



## The Winston Churchill Memorial Trust

GPO Box 1536 Canberra City ACT 2601 Australia  
telephone 02 6247 8333 • freecall 1800 777 231  
info@churchilltrust.com.au • churchilltrust.com.au

### The Winston Churchill Memorial Trust of Australia Report by Julia Symons 2017 Churchill Fellow

#### 'Investigating elite sports environments enabling culturally diverse women to thrive.'

I understand that the Churchill Trust may publish this Report, either in hard copy or on the internet or both, and consent to such publication.

I indemnify the Churchill Trust against any loss, costs or damages it may suffer arising out of any claim or proceedings made against the Trust in respect of or arising out of the publication of any Report submitted to the Trust and which the Trust places on a website for access over the internet.

I also warrant that my Final Report is original and does not infringe the copyright of any person or contain anything which is, or the incorporation of which into the Final Report is, actionable for defamation, a breach of any privacy law or obligation, breach of confidence, contempt of court, passing-off or contravention of any other private right or of any law.

Signed: Julia Symons

Date: 1 August 2018

#### Contact Details

2/495-497 Macaulay Road  
Kensington VIC 3031

[Julia.a.symons1@gmail.com](mailto:Julia.a.symons1@gmail.com)

0475 945 075



**REWARDING AUSTRALIANS STRIVING FOR EXCELLENCE**

The Winston Churchill Memorial Trust • ACN 008 445 707 • ABN 71 622 563 935

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

FOREWORD.....	4
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....	5
FELLOWSHIP DESCRIPTION .....	6
CULTURAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY: THE FOUNDATION OF INCLUSIVE EXCELLENCE .....	7
INSIGHTS FROM CULTURALLY DIVERSE WOMEN ACROSS ELITE SPORT .....	9
‘SEE ME AS AN INDIVIDUAL, AS THE SUM OF MY PARTS’ .....	9
‘FITTING IN’ VERSUS ‘BELONGING’ .....	9
BEING THE ‘ONLY ONE’ .....	10
- RESEARCH: Identities, Representation and Experience: The effects of solo status in the National Collegiate Athletics Association by Tibbets, Parks Smith, Labasan, Ciaccio and Longshore, 2017 .....	10
SHARING CULTURE BEYOND THE HIGH PERFORMANCE ENVIRONMENT.....	11
FINDING AND CREATING FAMILIES .....	11
- CASE STUDY: ‘Ohana’ in the San Jose CyberRays .....	11
WALKING IN TWO WORLDS: INDIVIDUALIST AND COLLECTIVIST CULTURES .....	12
STRENGTH FROM CULTURE AND COMMUNITY .....	13
- CASE STUDY: New Zealand Black Ferns Rugby Team .....	13
TRAILBLAZERS AND ROLE MODELS, WILLINGLY OR UNWILLINGLY .....	14
ALLIANCES AND NETWORKS REPRESENTING CULTURALLY DIVERSE WOMEN .....	14
- CASE STUDY: Muslim Women’s Sports Foundation, England .....	15
COLOUR BLIND OR COLOUR BRAVE? .....	15
<b>INSIGHTS FROM INCLUSIVE LEADERS .....</b>	<b>17</b>
INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP: BEHAVIOURS AND BELIEFS .....	17
INCLUSIVE LEADERS CONNECT WITH ATHLETE’S FAMILIES.....	18
INCLUSIVE LEADERS CONNECT WITH COMMUNITIES.....	18
<b>INSIGHTS FROM COACHING.....</b>	<b>20</b>
GENDER AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN ELITE COACHING.....	20
- RESEARCH: ‘Negotiating the coaching landscape: Experiences of Black men and women coaches in the United Kingdom’ by Dr AJ Rankin-Wright, K Hylton and L Norman, 2017 .....	20
- RESOURCE: Privilege and Unconscious Bias in Sports Coaching by Dr AJ Rankin-Wright, 2015.....	21
<b>MĀORI KNOWLEDGE AND VALUES STRENGTHENING HIGH PERFORMANCE SPORT .....</b>	<b>23</b>
- CASE STUDY: Chiefs rugby team .....	23
- CASE STUDY High Performance Squash New Zealand .....	24
- RESEARCH: ‘Towards cultural competence: How incorporating Māori values could benefit New Zealand sport’, Holly Raima Hippolite and Toni Bruce, 2014.....	24
<b>INSIGHTS FROM SPORT, GOVERNING AND ADVOCACY BODIES AND RESEARCH.....</b>	<b>26</b>
- RESEARCH: Creating a culture that welcomes diversity.....	26
MEASURING AND MONITORING CHANGE.....	27
- CASE STUDY: Race and Gender Report Cards, The Institute for Diversity and Ethics on Sport (TIDES) 27	
SUPPORTING SPORTS ORGANISATIONS TO DEVELOP, CREATE AND EVALUATE DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION PROGRAMS.....	28
- CASE STUDY: Equality Standard, A Framework for Sport (ESFS) England .....	28

IMPACT OF POLICIES, PROCESSES AND THEIR EXECUTION .....	28
- CASE STUDY: Bilqis Abdul-Qaadir on FIBA's hijab ban.....	29
- CASE STUDY: Eniola Aluko, England Soccer team representative .....	29
THE IMPORTANCE OF BOARD AND EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP IN DRIVING DIVERSITY .....	30
RELEVANT SUPPORT FOR DIFFERENT ROLES .....	30
EDUCATION AND AWARENESS .....	30
- CASE STUDY: Kick It Out 'Equality and Diversity Awareness in Football Award' eLearning course.....	31
THE ROLE OF ADVOCACY GROUPS .....	32
<b>RECOMMENDATIONS: THE PURSUIT OF INCLUSIVE EXCELLENCE .....</b>	<b>33</b>
APPENDIX ONE: CHURCHILL FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM: PEOPLE & ORGANISATIONS .....	36
APPENDIX TWO : BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	38

## Foreword

*Kotahi te kohao o te ngira e kuhuna ai te miro ma, te miro pango, te miro whero.  
There is but one eye of the needle through which the white, red and black threads must pass.*

Nā Kīngi Potatau Te Wherowhero

This *whakatauki*, or Māori proverb, originates from the first Māori King, Potatau Te Wherowhero, who described the strength and beauty that comes from unity and diversity, in the context of creating a woven *tukutuku*, an ornamental lattice work. The combination of threads, whilst keeping their own colour as they pass through the eye of the needle, add to this fabric that grows stronger and more beautiful when combined.

Whilst I had heard this quote before from a friend, it came up again over coffee with rugby coaches Wayne Smith and Crystal Kaua in Hamilton, New Zealand, during a discussion of the intersection of elite sport and culture. It stayed with me as I continued on to the United States and England before returning home. This *whakatauki* came to represent the ‘sum of the parts’ of the conversations and learnings I was privileged to receive during my trip.

I was profoundly impacted by the people I met and the conversations I had during my Churchill Fellowship. I found an extraordinary group of like-minded people who are driven to ensure that every facet of sport is accessible to everyone, in equal measure. Each with their own unique focus of inclusion and diversity within the sporting landscape, they shared their valuable time and reflections with generosity and grace, and encouraged me to connect and share my learnings with others.

Each person I met, be they a coach, advocate, athlete, administrator, CEO or board member, represents a unique thread that converges in and contributes to their sporting landscape in a myriad of ways. Each person makes an important contribution to their communities by striving to inform and create more inclusive sporting environments, and pursues excellence on that chosen path.

I hope this paper pays due respect to the hours of time they gifted me, as well as the wisdom, humour, insights and pure love of sport that they shared. I hope their threads will continue to pass through the eye of the needle to bring strength, inclusion, diversity and excellence to the rich fabric of elite women’s sport, and to the broader sporting landscape that we share.

## Executive Summary

Women from cultural minority groups<sup>1</sup> in elite sporting environments can experience challenges beyond those faced as a result of their gender. Walking in two worlds between collectivist and/or cultural values, whilst managing the demands and requirements of the often individualistic focus of an elite sporting can require constant navigation and negotiation.

My investigation found that cultural and psychological safety were the common features of elite sports environments where culturally diverse women thrive. The result is an environment of inclusive excellence, which is a term used by some university in the United States to describe their approach to diversity. Exploring inclusive excellence in elite Australian sport environments creates exciting opportunities to discover high performance elements of diversity in action.

Inclusive excellence manifests in sport environments where diversity of all kinds is demanded and celebrated, ongoing learning and knowledge is sought from a variety of sources, innovation and change is not feared, and inclusive leadership is demonstrated through key behaviours including emotional intelligence, courage, curiosity and vulnerability.

Infrastructure supporting such environments includes board and executive-led diversity strategy, measurement and reporting, effectively implemented policies, and education and training that creates brave spaces for reflection and empathy. It does not sacrifice high standards of performance, accountability and transparency. It offers spaces for robust and respectful debate, innovation and risk taking, in the pursuit of better ways of working and a 'best practice' approach.

The following recommendations highlight the ways that elite sporting environments in Australia can develop inclusive excellence to support culturally diverse women, as well as the broader sporting community through the exploration of (in no particular order):

1. Ways to enable culturally diverse women to bring their 'whole selves' to the high performance sport.
2. Repositioning diversity strategy and activity in sport.
3. Opportunities to ensure that culturally diverse women in sport have a seat at the table.
4. Sport and cross-sectoral diversity forums to share and gain knowledge and information.
5. Understanding and connection with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history, culture and communities.
6. Development of policies, systems and structures that protect individuals, embeds diversity considerations and monitors change.
7. Driving diversity agendas from executive and board level.
8. See the sporting arena as a classroom.
9. Forums to hold and share brave conversations.
10. Explore conduit roles to support culturally diverse women.
11. Representation of culturally diverse women at all levels, in all areas of sport.
12. Principles of inclusive leadership across sporting environments.

---

<sup>1</sup> I acknowledge the inherent difficulties of trying to find common language to describe cultural diversity in communities across the three countries I travelled to, as well as Australia, without homogenising cultures and minimising the importance of self-identification. Across New Zealand, the United States and England, language used to describe culturally diverse communities varied greatly during my trip, including BAME (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic), 'people of colour', multicultural, and cultural minority groups, whereas language used by individuals to self-describe their identities rarely used these words and was far more specific to ethnicity and nationality. Whilst this report is to be shared outside Australia, it is intended to inform Australian sports industry learnings, first and foremost. So I will use the terms 'culturally diverse' and 'cultural minority groups' to describe men, women and communities from the non-dominant cultural backgrounds within elite sporting environments. The dominant cultural background in Australia's elite sports environments is of English-speaking people with Anglo-Saxon and/or Anglo-Celtic heritage, which was also the case in most elite sports environments I visited in New Zealand, the United States and England. I use these terms above respectfully whilst in acknowledgement of their shortfalls.

## Fellowship Description

I travelled to 16 cities across New Zealand, the United States and England during an eight week period from March to May in 2018 and met with current and former athletes, coaches, sports administrators, CEOs, board and committee members, leaders from advocacy organisations and researchers from universities, during 37 meetings and three conferences (see **Appendix 1** for detailed program of visits).

The insights I have compiled capture the common experiences and stories from my interviews, but I have not personalised individual experiences, so as to maintain their confidentiality. Whilst my meetings were not individually recorded or transcribed, I did seek permission to take notes so as to identify common themes of feedback during these conversations. I collated relevant research papers and insights from time spent at several universities which added further insight to the perspectives and experiences from my interviews.

