

# Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) Mental Health for All Conference, September 29-30, 2016

## Sport for resilience ©: Exploring Physical Activity as a Vehicle for Fostering Resilience

### Abstract

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Canada is facing a wellbeing crisis featuring historically low levels of population physical activity also impacting mental wellbeing and resilience.<sup>1</sup> The crisis has a devastating impact economically<sup>2</sup>, and socio-economic differentials make some populations more vulnerable than others. Rural communities (not limited to First Nations) are an example.<sup>3</sup> There are increasing needs for inclusion and provision for meeting a wide diversity of psycho-social development needs within mainstream wellbeing infrastructure.

Yet, deficit oriented practice results in a split between therapeutic and mainstream physical recreation, often experienced as stigmatising and inaccessible to many. In the current climate, organizations and people face increasing challenge providing for and accessing support, particularly in early stages where intervention can have high impact.

Sport-for-development (S4D) is an emerging field which uses physical activity as a vehicle for other psycho-social development goals based on the asset focus of positive youth development. Factors promoting resilience are a specific subset of possible benefit/lifeskill outcomes for S4D programming.

While resilience is rarely a specific S4D study topic, studies often show benefits akin to resilience factors.<sup>4</sup> Yet, there are gaps in research which create challenges for implementation. Better understanding of resilience and S4D foundations contributes important knowledge for sport-for-resilience programming. Some results from my research on youth experience of resilience in rural youth development programming will be shared.

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2. Canada Senate. (2015, June 4). *Senate Hearing: The increasing incidence of obesity in Canada: causes, consequences and the way forward*. June 4. Retrieved from <http://senparlvu.parl.gc.ca/Guide.aspx?viewmode=4&categoryid=1&eventid=17241&Language=E#>

3. Child and Youth Health Network of Eastern Ontario (CYHNEO). (2012). *Good Health in a Place Called Rural*. Ottawa, ON: CYHNEO.

4. Donnelly & Kidd 2004, Coalter 2010b, Cameron 2013, PCYI 2013