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Sport Environment Assessments: A Robust Tool for the Advancement of Safe Sport

By Alexander Ducic, B.A., L.L.B., J.D. | OSIC Program Coordinator

Introduction

On July 6, 2021, the SDRCC was selected by the Government of Canada to establish and deliver an independent safe sport mechanism. Less than a year later, the SDRCC launched Abuse-Free Sport, a centralized, independent program offering a range of resources and services to support a positive culture shift within Canadian sport.

The Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner (the "OSIC") serves as the central hub of Abuse-Free Sport. It is responsible for the administration of the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport (the "UCCMS"). The OSIC is guided by trauma-informed processes that ensure fairness, respect and equity for all parties involved.

More concretely, the OSIC administers the UCCMS by way of two distinct and complementary processes: (1) Complaint Management; and (2) Sport Environment Assessments. This article examines the role of the Sport Environment Assessment in delivering on the OSIC's mandate to create the conditions for safe and enriching experiences for every participant in sport.

Addressing and Preventing Maltreatment – Where do Sport Environment Assessments Fit?

The OSIC's Complaint Management Process addresses allegations of abuse, harassment or discrimination from participants in organizations that have signed on to the Abuse-Free Sport program.

Here are some key aspects of this OSIC process:

- The OSIC has jurisdiction only over complaints where the respondent is under the authority of a Program Signatory (i.e., a sport organization that has joined Abuse-Free Sport);
- Complaint management is retrospective in that it applies to specific events that have already occurred;
- Complaint management is driven by individual participants and does not directly implicate sport organizations as a whole; and
- Investigations are primarily concerned with fact-finding that informs decisions about possible sanctions.

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Sport Environment Assessments *(continued)*

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Sport Environment Assessments serve a dual function in both addressing and preventing maltreatment. These assessments are designed to identify and remedy alleged systemic issues with the goal of improving the sport environment for both current and future participants.

Assessments can be requested by individuals or sport organizations; moreover, the OSIC can launch its own if it becomes aware of alleged systemic issues, regardless of whether or not the sport organization/environment is under the authority of a Program Signatory. In addition to looking more broadly at issues of maltreatment, the assessment focuses on finding long-term remedies to systemic issues related to the UCCMS.

Independent assessors are appointed to handle any requests accepted by the OSIC after the scope of the assessment has been carefully defined. All participants in that sport environment have the opportunity to share their concerns and comments. The reviews, based on the [OSIC Guidelines Regarding Sport Environment Assessments](#), are summarized in a public report that makes recommendations to remedy systemic issues. The OSIC may then circle back to ensure those recommendations are actually implemented and that necessary change is effected in a timely manner.

To summarize, Sport Environment Assessments are:

- Available to all participants - regardless of level or whether they are under the authority of a Program Signatory;
- Intended to address systemic issues – those relating more broadly to a culture or environment, and not to a specific event or incident;
- People-centered – participants are provided a safe space to recount their stories and are empowered to choose how they want to proceed;
- Collaborative – a process that encourages participation from athletes, coaches, administrators, etc.; and
- Proactive and solution-oriented – the focus remains on eliminating institutional roadblocks to a safe and inclusive sport environment.

“By providing this option for a more comprehensive review, the OSIC hopes that Sport Environment Assessments will identify sustainable solutions that will help prevent future maltreatment.”

By providing this option for a more comprehensive review, the OSIC hopes that Sport Environment Assessments will identify sustainable solutions that will help prevent future maltreatment. Changing the culture of sport in Canada is everyone's responsibility. Sport Environment Assessments are one of the ways that OSIC

and Abuse-Free Sport are supporting this important social movement.

For more information, please consult the [Sport Environment Assessment Process Overview](#). ■

Follow Abuse-Free Sport on Social Media: Stay current on initiatives and updates about the Abuse-Free Sport program and on the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner (OSIC) operations!



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SDRCC Roster Member Profile: Learning More About our Arbitrators and Mediators

They come from every region of Canada and have extensive experience in alternate dispute resolution and sports-related issues, but how much do we really know about them? The SDRCC has an impressive list of 58 mediators and arbitrators and we will slowly be introducing you to some of them through our regular installments of “SDRCC Roster Member Profiles”. In this edition we would like to present, **Nadini Sankar-Peralta**, Mediator and Arbitrator from **Toronto, in Ontario**.



What led you to a career in ADR?