Highlights of my Fellowship included:

- Understanding the way in which Māori knowledge has been embedded in the high performance systems and structures of elite teams in New Zealand, through *kōrero* (conversation) with Dr Farah Palmer, Jeremy Hapeta and Toni Bruce.
- Attending the Social Justice Through Sport and Exercise Psychology Symposium hosted by the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis, led by Nicole M. LaVoi. The Symposium brought together academia from across the United States as well as some international guests, from the fields of social justice and exercise psychology. Nicole shared her passion for advancing the women's sporting agenda, particularly around coaching, and generously connected me with many further contacts which were invaluable.
- Attending the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Inclusion Forum in Indianapolis, Indiana, and meeting student athletes, athletic department administrators, leaders and inspiring speakers working to create more inclusive environments across their campuses and athletic programs.
- Seeing academia and national sport bodies work together to inform and deliver best practice initiatives that seek to create formative cultural change for women in sport in England, and being given with a window into those programs by Dr Leanne Norman and Dr AJ Rankin-Wright from Leeds Beckett University in Leeds.
- Having the privilege of listening and learning from women who have given so much of themselves to sport at all levels, and have created formative change and impact for future generations of athletes, coaches and leaders. Dr Rimla Akhtar, Dana Abdulkarim, Vivienne Aiyela, Marlene Bjornsrud, Ohemaa Nyanin and Linda Vagana were generous with their time, wisdom and humour, for which I will always be thankful.

The conclusions and recommendations outlined in this report will be disseminated through presentations at the VicSport CEO Conference in August 2018, the Diversity and Inclusion In Sport Forum in October 2018 and other sport and multicultural sector events as requested. I will share my paper through relevant channels with the Australian Sports Commission, Women Sport Australia and other representative groups and networks including multicultural women's groups and sporting associations.

## Cultural and psychological safety: The foundation of inclusive excellence

My investigation led me to conclude that culturally diverse women sought high performance environments where they felt and experienced cultural and psychological safety, which are the building blocks of inclusive excellence. The descriptions frequently used to characterise these spaces included high performance environments and other sporting spaces where they:

- Felt welcome
- Felt a sense of belonging
- Felt they could bring their 'whole selves' to their sport
- Were trusted and respected
- Could put their views and opinions forward without fear of judgement
- Could question the status quo without feeling threatened
- Were supported when they were vulnerable or asked for help, and
- Were understood, appreciated and accepted, as the sum of their parts.

Given these phrases, the following definitions of cultural and psychological safety align well to the sentiments they shared:

- **Psychological safety:** "Team psychological safety is defined as a shared belief that the team is safe for interpersonal risk taking... the term is meant to suggest neither a careless sense of permissiveness, nor an unrelentingly positive affect but, rather, a sense of confidence that the team will not embarrass, reject, or punish someone for speaking up. This confidence stems from mutual respect and trust among team members." (Edmondson, 1999). Edmondson (2002) then expands the definition further as "the degree to which people perceive their work environment as conducive to taking these interpersonal risks. In psychologically safe environments, people believe that if they make a mistake others will not penalize or think less of them for it. They also believe that others will not resent or penalize them for asking for help, information or feedback."
- **Cultural safety:** "An environment that is spiritually, socially and emotionally safe, as well as physically safe for people; where there is no assault, challenge or denial of their identity, of who they are and what they need. It is about shared respect, shared meaning, shared knowledge and experience of learning together," (Williams, 1999).

Research has been undertaken to explore how these forms of safety can be cultivated in specific industries, as well as their benefits to organisations who seek them. Google have famously explored and espoused the integral role of psychological safety in high performing teams, which was identified after a study on team performance called 'Project Aristotle'. Through the two year study across 180 Google teams analysing 250 different team attributes, psychological safety emerged as the most prominent characteristic of a high performing team, behind dependability, structure and clarity, meaning and impact (Delizonna, 2017).

The way in which Google values psychological safety has implicit and important insights for high performance sport environments. Delizonna (2017) explores learnings from research at the University of North Carolina that "has found that positive emotions like trust, curiosity, confidence, and inspiration broaden the mind and help us build psychological, social and physical resources. We become more open-minded, resilient, motivated and persistent when we feel safe. Humour increases, as does solution-finding and divergent thinking – the cognitive process underlying creativity."

There is an opportunity to explore psychological safety as a critical attribute to create high performing team environments for everyone in elite sports spaces, not only women from cultural minorities. The positive outcomes as described above align with commonly pursued team values such as collaboration, hard work, innovation, belonging and unity.

Similarly, creating high performance sports environments in which cultural safety flourishes can provide numerous benefits that extend to everyone in that space, regardless of cultural background. Cultural safety was first defined and explored in the context of health care in New Zealand and Australia to address disengagement and dissatisfaction experienced by Māori and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and their experiences with healthcare and service providers. In this context, a culturally safe environment enables Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups to feel safe, strong and empowered in their cultural identities, and promotes the cultural competency of mainstream environments (Gooda, 2010). A culturally safe environment is not free from disagreement or difference of opinion. However it creates a place where debate and conversation can be held respectfully, and groups of different cultural backgrounds can learn and exchange knowledge together.

In a sporting context, this concept helps us to understand that the creation of a culturally safe space requires sports organisations and administrators to explore their own cultural identity as they seek to understand the ways in which they can connect with and understand the needs of culturally diverse women in sport. This enables them to feel comfortable sharing their values without feeling disempowered.

The following insights from my interviews reflect the many ways in which individuals and organisations in sport are already delivering or exploring the creation of psychological and cultural safety. Their stories, as well as existing examples within the Australian sporting context and knowledge from cross-sector input, can assist us to envision what safety looks like within sport in all areas and at all levels.

## Insights from culturally diverse women across elite sport

Understanding the experiences and viewpoints of culturally diverse women in roles across elite sport was the natural starting point for this investigation. In hearing their stories, we begin to understand the complexities of the scenarios they attempt to navigate, whilst pursuing excellence in their chosen field. Any activities proposed to address these challenges need to be based on insights and engagement directly with the group who the activity plans to support, so hearing their voices was the critical first step.

The stories from women across each of the three countries I visited all shared a similar experience of 'otherness' at times during their careers, and of trying to navigate and identify their place, position and power in an elite sport environment where they were in the cultural minority. These reflections are important for everyone across the sporting landscape to hear and consider, as they show a need for everyone from the CEO to the media manager to understand some of the unique challenges that culturally diverse women face in the elite sports environment, that may currently go unnoticed.

### **'See me as an individual, as the sum of my parts'**

One of the most significant insights from my discussions was the desire of culturally diverse women to be seen, understood and engaged as a unique individual and not only for a single attribute of their identity, such as their cultural or gender identity. This was raised by almost every culturally diverse woman I met with, who had experienced years of stereotypical judgement because of their cultural background and had fought to be seen from an intersectional perspective, which recognises the many different aspects of a person's identity and how they can overlap at different times.

They felt safe, supported and enabled in the high performance environments when they were understood and welcomed as the 'sum of their parts'. Many women acknowledged that whilst their cultural identities may form a critical component of their character, it was only one part.

Further to that, the way in which the women identified and connected with their cultural identities was constantly evolving and changing. Retired athletes spoke of their increased confidence and knowledge of their cultural identities as they got older and were more comfortable to speak with others in their teams and share knowledge about their culture as they matured. However they would never have raised concerns or shared this knowledge in their earlier years for fear of how they might be judged by their peers, or treated by their coaches and managers.

### **'Fitting in' versus 'Belonging'**

A common narrative of sport depicts a place where differences are forgotten, equality reigns and everyone is appreciated and valued purely for the skill they demonstrate during competition. Whilst this can be the case in some team environments, others can be known to further perpetuate stereotypes and create exclusive spaces where only a chosen few can participate and belong.

Several women reflected on the difference between 'fitting in' and 'belonging'. They described the feeling of having to navigate and then assess high performance sports environments, in order to understand how much of their authentic selves could be shared with their teammates.

Where they felt safe, they would talk about their families, share stories and lay themselves bare to their coaches and teammates, sensing that the greater purpose of the team was worth becoming vulnerable for and that they would not be judged for their contribution. This team environment created a sense of belonging for those athletes, where they could bring their true selves to training, competition and other events, without fear of

judgement for being their authentic selves, including their cultural values and traditions. Whilst some culturally diverse women I spoke to identified that this level of comfort and belonging was almost always in an environment where other athletes or staff from their own cultural heritage were present, this was not always the case.

Other women I spoke with recognised that they would need to take steps to modify and adapt the behaviour, language and values of their cultural identities in certain scenarios to 'fit in' to the team culture and environment. This may have included limiting references to family, managing religious requirements to minimise opportunity for engagement or questioning from staff or teammates, or consciously acting within or in response to a stereotype that they felt had been attributed to them. In an effort to fit in, they would mould themselves to the environment rather than risking being excluded.

### **Being the 'only one'**

Being 'the only one' was a common experience for women who had participated in a sport where they were in the cultural minority. This meant they were very aware and conscious of the spaces where they were the only woman from a cultural minority in their sports environment. Where there were no athletes, coaches or administrators from the same cultural heritage or with similar cultural values, some athletes would experience feelings of isolation or varying levels of anxiety within their team environments. Several athletes spoke of the relief of having as few as one other person in the sporting environment from a similar cultural background. There was a sense that just one other person who might see the elite environment through a similar cultural lens would build a sense of solidarity in their shared experience. Reflections of being 'the only one' in their high performance environments included vivid memories of their first selections, training sessions, elite matches, team engagements involving family attendance or rooming with other teammates whilst travelling away.

#### **RESEARCH: Identities, Representation and Experience: The effects of solo status in the National Collegiate Athletics Association (NCAA) by Tibbets, Parks Smith, Labasan, Ciaccio and Longshore (2017).**

At Loughborough University in England, I met with Kelsey Parks Smith, who has been part of a team of researchers exploring the concept of solo status within the context of the NCAA system. Solo status is the effect that being the only member of a given minority in an environment has on that person, which can have both physiological and psychological implications in an elite sporting environment. The effects on performance of solo status can include increased arousal, decreasing memory capacity, difficulty self-regulating, disengagement and struggling to execute a skill when under pressure, known as 'choking'.

Solo status commonly affects gender and racial minorities, which is relevant in the context of the NCAA where college sport has a poor track record of both gender and racial hiring practices according to the Racial and Gender Report Cards produced by The Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport. This research gives rise to questions of current efforts to increase diversity in gender and racial hiring, the potential negative impact of hiring isolated individuals from a minority group, and suggests that many athletes, coaches and administrators are already performing under the impact of solo status.

Also part of this research, is the consideration of 'stereotype lift' and 'stereotype threat'. Stereotype lift occurs when an individual is aware of a negative stereotype about another social group, which helps them to lift their own performance. Stereotype threat occurs in a scenario where people feel at risk of conforming to a stereotype about their social group, which may cause the individual to become anxious and to lead to underperformance (Shih et al, 2011).

This research is being pursued by the authors to inform an understanding of how the current NCAA environment could be changed to increase opportunities to recruit diverse teams and departments, to better understand how solo status impacts students, coaches and administrators in certain situations, and to find ways to foster diversity without detracting from the pursuit of athletic excellence.

### **Sharing culture beyond the high performance environment**

Some athletes and coaches spoke of the enjoyment they experienced when they had the opportunity to share aspects of their cultural heritage with their teammates and team staff, in settings away from the elite sports environment. This included attending ceremonies and events at a place of religious or cultural significance to their community, such as a church, a cultural landmark, traditional gathering place, or a community centre or restaurant relevant to their cultural heritage.

This opportunity provided the team with the chance to build connections away from the structures and habits of high performance training and competition. It also affords the athletes who may not always feel comfortable or culturally safe in high performance environments to thrive and share parts of their identities that cannot easily manifest in their sporting settings.

These offsite activities did not always need to have a cultural connection to their own heritage and could take the form of offsite pre-season training activities, team meals and informal gatherings away from the high performance environment. One athlete spoke of the sense of being on 'common ground' with their teammates during such pre-season trips.

However other women spoke of how they had learned to navigate these off field occasions, especially where considerations of food or alcohol were involved. Rather than missing out on the opportunity to engage with teammates in less formal settings, they would have intricate plans in place well in advance to ensure they could still participate in social occasions, without sacrificing their own religious requirements around Halal food, consumption of alcohol or observing prayer.

### **Finding and creating families**

Another common theme in the high performance environments where many culturally diverse women felt safe and supported, was a sense of family. For many women I spoke with, the concept of a family was far broader than the immediate relatives, and would be used to describe a community where a sense of belonging is felt, regardless of the cultural diversity of its members. It was spoken about as a spiritual yet tangible connection, where its members felt a sense of responsibility to each other, as well as a commitment to the team's broader purpose and aims.

