounds.

Racism/Shadeism:

- Shadeism hurts racialized women's confidence in many ways, including their confidence to participate in sports
- Often, racialized young people are the only non-white people on teams and face bullying by white peers
- Black women are made to feel like they can't express passion. When they do, they are deemed angry (e.g. Serena Williams)
- Referees apply rules in a racist manner
 - Once, a referee disqualified a girl for wearing hijab (can't remember the details of her dress)
 - Sometimes referees will call too many fouls on racialized women
- Too much pressure on racialized women's bodies with respect to appearance (e.g. too fat, too muscular, too hairy, etc.)

Gender and social norms:

- Society deems physical activity a masculine endeavour
- Uniforms are not designed to accommodate everyone (e.g. students who wear hijab or choose to dress modestly)
- Participants said they sometimes feel apprehensive about going to the gym because they worry there might be too many boys there.
 - Sometimes, they'll go to the gym in a large group of girls to overcome this
 - Sometimes they'll go to the gym and find a space away from the boys



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- Some participants mentioned their parents don't feel comfortable with them going to the gym because there are boys there
- There is emphasis placed on first and second generation immigrants to excel in school and physical activity is considered a distraction from schoolwork

Accessibility/Equity:

- Sports are often gendered and those sports deemed female are considered less important (e.g. dance, gymnastics)
- The boys' basketball season is longer than the girls' basketball season. The girls' volleyball season is longer than the boys' volleyball season. This may also be the result of the gendering of specific sports.
- Professional referees are brought in for boys' sporting events. Girls had to push for professional referees for their events
- We are seeing incremental change (e.g. Nike hijab, women of colour in ads)

Suggestions for Action:

- Reserving girls-only fitness room times in schools and community centres
- A workshop with parents might help to educate around the importance of physical activity as well as the positive implications of physical activity on schoolwork
- There is a need for education around equity (gender, race, sexuality, ability, etc.) with teachers and referees
- All girls' gyms as an alternative to conventional gyms

We hope that these suggestions can be taken into consideration regarding the Health and Physical Education curriculum.

Sincerely,

Jassi Ranauta, Iram Cheema, Shehla Choudhary, Aziza Khalifa, and Rohina Patel