I began an early career within the Ontario Public Service, namely within the Ministries of Education, Indigenous Affairs and Social Services. This involved policy-making, developing stakeholder partnerships or consultations, and managing competing interests with that of governmental priorities. My prior educational

degrees did not amply prepare me for conflict resolution, so I returned to university to study Alternative Dispute Resolution, and I felt energized helping parties reach resolution in a transformative way that would leave everyone feeling good about the outcome. I expanded my studies to negotiations and arbitrations. As a qualified and accredited member with the ADR Institute of Canada and the Ontario Association for Family Mediation, I've been involved in mediations, adjudications, arbitrations and negotiations in multiple specializations since 2013.

Field of specialization/Area of expertise:

I have conducted mediations/arbitrations/negotiations involving matters related to restorative youth criminal justice (ages 13-17), human rights (and child sex trafficking), family separation, employment, health care, community/land development, and conflict with Indigenous communities (land claims).

As a Mediator/Arbitrator with the SDRCC, I...

...hope to bring a transformative approach to mediations so each party feels good about the outcomes. I strive to be an ethical, fair decision-maker with integrity. Representation is so important and I can relate to many who may feel alone, under-represented, intimidated or voiceless within the process. I will hold the space for them to be heard. With my diversity in knowledge, experience and ethno-cultural backgrounds, I hope to bridge understanding and mutual respect between those I assist.

Favourite sport(s):

I grew up surrounded by soccer and cricket! Now I enjoy martial arts and basketball, as my daughter has competed nationally in taekwondo, and my husband was a professional basketball player.

Dispute prevention tips for athletes:

There are no winners or losers in the art of conflict resolution, just different perspectives to be heard and validated. If we look at conflict as an opportunity to deeply reflect and learn, we are halfway there. My advice is to truly listen with an intent to understand, not respond, and a mutual end goal of a positive, respectful relationships. ■

In our next edition, look for the profile of a SDRCC Mediator.

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New SDRCC / OSIC Staff Members



Sarah Atkinson is the new Director of Investigations & Assessments at the OSIC. She is a lawyer specializing in the effective resolution of harassment and workplace conflict, and a seasoned mediator, facilitator, and trainer in the areas of human rights, harassment and conflict resolution. She has been called to the Bar in Ontario since 1993, and in Quebec from 1994 to 2011. Sarah is appointed to the Ontario Human Rights Tribunal, and holds her LLM in Labour Relations & Employment Law from Osgoode Hall Law School and her Advanced Certificate in Dispute Resolution from York University. She enjoys hiking, jogging and cycling, loves to travel, and is an avid sports fan.

Alexander Ducic is joining the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner as a Program Coordinator to support and promote the development of safe sport initiatives. Having completed a bachelor's degree in psychology, he pursued a legal education, obtaining concurrent civil law and common law degrees from McGill University. Having worked as a lawyer, he has experience in high-stakes dispute resolution and has represented and advised Olympic-level Canadian athletes. A former competitive soccer player and current coach, Alex embraces the opportunity of working in the Canadian sport system and hopes to contribute to making sport safe and welcoming for all.



Ashley Csiszer is joining the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner as a Program Coordinator. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology from Queen's University. Over the past 6 years, she has worked in an independent capacity to assist a number of lawyers in conducting workplace investigations and assessments, and has held an operational role in supporting the development of professional development programs centered around human rights and respect, for private and public sector organizations. Ashley is excited to join the OSIC team, to support their mandate and participate in the development of various areas of the newly formed Abuse-Free Sport program. She is also enthusiastic to expand her knowledge of the interworking of the Canadian sport system. ■

Notable Dates:

- **October 15, 2022:** Safe Sport Research Symposium in Toronto, ON;
- **October 15-16, 2022:** OSIC virtual presentation at AthletesCAN Forum;
- **October 26-27, 2022:** Abuse-Free Sport Webinar Series – Education and Prevention (open to the public);
- **November 9, 2022 :** Webinar on sports law for members of the Canadian Bar Association;
- **November 10-12, 2022:** OSIC presentation and SDRCC Kiosk at the 2022 Sport Leadership sportif conference in Ottawa, ON;
- **November 24-26, 2022:** SDRCC Mediator and Arbitrator Conference 2022 in Saskatoon, SK;
- **November 30-December 1, 2022:** Abuse-Free Sport Webinar Series – *Topic TBC* (open to the public);
- **December 8, 2022:** OSIC presentation at SPIN Summit in Vancouver, BC;
- **December 14, 2022:** Abuse-Free Sport Webinar Series - Closing Conversation with the Commissioner (open to the public). ■



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