#### **CASE STUDY: 'Ohana' in the San Jose CyberRays**

In my interview with Marlene Bjornsrud, the first General Manager of the San Jose CyberRays women's professional soccer team in the United States, I learnt of the term *ohana*, which was used to describe the culture that the athletes and team management had cultivated across the team environment.

*Ohana* is a Hawaiian word and has a similar meaning to the Māori word *whānau*, as it describes an extended family with links that are not necessarily related through blood or birth. Despite the fact that the soccer team itself was not based in or representative of Hawaii, the team took strength from this all-encompassing concept of family that articulated their connection and responsibility to each other and their community. It extended to the team's staff and the way their office space was designed to ensure that transparency and openness translated to the physical environment.

The team had players from across the world, including various countries across South America, Europe and Australia, bringing a variety of different cultural traditions and value systems. The team took steps to share culture with one another, including sharing food, history and cultural celebrations of their home countries. Despite their cultural differences, the team united under their common purpose to thrive as *ohana* together.

The players truly appreciated and valued everyone in their *ohana*, which included everyone in the CyberRays administration, management and team members. This was exemplified when a player from the team distributed a portion of her prize money amongst the back office staff of the CyberRays after their grand final success.

### **Walking in two worlds: Individual and collectivist cultures**

Some sportswomen from cultural groups with collectivist values reflected that they would find themselves at odds with the expectations and requirements of the high performance environment at times, which would prioritise individualist values and behaviours. This can be further understood through the following definitions:

- **“Individualistic cultures** emphasize promoting the individual's and his/her immediate family's self-interest (underlining individual rights, not responsibilities), personal autonomy, privacy, self-realization, individual initiative, independence, individual decision making, an understanding of personal identity as the sum of attributes of the individual, and less concern about the needs and interests of others. As examples of typical individualistic societies, Australia, Great Britain, Canada the US are named.
- **Collectivistic societies**, on the other hand, emphasize loyalty to the group (while the group in turn cares for the well-being of the individual), emotional dependence on groups and organizations, less personal privacy, the belief that group decisions are superior to individual decisions, interdependence, an understanding of personal identity as knowing one's place within the group, and concern about the needs and interests of others. As typical collectivist societies China, Hong Kong, India, Japan, Pakistan and Taiwan are quoted,” (Darwish & Huber, 2003).

In a sporting context, these definitions can affect what athletes see as individual property, rights and priorities, as opposed to those of the team. It can also relate to decision making as individuals or as a collective, prioritising personal or team needs, and understanding of one's identity as a team member or an individual athlete within a team environment.

For women coming from cultures with collectivist value systems, the experience of 'walking in two worlds' is a prominent feature and reflection of their sporting careers. Sportswomen from collectivist cultures including (but not limited to) Māori and Polynesian communities would have to navigate a range of scenarios involving the need to prioritise family and community over individual needs as elite athletes. These conflicting approaches play out in sporting situations relating to:

- Managing player payments and finances amongst family and community
- Making decisions to join teams that requires moving away from family and communities
- Dealing with hardship when living away from family and community structures of support, particularly with young athletes
- Navigating sporting requirements at odds with religious customs or expectations, like playing during culturally or religiously significant holidays or ceremonies

- Dealing with conflict and confrontation with coaches and people in positions in power
- Managing family expectations of participation and attendance at sporting, cultural and community events

Several former athletes spoke of having to 'walk in two worlds' to manage personal behaviours which they saw as central to their cultural identities, but would be viewed negatively by some in the high performance space.

Another common theme, particularly from athlete insights, was a gendered experience of their community and family response to their pursuit of a high performance sporting career. In some communities, a man's pursuit of a career in elite sport was not only supported but encouraged, but the same would not be said for women with similar ambitions. Responsibilities of family and domestic duties, or prioritisation of education and other activities were placed on women, but not men. Some women struggled to convince their families and communities, in particular their parents, of the value of pursuing a sporting career or pathway.

### **Strength from culture and community**

Where groups of athletes of a one cultural group or community form the majority or a significant contingent within a team or sports environment, the experience of these athletes can be significantly different to those experiencing a similar environment alone.

The sporting environment can then provide an opportunity to share, celebrate and draw strength from cultural ceremonies, traditions and values. Some athletes described the opportunity to bring aspects of their culture into the high performance environment as a galvanising and teambuilding effect for everyone in that environment, regardless of their own cultural background.

### **CASE STUDY: New Zealand Black Ferns Rugby Team**

In Palmerston North, New Zealand, I had the opportunity to meet former New Zealand Black Ferns Captain and three time World Cup winner, Dr Farah Palmer, who now sits on the Board of New Zealand Rugby Union.

In New Zealand, rugby is a sport with significant elite representation of Māori and Polynesian women and girls. The national rugby women's team, the Black Ferns, have experienced international success and paint a picture of a culturally diverse New Zealand by the cultural representation in their ranks. Māori culture plays an integral role in team culture and values in the Black Ferns. It forms the backbone of the team, determining and defining how the team trains, plays and represents themselves, their community and their country.

The following Māori concepts are central to the team ethos:

- *Whanaungatanga* - Kinship/family
- *Manaakitanga* - Hospitality/enhancing the mana/prestige of others
- *Wairuatanga* - Spirituality
- *Kaitiakitanga* - Being guardians/holding guardianship for the legacy of the Black Ferns team and all it entails
- *Kotahitanga* - Unity, one-ness

Māori values are brought to life in the high performance environment of the Black Ferns through *tikanga*, which are protocols, practices and principles related to Māori culture. These are demonstrated in the team pre-match rituals, gathering to share food, a *powhiri* which is a formal welcoming ceremony to welcome newcomers or a *mihi whakatau*, which is an introduction for a newcomer in a less formal

setting. The team perform a *haka*, or dance performance, completed prior to their matches which is perhaps the most public symbol or observance of Māori culture for the team. The current *haka* is titled *Uhiā Mi* by Whetu Tipiwai. The team also has a *waiata* or song, composed by Pania Papa that was first performed by the team at the Women's Rugby World Cup in Barcelona in 2002.

Whilst some athletes I spoke to were forging (or had forged) a path in a sport where they represented a cultural minority, other athletes were attracted to their sport of choice because of their perception of the sport as welcoming and inclusive of women and girls from their community.

Several women I spoke with in New Zealand recognised that women and girls in Māori and Pacific Islander communities were increasingly drawn to the sport of rugby union, as they could see role models from the same cultural backgrounds in their national teams, their broader communities recognised the sporting code as a positive pathway for their women and girls, and they had been exposed to the sport through the engagement of men and boys from their communities for a long time.

### **Trailblazers and role models, willingly or unwillingly**

Whilst many retired athletes that I interviewed spoke of growing into positions as leaders and role models, many athletes did not willingly seek to take on these roles in their earlier careers. These roles are incredibly complex and at times, represent a greater burden on a culturally diverse sportswoman than her peers from the dominant cultural background.

Most recognised that they were or are afforded opportunities that others from their community may not receive, and would therefore take on roles as trailblazers and role models, either willingly or unwillingly. Being positioned as a leader can challenge athletes from collectivist cultures, who would prefer that their team be celebrated, as opposed to being recognised for individual achievement.

Former athletes also spoke of being the 'pin up' of cultural diversity and were often engaged by their national sports organisations to appear in diversity campaigns and promotional activities around participation programs. They recognised the opportunity that their image of cultural diversity represented to the sporting body involved, and they were often willing to contribute in order to demonstrate to other women and girls from their community that 'they could do it too'. The athletes were happy for their images to be utilised but sought authentic community engagement and support in return from their sports organisations, which they did not always receive, much to their disappointment.

Athletes also spoke of their awareness of previous sportswomen from their cultural backgrounds, who they would look up to as role models. They often knew if there were any other women from their cultural background in their sport, and if they were more senior athletes in age or experience, they would observe their careers very closely. They would not necessarily have friendships or personal connections with these other athletes, however they would often be aware of them and would follow their careers from afar. The experiences of those trailblazing women, both positive and negative, were followed closely by athletes from the same cultural background, in an effort to understand what the road ahead may present for them.

### **Alliances and networks representing culturally diverse women**

Athletes spoke of the desire to 'have a seat at the table' regarding decisions that affected them, particularly in relation to their cultural identities. This included being consulted by their sporting organisations in regards to the way they were engaged to promote cultural diversity within their sports, as well as being part of panels or advisory groups to drive further participation, community engagement or connection with their communities.

This desire to create change for themselves and for future generations of culturally diverse sportswomen has driven the formation of alliances, networks and organisations that advocate and drive change for specific cultural or religious groups in New Zealand, the United States and England. These groups have then become integral for national sports organisations to learn from, and have provided an integral channel to engage culturally and religiously diverse communities in authentic ways, where they might not already have established relationships or connections.

### **CASE STUDY: Muslim Women's Sports Foundation, England**

I met with Dr Rimla Akhtar, Chair of the Muslim Women's Sports Foundation (MSWF) and FA Council Member in London. A former representative and captain of the British Muslim Women's Futsal team and a Chartered Accountant, Rimla founded the Muslim Women's Sports Foundation in 2001 to "increase the involvement of Muslim women and girls in sport without compromising their religious or cultural values through catering to and raising awareness of their specific needs," (MWSF website).

Beyond its work in England, MSWF has also turned its hand to connecting with other networks and advocates internationally who are working to support and promote the engagement of Muslim women and girls in sports, through initiatives such as the Muslim Women In Sport Network, which hosted an online forum in 2018 with participants from around the world.

MSWF supports the UK sports industry to provide best practice sports programs for Muslim women and girls as a means for creating sustainable development from social inclusion and development. They have a broad diversity and inclusion agenda within sport, and are the only organisation in the UK to focus specifically on Muslim women and girls.

### **Colour blind or colour brave?**

In the United States, matters of race play out in sporting forums at all levels. A rise in the prominence of athlete activism has seen national sports bodies confront social justice issues relating to race almost weekly. Professional sports such as basketball and football (gridiron) have provided an important avenue and platform for minority groups to have agency, power and to excel beyond measure.

The conversations regarding race in sport in the United States were incredibly powerful. Attending the Social Justice Through Sport and Exercise Psychology Symposium in Minneapolis and the NCAA Inclusion Forum in Indianapolis provided exposure to issues of cultural diversity at a level that broadened my understanding of the ways in which sport can consciously or inadvertently play a critical role in shaping these important national conversations, both in good and bad ways.

A common theme in discussion emerged in my interviews, around whether or not people in elite sports environments 'saw race', and whether or not this would impact a coach or sports administrators' ability to support and build strong relationships with athletes, coaches and staff from cultural minority groups in an authentic way. One conference panel member reflected on his upbringing, where "we didn't see race growing up, we were all the same." This was a sentiment reflected several times throughout the trip, but not from any women from cultural minorities in their sporting environment.

Women from cultural minorities that I spoke with in my interviews expressed a desire to have their culture seen and acknowledged, as part of their identities. For some women more than others, particularly those who spoke of "wearing my culture on my skin", the experience of engaging with others who would claim that "they didn't

see colour”, was a difficult interaction. The reality for many of these women was that the colour of their skin defined significant (if not all) aspects of their lived experience, in both empowering and damaging ways. So when coaches, teammates and others in the sporting environment did not acknowledge their race as part of their identity, these women were further challenged in their navigation of their identities in sport environments.

## Insights from inclusive leaders

Another common theme in elite sports environments that culturally diverse women felt safe, and that was the presence of inclusive leadership. The inclusive leaders I met were male and female, from varying generations, and of different cultural backgrounds representing both majority and minority cultural groups in their sports environments. Some had been involved in sport as athletes, whilst others had come from non-sporting backgrounds into positions of leadership within their sporting organisations.

Inclusive leaders I met, as identified by their athletes, colleagues or staff, would not necessarily identify themselves as 'inclusive', and the inclusive behaviours and beliefs they demonstrated were intrinsic, as opposed to being a stand-alone skillset. Inclusion was an authentic and inherent part of their leadership style, which they saw as constantly evolving. They sought to constantly improve themselves and saw the pursuit of personal and professional excellence as an ongoing journey.

