

ISANS Community Connections Program

Through strong community partnerships, we engage all newcomers in inclusive recreation and art programs, with a special focus on Government Assisted Refugees and their families

WHY THIS PROGRAM MATTERS

Newcomers often arrive with excitement and hope but face multiple obstacles when trying to engage in local recreational and social programs. The Community Connections Program aims to bridge that gap, enabling individuals and families to feel welcomed, connected, and supported in their communities.

KEY BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION

1. Lack of information about recreation opportunities (Many newcomers are unaware of what programs exist, where they are, or how to join).
2. Financial constraints (Costs of registration, equipment, and travel can be prohibitive).
3. Complicated registration processes (Multiple steps, unfamiliar platforms, or bureaucratic requirements can discourage participation).
4. Language and culturally relevant programming (Programs may not accommodate language diversity or cultural expectations).
5. Racism, discrimination, and lack of inclusion (Some newcomers experience exclusion, racism, or discrimination).
6. Transportation, childcare, or scheduling conflicts (Getting to venues, juggling childcare, or aligning with work schedules can be barriers).
7. Confidence, social anxiety, or unfamiliarity with local norms (Some clients may feel shy, unsure, or hesitant to participate in a new community).

WHAT WE OFFER

1. **Orientation and Needs Assessment**
2. **Sports & Movement:** hockey, judo, multisport, lacrosse, swimming, soccer
3. **Arts & Creativity:** open-studio art programs, community art workshops, collaborative projects
4. **Outdoor & Nature:** Learn to Camp, urban hikes, youth sailing, sea kayaking, nature clubs
5. **Cultural & Social Recreation:** field trips, community events, cultural celebrations, heritage tours

“This program really brightens our winter days... giving newcomers a chance to feel included, make connections, and enjoy moments of warmth and friendship.”
– Client participant in Open Art Program, 2025



“I really liked that the children had the opportunity to make new friends... keeps kids active and teaches them confidence outdoors – Client participant in Sea School Sailing & Kayaking, 2024

HOW THE PROGRAM WORKS

Funding & Support access to community funding opportunities

- Assistance applying to Kidsport, HRM Affordable Access, and other subsidy programs
- Promotion of free community events and drop-in activities

Strategic Partnerships

We collaborate closely with community organizations to expand inclusive offerings, such as:

- Newcomer Hockey Program (Hockey Nova Scotia)
- Learn to Camp (Nova Scotia Parks)
- The Nova Scotia Sea School (outdoor youth programming)
- Numa Judo
- Speedy Kids Oval Program Society
- Wonder'neath Art Society
- Young Naturalist Club
- Blue Nose Marathon, and more

These partnerships allow us to co-design culturally responsive and accessible programs

Orientation & Needs Assessment

- Conduct individual and group orientation sessions
- Host group-based registration workshops
- Assess each client's interests, constraints, and goals
- Tailor recommendations to their unique situation

Registration & Digital Support

- Referrals to ISANS digital navigators who coach clients in using apps and online platforms
- Hands-on help to set up funding accounts, registration portals, and payment systems

Accessibility & Capacity-Building with Partners

- Referral staff in Rec programs to **ISANS Intercultural Competence Training** workshops
- Provision of “readiness tools” and ongoing consultative support
- Distribution of a **Recreation Program Planning Checklist**, covering:
 1. Program design & scheduling
 2. Promotion & outreach
 3. Financial accessibility
 4. Venue and transportation logistics
 5. Registration workflows
 6. Volunteer & staff training in inclusive practices



Our Funders:



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