

CULTURAL COMPETENCY IN SPORT: SUPPORTING FIRST NATIONS PEOPLES

Cultural competency in sport refers to the ability of players, coaches, officials, and organisations to work effectively, respectfully, and inclusively with First Nations peoples.

It is built across four key areas:

Skills

- Providing culturally appropriate support and services.
- Communicating respectfully with First Nations players, families, and communities.
- Building trust and strong relationships.
- Adapting coaching and leadership approaches.
- Managing and addressing discrimination on and off the field.

Mindset

- Respect for First Nations cultures, identities, and histories.
- Openness to learning from First Nations peoples.
- Self-awareness of personal attitudes and biases.
- Valuing cultural diversity as a strength in sport.
- Commitment to ongoing reflection and improvement.

Strategies

- Promoting cultural awareness, safety, and inclusion.
- Understanding responsibilities and obligations to First Nations peoples.
- Implementing anti-racism practices.
- Embedding cultural respect into club values and policies.
- Engaging with local First Nations communities.

Knowledge

- Understanding First Nations histories, cultures, and traditions.
- Awareness of the impact of colonisation and racism in sport.
- Knowledge of cultural protocols (e.g., Acknowledgement of Country).
- Understanding community needs and expectations.
- Ongoing education and learning.



Credit: Netball WA

Cultural Safety and Security

Cultural Safety

A culturally safe sporting environment is one where First Nations peoples:

- Feel respected, valued, and supported.
- Can express their identity without fear of discrimination.
- Are confident in their participation and inclusion.

Cultural safety is determined by the individual experiencing the environment.

Cultural Awareness

Cultural awareness involves:

- Recognising differences between cultures.
- Understanding First Nations values, beliefs, and traditions.
- Developing respect for cultural diversity.

Cultural Safety Strategies

- Reflect on personal cultural background, attitudes, and beliefs.
- Use respectful, inclusive, and clear communication.
- Avoid stereotypes and assumptions.
- Engage in open, two-way conversations.
- Understand the impact of culture shock.
- Identify and address racism in sport.

Cultural Security

- Cultural security ensures that sporting organisations:
- Protect the cultural rights of First Nations peoples.
- Deliver programs and services that meet cultural needs.
- Embed cultural respect into all policies, systems, and practices.
- Involve First Nations voices in decision-making.

Improving Cultural Safety in Sporting Environments

- Build trust and respectful relationships with First Nations players and communities.
- Encourage open and inclusive communication.
- Recognise and challenge bias and stereotypes.
- Provide cultural awareness education for staff and players.
- Support education about racism and inclusion.
- Promote shared learning and collaboration.

Supporting First Nations Peoples in Sport

1. Call out racism in games, training, and spectator behaviour.
2. Listen to First Nations athletes and community voices.
3. Respect cultural obligations (e.g., Sorry Business).
4. Begin events with an Acknowledgement of Country.
5. Invite Elders to share knowledge and perspectives.
6. Engage with local First Nations communities.
7. Avoid assumptions and stereotypes.
8. Build genuine, respectful relationships.
9. Support ongoing consultation and collaboration.
10. Do not speak on behalf of First Nations peoples—amplify their voices.
11. Recognise the importance of First Nations leadership in sport.