The standards and culture inclusive leaders set could have a far reaching impact, when in positions of senior leadership. Inclusive leaders I met who had less senior role had also created safe spaces within their immediate environment for their colleagues or teams, but struggled to create a broader systemic impact in their sporting organisations due to the sphere of influence of their middle to lower management roles.

### Inclusive leadership: Behaviours and beliefs

Inclusive leaders appeared to have a series of common values and characteristics, which emerged as we discussed different scenarios throughout their careers in the high performance sporting setting. These were:

- **Emotional intelligence:** Their ability to recognise their own emotions and those of others, and to build strong relationships through empathy and meaningful connections. Whilst their demeanours and manners differed, their ability to read, understand, empathise and connect with people appeared to be consistent.
- **A strong moral compass:** They had a clear understanding of what was 'the right thing to do', which guided their treatment of people and reactions to situations of injustice or inequality. Their actions, whilst not always popular, were consistent with their morals. This was a defining feature for many athletes who played under coaches who were inclusive leaders, who reflected on these leaders as being 'tough, but always fair'. Enacting this moral stance also appeared to be done consistently, regardless of the personal cost. Coaches who had demonstrated their commitment to their moral compass publicly engendered significant support from their athletes.
- **Willingness to be vulnerable:** Culturally diverse sportswomen who reflected on coaches they felt supported by spoke of their willingness to say 'I don't know' or to ask questions that some may have felt they should know the answers to. By demonstrating a willingness to share their vulnerabilities in the form of a lack of knowledge, articulating feelings of shame, fear or other perceived shortfalls, the sportswomen I spoke to felt they were able to share their own vulnerabilities as well. Some athletes also spoke of being willing to forgive the mistakes of their coach, when they knew their true intention to support their athletes was authentic.
- **Curiosity:** Inclusive leaders ask 'why', and seek out answers. In a high performance context, this curiosity leads to challenging the status quo, innovation and seeking out new ways to approach problems. They are constantly learning, seeking out new sources of knowledge and looking across sectors to identify best practice. Due to this curiosity and willingness to experiment and try new approaches, inclusive leaders can sometimes be seen as unorthodox but can also be seen in hindsight as trailblazers, who were not afraid to walk new paths. This is not to say that they are always successful, but they are not afraid of failing and see failure as an opportunity to learn and improve.

- **Comfortable with friction:** Inclusive leaders are not afraid to challenge 'business as usual', or to be challenged. They are secure in their own beliefs and consequently are not afraid to be questioned. They recognise that change comes with challenge, but are not afraid of experiencing or working through conflict in the pursuit of excellence.
- **Demand diversity:** Inclusive leaders demanded diversity of thought, experience and expertise in the staff and people around them. They recognised the value of diverse opinions in their decision making process, in order to counter the impacts of 'group think', which occurs when "one or two people or personality styles dominate a group's culture so completely that there is no room for those with other styles, perspectives, needs, or beliefs to get their ideas on the table," (Fernandez, 2007).
- **Courage:** They do not fear change and are willing to take risks. They will have difficult conversations in an effort to understand a complex issue, and do not shy away from potential conflict.
- **Put people first:** Despite multiple and competing interests, they will always prioritise the best interests of their people, be they staff or athletes. They prioritise the wellbeing of their people over other influences, such as winning or meeting deadlines.
- **'Love and belief':** In a conversation with rugby coaches Wayne Smith and Crystal Kaua in New Zealand, 'love and belief' were discussed as central tenants of successful coaches. They felt that players who knew they were loved and believed in, regardless of the result of the scoreboard, would push themselves to their limits to achieve their team goals. With trust in their coaches, they were willing to make themselves vulnerable and place themselves out of their comfort zone, knowing that regardless of the outcome, they belonged to a team where they would be loved and believed in.

Following the conversation with Wayne and Crystal, I heard similar iterations of these beliefs from numerous sportswomen as they defined the characteristics of the coaches and leaders that they felt most supported by. Several athletes referred to the importance of their coaches believing in them. This implied a sense of trust, respect and care was felt by the athlete, which made them feel safe, as well as creating a sense of belonging. The coaches were trusted to put the best interests of their teams first, beyond friendship, personality clashes or self-interest.

It is also important to note that these characteristics which would be classed as 'soft skills' did not come at the cost of other behaviours associated with competitive, driven leaders in high performance sporting cultures. Accountability, transparency and strong work ethics are not compromised by these leaders. However, they would not subscribe to a 'win at all costs' mentality, noting that the safety and wellbeing of the people they coach or lead comes first.

### **Inclusive leaders connect with athlete's families**

Many culturally diverse sportswomen I spoke with highlighted how important it was that their parents and families were informed and engaged in their elite sporting careers, and of the role that their coach and team management took in building this relationship. This was seen as important for two reasons.

Firstly, meeting the family of a culturally diverse athlete helped to build trust, open communication channels and develop rapport between the coach and the family, particularly when the sportswoman was younger. Having clearer lines of communication would often make the family feel more welcome and engaged at team events, build trust in the coach to support their daughter and her pursuits, and to assist both the family and the coach to share information or concerns about cultural or religious observances that the athlete may need to follow. The processes of selection, training and competition demands of an elite sportswoman would often be constantly changing, so it helped to have someone describing and explaining this unfamiliar system.

This relationship is also crucial to enable the athlete to more successfully navigate the two worlds in which they are living in, being the elite sporting world, and the world of their cultural responsibilities, observances and their community, which are sometimes at odds. Several former athletes reflected on the conduit role they played between their parents and the coaching staff, in disseminating sometimes difficult information both ways for each party, and the toll that this role took on themselves and their relationships.

Examples of these potential conflicts that athletes would be managing included dealing with issues related to diet, rest and recovery. Some athletes spoke of the challenge of following strict dietary requirements from their team doctor or nutritionist which were often at odds with the food prepared in their home. Others spoke of sharing rooms with siblings, which would impact their ability to sleep and therefore recover from their training and playing schedules. Where coaches or team staff had positive relationships with the athletes' families, they were able to engage and support the family to understand the needs of their daughter, and therefore address challenges that the athlete would find difficult to navigate.

### **Inclusive leaders connect with communities**

Genuine community engagement and support was identified by athletes, coaches and sports administrators as an opportunity through which to build cultural understanding and relationships with culturally diverse groups, as a precursor to greater engagement and support of culturally diverse sportswomen. Several athletes spoke of the importance of community sporting events and the important role that they play in strengthening their culture and connection to their communities.

The CEO of one sporting organisation spoke of many lessons learnt and relationships built whilst attending community sports and cultural events in their area. Rather than the diversity and inclusion officer or community engagement manager being the only person to represent the sporting organisation at these events, this CEO saw attendance at these events as critical to understanding the customs, values and people within the geographic area that their organisation served.

This visibility is important and its impact cannot be underestimated, particularly for multicultural community groups that are not traditionally engaged in or by the sport in question. Time taken to attend community events and engage with multicultural leaders or community groups is recognised by many community stakeholders as a crucial first step to developing genuine relationships, built on mutual understanding, respect and trust.

The connections a senior leader of a sports organisation can build from such engagements are important and can become invaluable when supporting elite athletes from that community, especially for sportswomen. When sports organisations are seen as being genuinely engaged in multicultural communities, their leaders and elders are more likely to encourage involvement in that sport.

## Insights from coaching

For many culturally diverse women I met, coaches held the key to the creation of a culture and environment where they could thrive. As athletes, many women reflected on the coaches who saw them for who they truly were, built genuine relationships based on trust and respect and would challenge and push them to stretch themselves, knowing that they would be supported regardless of the outcome on the scoreboard.

Hearing the perspectives of culturally diverse female coaches also provided important insights into this report. As most had also been athletes, they provided valuable reflections of the progression through sporting roles and the various challenges along the way through a gendered and cultural lens. Of particular note in this section, were the insights from Dr AJ Rankin-Wright and her colleagues from Leeds-Beckett University who have investigated the role of gender and cultural diversity across amateur and professional coaching ranks in the United Kingdom. Their insights provide important learnings that can be applied across sports organisations, as well as coaching pathways.

### Gender and cultural diversity in elite coaching

In varying levels across New Zealand, United States and England, gender equity is an increasing focus in sporting environments in relation to coaching. With low levels of female coaches in national teams internationally, it is not surprising that the focus is on balancing the gender scales.

However the focus purely on gender balance in coaching sometimes ignores a need to ensure that all women of all cultural backgrounds have equal opportunity to access the coaching pathway. There is an important opportunity with this increasing focus of women in all aspects of sport, to ensure that all aspects of identity, not just gender, are considered, understood and explored when seeking true diversity in coaching.

A desire to encompass an intersectional approach to diversity hiring and recruiting in coaching positions was highlighted by many women I spoke with. Navigating both gender and racial identities in traditionally male dominated and culturally homogenous coaching environment makes for an incredibly challenging pursuit, let alone the technical, tactical, interpersonal and intrapersonal competencies that must be conquered as an elite level coach. Statistics from studies from all three countries I visited tell this story clearly, that whilst numbers of female coaches in elite competitions and national roles were low, the cultural diversity of these few female coaches was almost non-existent.

### **RESEARCH: 'Negotiating the coaching landscape: Experiences of Black<sup>2</sup> men and women coaches in the United Kingdom' by Dr AJ Rankin-Wright, K Hylton and L Norman (2017).**

In this research paper, Rankin-Wright, Hylton and Norman explore cultural diversity in coaching in the UK. The research was based on in-depth interviews with Black male and female coaches from two national governing bodies. Three key themes were drawn from the interview findings:

---

<sup>2</sup> Note the author's reference to use of this term: "Whilst acknowledging critiques of the term 'Black', and recognising the multiplicity of experiences within and across different groups of people, we adopt Black as an inclusive theoretical and political term to refer to the experiences of groups that experience processes of racialisation and suffer discrimination due to their colour, culture or phenotype." (p. 17).

- **Negotiating identities:** This theme described the ways in which the coaches negotiated their identities to accommodate both inclusion and exclusion, in order to be accepted as coaches within their environment of their national governing body.
- **Privilege and blind spots:** This theme explored two prominent yet contrasting ‘insider/outsider’ narratives amongst the interviewed coaches, where ‘hegemonic notions of masculinity’ remain unchecked and ‘gendered racism’ poses layered challenges for Black women in coaching role.
- **Systemic discrimination:** This theme describes the subtle and overt yet entrenched and embedded forms of discrimination that the coaches faced as they sought to progress their careers, that have become ‘routine and normal, but are also forcefully reinstated’ in both sports environments.

The traditional mantra of sport as a ‘level playing field’ is challenged in this research, as the underrepresentation of Black people in both sport leadership and coaching is explored.

The findings of this research challenge sports organisations to consider the norms, assumptions and institutional systems within the culture and framework of their coaching activities that “continue to disadvantage and subordinate Black coaches in generic and specific ways”.

The research also highlights the experience of Black women in coaching, who were forced to navigate and negotiate both gender and racial identities in sporting environments. The author highlights the importance of not generalising the coaches’ experiences, noting the “importance of considering interconnected identities and the multiplicity of coaching experiences when recruiting and developing coaches in the UK, ” (Rankin-Wright et al, 2017).

#### **RESOURCE: Privilege and Unconscious Bias in Sports Coaching by Dr AJ Rankin-Wright, 2015.**

Rankin-Wright has explored the role of unconscious bias in coaching through an online factsheet titled ‘Privilege and Unconscious Bias in Sports Coaching’, designed to help sports organisations and governing bodies to build their awareness of and progress towards increasing the cultural diversity of their coaching cohort, with most qualified coaches within UK governing bodies of sport being white (99%) and male (82%). Through Rankin-Wright’s resource, sports organisations are challenged to explore concepts of power and privilege, in order to build their awareness and understanding of how unconscious bias can impact their coaching cohorts.

This resource provides recommendations for sports organisations and governing bodies of sport to guide the creation of “environments for coaches that are free from discrimination and are welcoming to all,” (Rankin-Wright, 2015). These included:

- “Monitor coach equality characteristics, specifically ethnicity and gender, for every coaching course, using an online database. After each coaching course, follow up with the coaches to support them with coaching opportunities, links to clubs and further qualifications. This is particularly necessary if the coaches are from an under-represented group and may lack the informal networks and support (they don’t know ‘the right people’) to progress within coaching.
- Consult coaches from under-represented groups across your coaching workforce at all levels for their experiences and views on inclusive practice. As in our research, black and

minority ethnic coaches can offer their insights based on their everyday experiences of being in the minority on coach education courses and sessions. Create a safe and non-judgemental environment for these discussions.

- Seek out new ways to diversify the coaching workforce with transparent systems for recruitment and development, rather than using social networks to appoint 'the same type of people' to positions.
- Embed equality and diversity training throughout coaching courses, particularly Level 1 and 2 courses, not as a separate module.
- Advocate equality and diversity training for all staff on a regular basis, and include education activities on privilege and unconscious bias.
- Review and update your current resources to include guidance on behaviour and expectations, to create an inclusive and professional culture across all stages of the coaching pathway.
- Remember, creating an inclusive culture is everybody's responsibility. All coaching team members should communicate regularly with equality leads through meetings and collaboration on projects.
- Celebrate diversity within your coaching workforce!"

(Rankin-Wright, 2015)

## Māori knowledge and values strengthening high performance sport

Seeing Māori culture brought to life in elite sport in New Zealand was a powerful example of high performance environments utilising centuries-old knowledge, culture and value systems to guide, develop and strengthen their cultures and organisations. There is great opportunity to learn from cultures whose values reflect central tenants of what modern day sport now depends upon, including cooperation, respect, building relationships, teamwork and mechanisms and structures to maintain order and harmony.

In New Zealand, I had the opportunity to learn about the ways in which academics, coaches and sports administrators were exploring how high performing teams and sporting organisations could create inclusive sporting environments by understanding and utilising Māori cultural knowledge, values, symbols, traditions and storytelling, and embedding it across their operations and systems. Whilst some case studies focused on culture in high performance sport in men's teams, the learnings for the adoption of indigenous culture from a strength-based position was of particular interest and relevance for an Australian sporting context.

### CASE STUDY: Chiefs rugby team

Jeremy Hapeta and Dr Farah Palmer from Massey University in New Zealand explored the ways in which the Waikato-based Chiefs rugby team embraced and integrated Māori culture into every aspect of the clubs' way of working and operating.

In their paper titled '*Māori Culture Counts: A Case Study of the Waikato Chiefs*', Hapeta and Palmer sought to understand what role the adoption and incorporation of Māori culture had played in the Chiefs' change of fortune and what this looked like in practice, including (but not limited to):

- The development of their own *haka* (a culturally significant dance) which includes multiple layers of meaning referencing the Waikato region
- On-field attack and defence themes that reference local Māori history and concepts
- Personalising the emblem of the Chiefs team, 'Jeff the Māori', to create a symbol of the teams' collective identity.
- Engaging Chiefs' *whānau* (extended family) in the relocation and construction of the club headquarters, as well as team celebrations such as medal ceremonies.

Whilst acknowledging the diversity of definition and application of Māori values and principles amongst *iwi* (tribe) and *hapū* (sub-tribe), the Chiefs have integrated *mātauranga ā-iwi*, or local tribal knowledge and *mātauranga Māori*, or general knowledge, into their team culture and values to create an inclusive environment for everyone, regardless of cultural heritage, who were united through a deep sense of belonging and the belief in a shared vision and purpose.

It is important to note that the player-centred coach approach taken by the coaching group, which sought to understand and focus on the athletes' goals and development, was seen to compliment the pursuit of a common Chiefs vision. Athletes could continue to develop their individual learning and development, whilst simultaneously taking "a leadership role and ownership over forming and enhancing the team's culture." (Hapeta & Palmer, 2014).

Hapeta and Palmer (2014) conclude that the exploration and adoption of a *Te Ao Māori* (the Māori world view) at the Chiefs, both on and off the field, has brought about transformational change and benefits for the entire Chiefs *whānau*:

“The adoption and promotion of a culturally responsive and inclusive approach to team culture, values and vision has had a positive impact on the performance of the Chiefs both on and off the field. It has also shown that Māori culture does count when it comes to contributing to a winning team culture and effective leader-follower relations.”

#### CASE STUDY: High Performance Squash New Zealand



Squash New Zealand engaged Jeremy Hapeta of Massey University as a cultural advisor to create a culturally inclusive emblem for their High Performance program. The aim of the initiative was to inspire a greater sense of personal pride and connection for their elite athletes to the people and country they represented. Through a series of workshops, meetings and awareness raising to connect Squash New Zealand with the importance of cultural meanings, Hapeta and his colleagues created the *koha* (emblem) titled *Haeata Poipātū*:

“*Haeata* describes the first rays of light at sunrise or the glow at dawn, and *Poipātū* is the Māori word given to mean Squash (*Poi*, a circular-shaped ball; *Pātū*, to hit or strike). Together they literally mean ‘a new dawn for Squash’ in Aotearoa New Zealand.” (Massey University, 2017).

The process was undertaken over two and a half years and engaged players, coaches and administrators, demonstrating the commitment of Squash New Zealand, Hapeta and his colleagues at Massey University to reach an outcome of significant cultural importance, achieved through collaboration with the people for whom the symbol would represent.

#### RESEARCH INSIGHT: ‘Towards cultural competence: How incorporating Māori values could benefit New Zealand sport’, Holly Raima Hippolite and Toni Bruce, 2014.

In this research, authors Hippolite and Bruce argue the case for sport in New Zealand to draw on the values, insights and knowledge of *Te Ao Māori*, or the Māori world, and the benefits that moving towards a culturally competent approach could provide for New Zealand sport. This paper uses a *kaupapa Māori*, or Māori principles and ideology research methodology, which “privileges research by Māori, about Māori, being Māori.” This was a new methodology to me until reading this paper, as well as others that Hippolite and Bruce co-authored.

The authors recognise the great diversity within Māori, and that the term ‘Māori’ itself “collapses a tribally based culture into a single overarching grouping.” However this paper focuses on “the influence of concepts of *tikanga Māori* (Māori ethical behaviour or custom) that relate to the research participant’s experiences.”

The authors use a Cultural Competence Continuum (Cross et al., 1989) to describe where their interviewed participants feel New Zealand sport is currently positioned on the continuum, as well as where they would like New Zealand sport to work towards. The Continuum includes six phases:

- Cultural Destructiveness
- Cultural Incapacity
- Cultural Blindness
- Cultural Pre-Competence
- Cultural Competence
- Cultural Proficiency

Based on interviews with Māori participants involved in sport, the authors propose a path towards culturally competent sport in New Zealand, including (but not limited to):

- The need to recognise the importance and value of difference and the right to *tino rangatiratanga* (self-determination).
- Placing importance on prioritising *tikanga Māori* (Māori ethical behaviour or custom) as a ‘guiding principle for administrating and delivering sport, which would involve acknowledging values and principles such as:
  - *Whakapapa* (genealogy)
  - *Whānauungatanga* (relationships)
  - *Manaakitanga* (generosity in relationships)
  - *Whānau* (extended family)
- Practicing *manaakitanga* by sharing resources internally and with other sports and treating each other as *whānau*.
- Highlighting the collectivist elements of *tikanga Māori* that lead to team building and nurturing values and behaviours required in high performing sport environments.

Whilst the Māori interviewees in this research have been affected by the impacts of cultural destructiveness, incapacity and blindness, some have also experienced culturally competent team environments and sports, that have provided safe spaces for all. Whilst not underestimating the challenges of this path, Hippolite and Bruce paint an optimistic view of the opportunities that adopting a *tikanga Māori* approach could provide to New Zealand sport:

“Reflecting on what a culturally competent New Zealand sport system might look like, we visualise leaders and participants with *mana* that is bestowed on them by others who understand what it means to serve so that others may achieve their potential in sport as players, officials, administrators. It will take sacrifice of time, energy, effort and egos. Ongoing sharing and dialogue are necessary. It will require passion, patience, diligence and discipline. But we believe it is worth the effort. As the Māori proverb states: *Nau te rourou naku te rourou, kia ora ait e tangata* (With your food basket and my food basket, we will cater for the people),” (Hippolite & Bruce, 2014).

## Insights from sport, governing and advocacy bodies

The following insights explore the role of policies and processes, education and awareness, board and executive led strategy and support that enable sports organisations to create infrastructure and cultures that build safe environments. The role of advocacy organisations and universities are also included to demonstrate the impact of independent subject matter experts that can monitor, inform and guide the development of inclusive cultures and champion diversity across sport at all levels.

Beyond the infrastructure, it is important to note that without an understanding of the cultural environment that policies, systems and programs operate within, there can be no lasting, sustainable change. Sports organisations must seek to review not only systems and structures, but also the culture that defines the everyday experiences of the people within them.

Whilst some of the following insights and case studies speak to broader inclusion and diversity activities and themes and do not specifically address culturally diverse women in elite sport, they are useful to consider as part of the holistic role that institutions play in creation of safe environments within their departments or areas.

### RESEARCH: Creating a culture that welcomes diversity

During a visit with Dr Leanne Norman at Leeds Beckett University, I was introduced to Johnson and Scholes 'Cultural Web' (1998). Norman uses the Cultural Web to help sports organisations understand and map their internal cultures in her 'Changing Sport Organisational Culture to Achieve Gender Equity' project. Using this model, sports are given a framework through which to view and understand the complex and intersecting elements that create their organisational culture.

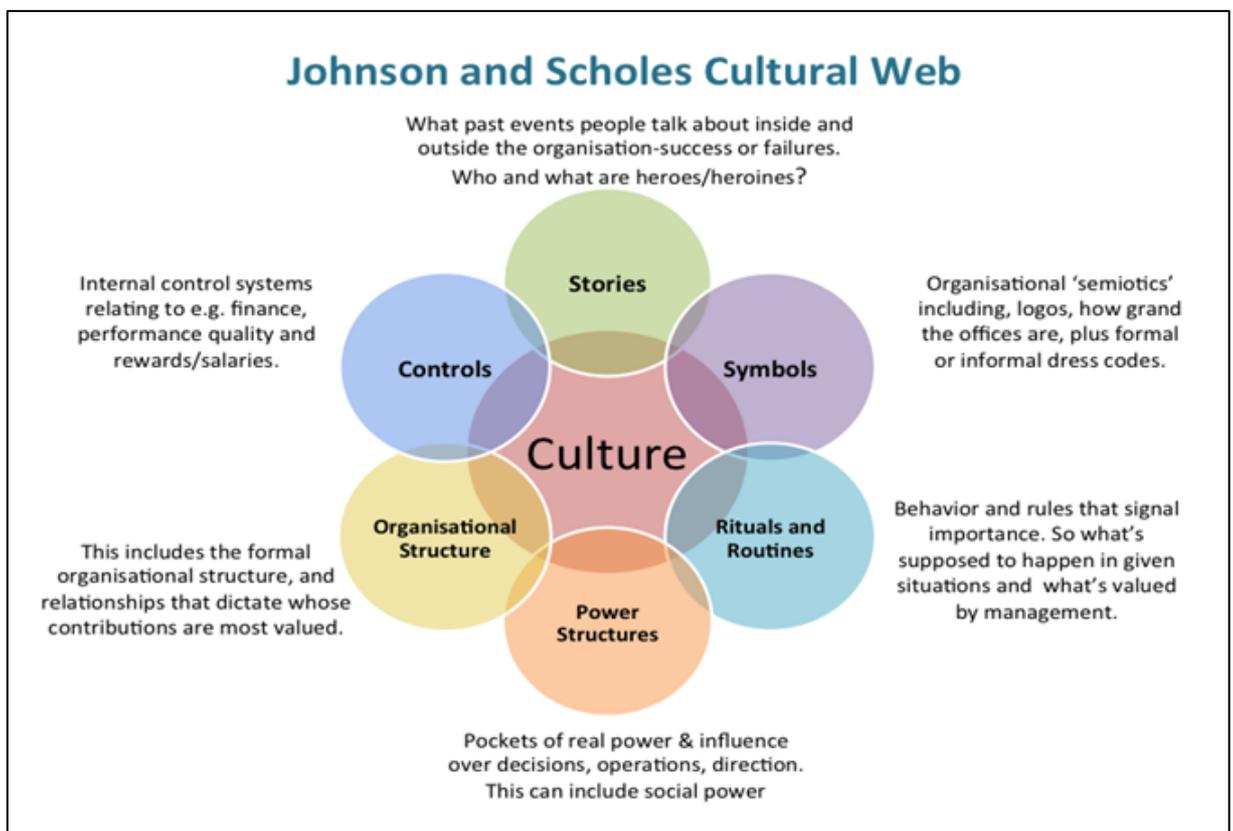


Figure 1. *Johnson & Scholes Cultural Web*, featured by The Management Centre, adapted from

'Fundamentals of Strategy' by G. Johnson, R. Whittington, and K. Scholes. Published by Pearson Education, 2012.

Using the Cultural Web as a basis, sports organisations can begin to understand the deep and embedded narratives that either give rise or minimise opportunities for diversity and inclusion to flourish, in relation to gender. Without acknowledging, unpacking and investigating the Cultural Web, the most sophisticated policies, systems and structures will not be effective if the organisational culture counters their purpose.

- **Measuring and monitoring change**

Through my previous research into this topic, I identified the report cards below as an example of an industry-leading reporting activity that enabled sports to be compared against each other for their gender and racial hiring and representation. Making these reports publicly available has created sport-wide transparency and an opportunity to see change over time across the major sporting codes in the US, which has led to more informed conversations and programs around gender and racial presentation in elite men's and women's sport.

#### **CASE STUDY: Race and Gender Report Cards, The Institute for Diversity and Ethics on Sport (TIDES)**

Each year in the United States, TIDES releases Racial and Gender Report Cards, which are an assessment of hiring practices in coaching and sport management in professional and college sport:

"The Racial and Gender Report Card (RGRC) is the definitive assessment of hiring practices of women and people of color in most of the leading professional and amateur sports and sporting organizations in the United States. The report considers the composition – assessed by racial and gender makeup – of players, coaches and front office/athletic department employees in our country's leading sports organizations, including the National Basketball Association (NBA), the National Football League (NFL), Major League Baseball (MLB), Major League Soccer (MLS) and the Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA), as well as in collegiate athletics department," (Racial and Gender Report Card, TIDES 2018).

TIDES is part of the DeVos Sport Business Management Graduate Program in the University of Central Florida's College of Business Administration. TIDES' independence from any of the sporting organisations that they report on is important to maintaining their reputation as an authentic and reputable source of not only the RGRCs, but many other reports and research items. The RGRCs are published each year to great acclaim and interest from the media and sporting community, as they effectively hold a mirror to the sports leagues with a quantitative lens, with evidence that either supports or questions their respective commitments to diversity and inclusion in their recruitment across all areas of their organisations. It is particularly powerful to see and understand this diversity represented not only in player groups, but also in coaches and 'front office/athletic department employees'.

TIDES also produces a Bi-Annual Associated Press Sports Editors (APSE) RGRC, which evaluates over 75 newspapers and websites to measure the changes in racial and gender hiring practices since the original study in 2006. The APSE requests this report from TIDES, as it seeks to understand and progress its diversity hiring practices.

The RGRCs, are graded using racial and gender data of each group ie. players, coaches etc in comparison to overall societal patterns. The most recent US census showed that 35% of the overall population are 'people of color and minorities', which included people of African-American, Latino,

Asian and Hawaiian/Pacific Islander heritage. The RGCGs therefore compare each group to this 35% figure as a benchmark, and give an according grade between A+ (= >30%) to F (= <11%).

The RGCGs have been published for three decades, under the leadership of Dr Richard Lapchick.

### **Supporting sports organisations to develop, create and evaluate diversity and inclusion programs**

Some initiatives that sought to support sports organisations to develop and implement diversity strategies were being led by national governing bodies or industry bodies who also held responsibility for governance and funding. This enabled them to utilise these levers to embed diversity frameworks as a requirement of their funding or governance structures.

#### **CASE STUDY: Equality Standard, A Framework for Sport (ESFS), England**

The ESFS is owned by the five Sports Councils through the Sports Councils Equality Group in England. The aim of the ESFS is to assist and guide sports organisations to develop structures and processes that will achieve equality in their sporting environments. Their equality performance is then assessed to ensure the sports continue to improve the quality and reach of their initiatives to help address the inequalities that exist within their organisations and to achieve equality. Through a system of governing bodies of sport, county sports partnerships, sports councils and national sports organisations, the Framework guides the development and implementation of policies and practices to ensure relevant legislation is followed.

The benefits to sports organisations of working through the Standard have been promoted as follows:

- *Provides a framework for achieving equality in sport;*
- *Helps to ensure democracy and sound governance of the sport;*
- *Increases participation by reaching new audiences;*
- *Mitigates against legal action and helps to meet legal duties;*
- *Enhances the skills and knowledge base of staff and volunteers;*
- *Increases involvement in equality at all levels of the organisation;*
- *Improves equality practices through monitoring, evaluation and review;*
- *Builds on existing equality good practice;*
- *Guides in assessing and reviewing equality performance and achievements;*
- *Helps to open sport up to all sectors of the community;*
- *Encourages more potential administrators, coaches, officials and volunteers;*
- *Provides a positive public image;*
- *Appeals to funding providers and sponsors.*

(from the UK Equality Standard Resource Pack)

The ESFS assists sports with a framework through which to establish, explore and expand their organisational efforts to address issues of diversity and equality. The additional expertise from subject matter experts supports the sporting organisations through their journeys, with relevant and targeted advice, specific to the sporting organisation and their stakeholders.

### **Impact of policies, processes and their execution**

Several women I spoke to reflected that they would only consider raising issues they experienced in their elite sporting careers relating to discrimination at the end of their careers (if at all) when their selection or career

success could no longer be impacted, for fear of being labelled 'angry', 'difficult' or 'a troublemaker', and then dropped from their team. Others had been impacted by the application of policies that did not support their ability to follow their religious customs, particularly around uniforms. Some culturally diverse women I spoke to were not confident in their sports organisations' ability to handle or address issues of discrimination through their policies and systems, so they were very hesitant to raise any issues and recognised that they would come with a significant personal cost.

#### **CASE STUDY: Bilqis Abdul-Qaadir on FIBA's hijab ban**

Whilst in the UK, I attended the Muslim Women's Sports Network (MWSN) virtual summit, which showcased Muslim women from around the world who were working to 'lead, inform and display innovative practices across the sport industry,' (MWSN website, 2018). The keynote speaker of the summit was a Muslim woman from the United States called Bilqis Abdul-Qaadir, who was a 26 year old basketball player from Massachusetts in the US who had played NCAA Division I college basketball at Memphis University and Indiana State.

Following her graduation, she had planned to go overseas to play professionally, but was stopped from pursuing these opportunities when FIBA implemented Rule 4.2.2. stating that "players shall not wear equipment (objects) that may cause injury to other players," (Ahmed, 2017). As a result of this ruling, Abdul-Qaadir was sidelined due to the headscarf that she wore when playing in observance of her faith, and was therefore unable to play professional basketball. Ahmed (2017) writes that this rule not only impacted Muslim women in hijab, but also affected Sikh men wearing turbans and Jewish men in kippot.

The rule was overturned on October 1, 2017, allowing players to wear headgear under within certain conditions. Although the outcome of the overturned ban was positive, the question remains why it was seen as a necessary measure in the first place, especially when FIFA had overturned their headscarf ban under similar circumstances and criticism three years earlier.

#### **CASE STUDY: Eniola Aluko, England Soccer team representative**

Several interviewees in England discussed a recent case relating to the treatment of Eniola Aluko, a professional football player who has represented England with 102 caps. Aluko was one of a select group of people to take part in a culture review conducted by the FA in May 2016. Aluko's review included complaints regarding alleged bullying and racial discrimination from the coach of England at the time, Mark Sampson. The report of this review, which Aluko believed to be confidential, was then leaked. Within a week of contributing to that review, Aluko was dropped from the England squad despite winning the Golden Boot for the highest number of goals scored in the Women's Soccer League in 2016. (Taylor, 2017).

What followed was a series of further internal investigations conducted by the FA into Aluko's claims, as well as a claim that another teammate had also been racially discriminated against in the team environment by Sampson. A further independent review was then commissioned by the FA, which was reopened after questions were asked of its process when key parties were not interviewed at critical times, including the two players in question.

Based on their handling of Aluko's claims, a UK parliamentary hearing into the FA's ability to conduct internal investigations was held in September 2017 (Commons Select Committee, 2017). The FA admitted that Sampson made the discriminatory remarks to both herself and teammate Drew Spence, and offered an official apology. Sampson was later stood down, for a separate conduct-related matter.

## **The importance of board and executive leadership in driving diversity**

Amongst the administrators that I spoke to who were involved in diversity and inclusion initiatives regarding race or gender, there was a clear consensus that sustainable change or impact could only be achieved with board and executive support. Whilst many organisations I met with and learnt about had designated diversity and inclusion staff or liaison roles, most were not in positions that enabled them to influence or create change at a board or executive level. Many were also contract roles through external funding, which would lead to regular staff turnover and a resulting lack of consistency in their approach to diversity and inclusion activities, as well as relationships with community groups.

This insight aligned with findings in an Australian study titled 'Diversity work in community sport organisations: Commitment, resistance and institutional change' by Spaaij et al (2018), which concludes that 'while individual champions are critical to the promotion of diversity, persistent tensions and resistance arise when they seek to translate to the language of diversity into institutional practice and culture change.' Whilst this research focused on community sports clubs, my interviews identified a similar theme that unless executive or boards championed diversity and inclusion behaviours, budgets and programs, then even the most effective 'inclusion champion' could not bring about sustainable cultural change. Spaaij et al (2018) further argue that "the ability of champions to advance change initiatives was also mediated by their power and status within the organisation."

I engaged with two organisations in the United States that demonstrated a recognition of the importance of diversity and inclusion through Executive role appointments. Both the National Basketball Association and the United States Tennis Association (USTA) have Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officers at executive level. In these organisations it was a commissioner or CEO who prioritised diversity and inclusion through the creation and appointment of these roles, and then assigned the relevant budget, staff and resources they needed. The message of the creation of this role demonstrates the organisation's commitment to diversity and inclusion as evidenced by their financial investment and resourcing of this role within their executive team.

## **Relevant support for different roles**

Regardless of the level of seniority of a position within a sporting organisations or high performance environment, the ways in which sports administrators interact with diversity and inclusion matters tends to be different in practice, but often similar in principle. It became apparent in my conversations that many people working in sport, particularly senior leaders, did not feel they had a network of relevant subject matter experts to seek guidance on matters pertaining to culture and gender. They felt it was a matter that they should already know about and were therefore hesitant to publicly demonstrate a lack of knowledge by asking a question, for fear of appearing disrespectful or potentially discriminatory. This concern appeared paralysing at times for some leaders.

When they did want to proactively seek information about a particular cultural group or traditions related to communities they engaged with, they would sometimes find informal or ad hoc advice upon which to guide their behaviour, practice or actions. This does not place value on this advice or support but rather, positions the knowledge and awareness of cultural matters as an add-on or a 'nice to have', as opposed to being seen as critical knowledge set or core business worthy of investment or resourcing.

## **Education and awareness**

Many sports organisations and advocacy groups I met with had designed, developed and delivered face to face courses for sports clubs and groups to learn about various aspects of inclusion and diversity, including cultural

diversity workshops. Whilst there were no specific education programs specific to culturally diverse women in the high performance field, the broader impact of such training has been recognised as an integral aspect of developing the cultural competency and broader inclusion awareness of an entire organisation. This can lead to better support and infrastructure for culturally diverse women at all levels of their sporting careers.

When meeting with the USTA, I learned of their inclusion and diversity-themed workshops delivered to their local associations with a view to creating an understanding of the need to engage with wider audiences, but to also inform their members of the ways in which they can pursue closer connections and engagements with diverse communities in their area. At the time, they were in the process of developing a second phase of that face-to-face workshop.

Some sports I engaged with had developed soft copy resources for cultural awareness purposes. US Swimming have developed a series of online resources containing information to enable swimming clubs and coaches to support participants from several targeted communities including Asian Americans, African Americans, Hispanic-Latino, LGBTQ and Native American groups.

During a visit to Kick It Out, football's equality and inclusion organisation in the United Kingdom, former professional players are recruited and trained to deliver inclusion and diversity training. This is seen as a critical success factor of the trainings, as they have influence and rapport with groups that know of their professional careers, and can put an authentic voice to experiences of discrimination. Kick It Out utilise both online and face-to-face learning to deliver educational training to tackle racism and discrimination in football.

Sporting advocacy groups including Kick It Out and Sporting Equals in England also deliver training to sporting organisations and clubs, targeting a range of diversity and inclusion matters including race, gender, LGBTIQ and disability matters.

#### **CASE STUDY: Kick It Out 'Equality and Diversity Awareness in Football Award' eLearning course**

In collaboration with Southampton Solent University, Kick It Out has developed the Equality and Diversity Awareness in Football Award. Delivered over a six unit Award, this online course aims to educate people currently working in or aspiring to work in the football industry in the UK. Participants in the online course gain:

- *“Further understanding of the workings of the football industry*
- *Enhanced leadership and communication skills*
- *Confidence and skills to challenge discrimination and promote best practice in football and society*
- *Opportunities to study and collaborate with like-minded individuals exploring similar career paths*
- *Enrolment as a student of Southampton Solent University for the duration of the course*
- *A certificate acknowledging successful completion of the course”*

(Equality and Diversity in Football Awareness Course webpage)

Whilst completing the course, participants interact with their fellow students through a series of moderated forums and facilitated online interaction with staff of Kick It Out and Southampton Solent University, including ex-professional footballers and experts in equality and diversity issues in football.

The course does not purport to provide all the answers to participants about issues of equality and diversity within their game. However it does provide a safe and structured online environment which encourages learners to reflect on and challenge their own knowledge, thoughts and perceptions in matters relating to equality and diversity. Using actual examples, learners are guided by experienced moderators to consider varying sides of a story or news report of a particular incident, and to put

themselves in the position of the various stakeholders involved. It also covers the legal framework within which football operated, bringing to light the Nine protected Characteristics in the Equality Act, including age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership, and pregnancy and maternity.

Using personal research, reflection and discussion, the aim of the course is prepare and provide learners with the knowledge understanding and skills needed to effectively handle matters relating to equality and diversity ad to “enhance employability and enable learners to operate as reflective, confident team members and future leaders within the football industry.” (Equality and Diversity Awareness in Football Award Course Handbook, 2017).

Completion of the course results in the award of a certificate from both collaborating organisations.

### **The role of advocacy groups**

Independent advocacy groups can also play a critical role in informing and directing the sporting inclusion and diversity agenda. This is crucial for smaller sports who do not have dedicated inclusion and diversity staff or teams, and for larger sports with significant profile whose decisions on matters of inclusion and diversity can play a significant role in a national narrative about equality. I met with representatives from advocacy organisations across New Zealand, the United States and England who all played different roles in their work to advance, improve and monitor efforts to increase participation, support and understanding of diverse communities in sport at all levels.

As subject matter experts in their respective fields in relation to gender, religion, sexuality, age, socio-economic status and other diversity characteristics, advocacy organisations support and inform sports organisations through the provision of cutting edge research and benchmarking, authentic community connections and understanding, education and training, and providing cross-sector learnings on their area of expertise.

Advocacy groups can shine a light on collective experiences of groups who experience marginalisation in the sporting environment. Such groups can be of great assistance to culturally diverse women in sport who represent minorities within their own sports, as they can provide the support and voice these women may not feel that they have access to.

A key factor in power of advocacy groups in the sporting context lies in their ability to remain independent from the sports organisations to enable them to critically assess and inform the diversity and inclusion activities of those sports.

## Recommendations – The Pursuit of inclusive excellence

The following recommendations provide guidance for the Australian sports sector to explore and develop culturally and psychologically safe high performance environments that enable culturally diverse women to thrive, thereby bringing inclusive excellence to life.

This list is not exhaustive and does not address all of the root causes, complexities and challenges that women from cultural minorities face in sport. It is however, a place from which to start; to guide reflection, to prompt consideration and empathy, to initiate research, dialogue and engagement, and above all, to encourage authentic and brave conversations.

### **1. Explore ways to enable culturally diverse women to bring their ‘whole selves’ to the high performance sporting environment.**

We are not all the same, and that’s a good thing. It is the recognition, celebration and diversity of our differences creates inclusive excellence. Dr Derek Greenfield stated at the 2018 NCAA Inclusion Forum in Indianapolis, that “when you can be who you are, you’re better.” Sporting organisations can enable such an environment by taking an intersectional approach to understanding their people, which recognises the many different aspects of a person’s identity and how they can overlap.

### **2. Reposition diversity strategy and activity in sport.**

Rather than seeing gender and cultural diversity purely as a ‘tick box’, risk management or corporate responsibility activity, sport at all levels stands to benefit from an inclusive excellence approach and could learn from existing cross sector models, case studies and programs that have prioritised this work for years, to their strategic and financial benefit. A diverse team is more likely to generate innovative ideas and be less likely to succumb to ‘group think’ in team situations (Fernandez, 2007), will be more forward-thinking, have a broader combined life experience and bring new concepts to the sporting environment that may help to identify previously untapped opportunities across all aspects of its operations. This approach is based on a holistic and intersectional approach to diversity, that encompasses gender and cultural background, as well as age, sexuality, disability and other protected attributes, whilst also considering varying skills and expertise, experience, socio-economic status, and learning and communication styles.

### **3. Ensure culturally diverse women in sport have a seat at the table.**

Sporting organisations must put culturally diverse women at the centre of their design processes when considering how to support and improve their sporting pathways, programs and engagement of multicultural communities, in an appropriate and safe way. They must have not only a role in decision making, but must have a seat at the table when discussing programs, initiatives and policies relating to themselves as individuals and their communities. This engagement should be from the start or design phase of an initiative through to its completion or launch, as opposed to tokenistic engagement in a one-off or isolated way. Such channels may include athlete or community advisory groups, facilitated conversations with the support of relevant cultural liaisons, family members or support staff, and the provision of confidential feedback channels that prioritise the protection and wellbeing of the individual.

### **4. Explore sport-wide and cross-sector diversity forums to share and gain knowledge and information.**

Best practice initiatives, knowledge and information around policies, systems and procedures that support, monitor and guide diversity practice should be shared within sports and across sectors. Peer-to-peer learning circles at all levels, including executive and board level, can provide safe spaces to discuss relevant diversity and inclusion issues, with the opportunity to learn from visiting subject matter experts. Reverse mentoring with culturally diverse women can give insights into experiences, building links of empathy through storytelling and

personal connections. Academic contribution to topics of gender and race in sport are significant internationally and should be sought by sport to inform relevant strategies and programs.

#### **5. Seek to understand and connect with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history, culture and communities.**

Just as Māori culture and values have been embedded in some high performance sport environments in New Zealand, Australia has a unique and privileged opportunity to engage and learn from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history and culture and how it has strengthened, shaped and guided communities for more than 40,000 years. From the values of a collectivist culture that prioritises the inclusion, community, resilience and strength of the group over the individual, there are clear opportunities to understand how these learnings may be applied in a high performance team environment in a sporting context.

#### **6. Develop policies, systems and structures that protect individuals, embeds diversity considerations and monitors change.**

Whilst the attitudes and leadership of the board, executive or head coaches can determine the culture and tone set in an elite sports environment, it is the infrastructure that turns words and intent into action. Policies, systems, education, monitoring and evaluation infrastructure should be developed proactively to support the creation of culturally and psychologically safe spaces, and not reactively in response to a crisis that could place an individual or community in harm's way. Whistle-blower and reporting policies should support the confidentiality of the individuals involved. Robust data collection mechanisms and reporting will enable sports organisations to explore, understand and measure diversity trends over time.

#### **7. Driving diversity agendas from executive and board level.**

Authentic, sustainable and well-resourced diversity and inclusion programs that lead to the creation of culturally and psychologically safe environments in elite sport must be driven, resourced and monitored at an executive or board level. Diversity and inclusion roles are often not in positions that are senior enough to influence, position and embed sustainable cultural change. The implementation, resourcing and embedding of diversity and inclusion strategies in sport must be driven by senior leadership if they are to stand the test of time. Relationships with senior cultural advisors can be established to inform board and executive decision making, and should be built on a basis of trust, transparency and a long-term, two-way commitment. Boards should include diversity and inclusion knowledge in their capability matrix when searching for new candidates.

#### **8. See the sporting arena as a classroom.**

Sports organisations can be classrooms for diversity training and education, which is a crucial tool for creating cultural and psychological safety. Training around unconscious bias and blind spots, reflective learning, and cultural immersion experiences are important learning tools that all sports administrators should take part in. Attendance and engagement with multicultural sports tournaments and carnivals are great opportunities for staff at all levels of sports organisations to build relationships and trust amongst those culturally diverse communities, whilst also building understanding of the role of sport within that community. What happens in sport spills into communities in a myriad of ways, including lessons about society's responses to issues of culture and gender. Sport can act as a classroom for all Australians to learn about culturally diverse women from a position of strength, empowerment and excellence, when authentic stories are shared and portrayed respectfully.

#### **9. Explore ways to hold and create brave conversations.**

Sport can provide an environment to create spaces where conversations about cultural diversity and gender can be informative and safe, but also courageous and brave. Dialogue about matters of race and gender should not be avoided for fear of discomfort. Settings in elite women's sport for respectful conversations to raise difficult issues for culturally diverse women can be created with support from experienced leaders and facilitators, and with guidance and contribution from all involved parties. The spaces for such conversations should be tailored to the audience, their existing knowledge and their level in the organisation. Such conversations should be

positioned as being part of a lifelong journey of learning that will put people outside of their comfort zones, and will not automatically lead to clarity or immediate answers.

#### **10. Explore conduit roles to support culturally diverse women**

Conduit roles can provide critical support systems for culturally diverse women in elite sport, as well as educating and advising sports organisations. Roles such as cultural brokers or liaisons can provide culturally specific and relevant insights to inform sports organisations of the potential support and considerations required by some cultural groups. Similarly, they can also advocate for culturally diverse women so as to bridge potential gaps that the sportswomen themselves may feel too intimidated or fearful to address. Community elders, leaders or mentors may take on such conduit roles.

Another important conduit role comes in the form of engaged allies, who are not from a culturally diverse background or be female, but will advocate for and promote the engagement and inclusion of culturally diverse women in spaces where they are not represented and do not yet have a voice. Allies can help to open doors and reveal opportunities to culturally diverse women to step into positions that will influence and shape their sporting futures.

#### **11. Champion representation of culturally diverse women at all levels, in all areas of sport.**

Opportunities to support and engage culturally diverse women in sport extend well beyond the court, pitch and field. Roles on selection panels, in advocacy, administration, coaching, officiating and research in sport should be promoted to culturally diverse women so they can come to see themselves in any area of sport, should they wish to pursue it. The voices and stories of the women upon whose shoulders they stand are a powerful connection to enable the next generation to 'see what they can be'. This includes profiling culturally diverse women in board and executive positions, as well as business-facing roles such as marketing, sponsorship, media and broadcast.

#### **12. Explore principles of inclusive leadership across sporting environments.**

The identified behaviours and attributes of inclusive leaders from this report provide sport-specific context for further investigation. There are opportunities to discuss and explore these attributes with leaders at all levels of sport, including coaches, managers, team captains, executive staff and board members, but also to administrators at all levels who are seeking to create more inclusive environments in their immediate teams. Case studies of inclusive leaders could be utilised in training content and courses to build awareness of the importance of these soft skills, whilst utilising reflective learning techniques to develop them, alongside technical and tactical requirements of elite coaches.

### **Conclusion**

The pursuit of inclusive excellence requires a long-term commitment, courage and vigilance at every level of sport from the grassroots to the elite level. Everyone in the sporting world has a role to play and stands to benefit from environments that are psychologically and culturally safe, regardless of their gender, culture, skill or ability. Australian sport is not alone in its pursuit of more diverse and inclusive environments, with opportunities to seek and share cross-sector insights and support from subject matter experts across advocacy and industry groups, community leaders and academia. Culturally diverse women at all levels of sport as well as the broader sporting community, will benefit from a sport-wide approach embedding inclusive excellence. Through inclusive leadership and by creating more welcoming, safe spaces for individuals and communities to gather, connect and play, sport can lead the way as a catalyst, classroom and stage for social inclusion on a national scale.

## Appendix One: Churchill Fellowship Program

Date	Name	Position	Organisation (where relevant to include)	City	Country
19-Mar	Julie Paterson	Founder & Director	Women in Sport Aotearoa	Auckland	New Zealand
20-Mar	Linda Vagana	Former athlete, coach		Auckland	New Zealand
21-Mar	Dave Stewart	Manager, Sport & Recreation	Auckland Council	Auckland	New Zealand
22-Mar	Professor Toni Bruce	Professor, School of Curriculum and Pedagogy	University of Auckland	Auckland	New Zealand
23-Mar	Wayne Smith	Coach	Formerly All Blacks & Chiefs rugby teams	Hamilton	New Zealand
23-Mar	Crystal Kaua	Coach, Managing Director	Athlete Nation	Hamilton	New Zealand
26-Mar	Jeremy Hapeta	Former athlete, academic	Massey University	Palmerston North	New Zealand
26-Mar	Dr Farah Palmer	Former athlete, NZRU Board Member & academic	Massey University	Palmerston North	New Zealand
5-Apr	Nicole M. LaVoi, Ph.D	Co-Director	The Tucker Center for Research on Girls & Women In Sport, University of Minnesota	Minneapolis	USA
6-8 April	<b>Social Justice Through Sport &amp; Exercise Psychology Conference</b>		Tucker Centre, University of Minnesota	Minneapolis	USA
10-Apr	Ohemaa Nyanin	Former athlete, Assistant Director	USA Women's Basketball Team	Colorado Springs	USA
11-Apr	Marlene Bjornsrud	Executive Director	Alliance of Women Coaches	Colorado Springs	USA
11-Apr	Christine Bolger	Coaching Manager	US Olympic Committee	Colorado Springs	USA
14-16 Apr	<b>NCAA Inclusion &amp; Diversity Forum</b>		NCAA	Indianapolis	USA
17-Apr	Kristin Konkol	Former athlete, PhD	Falk College & School of Education, Syracuse University	Syracuse	USA
17-Apr	Kimberley Anne Keenan-Kirkpatrick	Deputy Athletics Director, Senior Women's Administrator of Athletics	Syracuse University	Syracuse	USA
18-Apr	Anne Flannery	Project Coordinator	Syracuse University Sport and Wellness Research Collaborative	Skype call, Syracuse	USA
19-Apr	Rachel Epstein	Director	espnW	New York	USA
23-Apr	Melissa Palarea	Director, Diversity & Inclusion	NBA	New York	USA
23-Apr	Sarah Axelson	Director, Advocacy	Women's Sports Foundation	New York	USA
25-Apr	Liz Hanson	Founder & Director	Athlete Assessments	Skype call, Australia	USA

26-Apr	Craig Morris	Chief Executive, Community Tennis	United States Tennis Association	Orlando	USA
26-Apr	Yasmine Osborn & Shelly Licorish	Diversity & Inclusion	United States Tennis Association	Orlando	USA
27-Apr	Dr Richard Lapchick	Director	Institute for Diversity & Ethics In Sport, University of Central Florida	Orlando	USA
30-Apr	Jemima Coates	Standards Coordinator	UK Sport	London	England
1-May	Dr Rimla Akhtar	Chair	Muslim Women's Sports Foundation	London	England
3-May	Vivienne Aiyela	Non-Executive Director	London Football Association	London	England
4-May	Roisin Wood	CEO	Kick It Out	London	England
4-5 May	<b>Muslim Women In Sport Network Summit</b>				Online
8-May	Kelsey Parks Smith	Researcher	Loughborough University	Loughborough	England
9-May	Dr Leanne Norman	Reader in Sport Coaching, Carnegie School of Sport,	Leeds Beckett University	Leeds	England
10-May	Colin Bridgford	CEO & Senior Safeguarding Lead	Manchester Football Association	Manchester	England
11-May	Dr Alexandra Rankin- Wright	Research Officer in Sport Coaching	Leeds Beckett University	Leeds	England
11-May	Humayun Islam	Chief Executive	BEAP Community Partnership	Bradford	England
12-May	Dana Abdulkarim	Athlete & PE teacher		Sheffield	England
14-May	Osei Sankofa	Education Officer, former athlete	Kick It Out	London	England
14-May	Cathy Hughes & Alexandra Alexander	Equality Lead	Sport England	London	England
15-May	Shaheen Bi	Head of Research & Projects	Sporting Equals	Phone call, London	England
15-May	Jane Booth	Consultant	Equality and Diversity in Sport	Phone call, London	England
15-May	Donna Fraser	Equality and diversity lead, former athlete	Athletics UK	Phone call, London	England

## Appendix Two : Bibliography

Ahmed, S 2017, After a Long Fight, FIBA Finally Lifts its Ban on Religious Headwear, viewed on 2 June 2018, <[https://sports.vice.com/en\\_au/article/nz8bvg/after-a-long-fight-fiba-finally-lifts-its-ban-on-religious-headwear](https://sports.vice.com/en_au/article/nz8bvg/after-a-long-fight-fiba-finally-lifts-its-ban-on-religious-headwear)>.

Ahmed, S 2017, 'Bilqis Abdul-Qaadir Is Fighting to Lift FIBA's Hijab Ban', *teenvogue*, viewed on 2 June 2018, <<https://www.teenvogue.com/story/bilqis-abdul-qaadir-fighting-fiba-hijab-ban>>

Arao, B & Clemens, K. 2013. From Safe Spaces to Brave Spaces. *The Art of Effective Facilitation: Reflections from Social Justice Educators*, pp. 135-150.

Gooda, M, 2010, Social Justice Report 2010, Chapter 4: Cultural safety and security: Tools to address lateral violence, *Australian Human Rights Commission*, viewed on 13 July 2018, <<https://www.humanrights.gov.au/publications/chapter-4-cultural-safety-and-security-tools-address-lateral-violence-social-justice#fn8>>

Cross, T.L, Bazron, B.J, Dennis, K.W, Isaacs, M.R. 1989, Towards a culturally competency system of care. Vol. 1. Georgetown University Child Development Centre, Washington DC.

(PDF) *Individualism vs. Collectivism in....* Available from: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/215889253\\_Individualism\\_vs\\_Collectivism\\_in\\_Different\\_Cultures\\_A\\_cross-cultural\\_study](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/215889253_Individualism_vs_Collectivism_in_Different_Cultures_A_cross-cultural_study) [accessed Jul 29 2018].

Delizonna, L 2017, 'High-Performing Teams Need Psychological Safety. Here's How to Create It', *Harvard Business Review*, viewed 10 July 2018 at <https://hbr.org/2017/08/high-performing-teams-need-psychological-safety-heres-how-to-create-it>

Edmonson, A. 1999, Psychological Safety and Learning Behavior in Work Teams, *Administrative Science Quarterly*, vol. 44(2), pp. 350-383.

*Equality and Diversity in Football Awareness Course*, Kick It Out website, viewed 15 June, <[www.kickitout.org/education/online-course/](http://www.kickitout.org/education/online-course/)>

*Equality and Diversity Awareness in Football Course Handbook*, Kick It Out and Southampton Solent University, viewed 21 July 2018, < <http://www.kickitout.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Equality-and-Diversity-Awareness-in-Football-Award-Course-Handbook.pdf>>

*FA questioned on ability to conduct internal investigations*, Commons Select Committee website, viewed 20 July 2018, <https://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/digital-culture-media-and-sport-committee/news/governance-fa-evidence-17-19/>

Fernandez, C.P. 2007, Creating Thought Diversity: The Antidote to Group Think, *Journal of Public Health Management and Practice*, vol. 13(6), pp. 670-671.

Hapeta, J. and Palmer, F. 2014, Maori Culture Counts: A Case Study of the Waikato Chiefs. In T. Black, H. Murphy, C. Buchanan, W. Nuku, and B. Ngaia, B. (eds) *Enhancing Matauranga Maori and Goba Indigenous Knowledge* Wellington, NZ: Haemata Ltd/New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA).

Helms, J. 2017, The Challenge of Making Whiteness Visible: Reactions to Four Whiteness Articles. *The Counselling Psychologist*, vol 45, issue 5, pp. 717-726.

Hippolite, H.R. and Bruce, T. 2013, Towards Cultural Competence: How Incorporating Māori Values Could Benefit New Zealand Sport. In C. Hallinan and B. Judd (eds) *Native Games: Indigenous Peoples and Sports in the Post-Colonial World*, *Research in the Sociology of Sport*, vol 7, Emerald Group Publishing Limited, pp. 85 – 106.

Johnson, G. and Scholes, K, 1999. *Exploring corporate strategy*, Prentice Hall Europe, London.

Kernan, C. L, Greenfield M, 2005. Becoming a Team: Individualism, Collectivism, Ethnicity, and Group Socialization in Los Angeles Girls' Basketball. *ETHOS*, Vol. 33, No. 4, pp. 542-566.

Massey University 2017, 'A new dawn for High Performance Squash', *Massey University*, 25 July, viewed 30 March 2018, < [http://www.massey.ac.nz/massey/about-massey/news/article.cfm?mnarticle\\_uid=D51E5770-BCF5-4837-A388-ADF65975EDB0](http://www.massey.ac.nz/massey/about-massey/news/article.cfm?mnarticle_uid=D51E5770-BCF5-4837-A388-ADF65975EDB0)>

Muslim Women In Sport Network, viewed 2 June 2018, <<https://mwisn.org/conference-schedule/>>

Rankin-Wright, A.J. 2015, *Privilege and Unconscious Bias in Sports Coaching*, The International Platform on Sport and Development.

Rankin-Wright, A. 2015, Racial and Gender Equality and Diversity in Sport Coaching in the United Kingdom (PhD thesis), Leeds: Leeds Beckett University.

Rankin-Wright, AJ, Hylton K and Norman L. 2017, Negotiating the coaching landscape: Experiences of Black men and women coaches in the United Kingdom. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, pp. 1–19.

Shih, M.J, Pittinsky, T.L, Ho, G.C, 2011, "Stereotype boost: positive outcomes from the activation of positive stereotypes", in Inzlicht, Michael; Schmader, Toni, *Stereotype threat: theory, process, and application*, pp. 5–6, 141–143, Oxford University Press, New York.

Spaaij, R, Magee J, Farquharson K, Gorman S, Jeanes R, Lusher D & Storr, R, 2018. Diversity work in community sport organisations: Commitment, resistance and institutional change. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, vol. 53(3) pp. 278-295, viewed online 20 June 2018.

Taylor, D 2017, Eni Aluko: 'The minute you are brave enough to talk about race you are in a difficult situation', *The Guardian*, viewed 15 July 2018 at <<https://www.theguardian.com/football/2017/aug/21/eni-aluko-interview-race-difficult-situation>>

*The Racial and Gender Report Card* n.d., viewed 29 July 2018, <<http://www.tidesport.org/reports.html>>

*Johnson & Scholes Cultural Web*, featured by The Management Centre, adapted from 'Fundamentals of Strategy' by G. Johnson, R. Whittington, and K. Scholes, viewed 29 July 2018, <<https://www.managementcentre.co.uk/culture-eats-strategy-for-breakfast/>>

Williams, R. 1999. Cultural safety – what does it mean for our work practice? *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*, vol. 23(2), pp. 213-214.