



Showing Dragons and Passing Balls

**Asian engagement in Sport and
Recreation in West Auckland
2022/2023**

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Introduction

*I arrived here when I was 15. Year 10. The transition time was difficult.
I thought I had standard English [but] I could not even phrase a sentence.
I hated being an Asian.
Others thought I was a typical Asian, you know, with glasses, good at math. Nerd.
I am not.
I tried hard to avoid my identity.
I still remembered vividly. We were doing a beep test. I tried so hard. I was the second in the class.
The other time I was playing rugby. Others were like: damn, **he can pass a ball.**
I found a home through sport...it allowed me to connect with others.*

(Alvin, regional ActivAsian manager)

Sport and recreation has the power to help migrants in Aotearoa connect and find a sense of belonging. At Sport Waitākere, we believe in the value that physical activity brings and that everyone should have the opportunity to participate. We also believe that sport can be a tool for social integration to welcome our Asian community.

In West Auckland, Asian people are the third largest ethnic group behind NZ European/Pākehā and Māori. Asian people account for 29% of the population of West Auckland, with 21% under 15 years old. Many West Auckland schools have a large proportion of Asian students (for example. 50% of students at Blockhouse Bay Primary School) and the population is projected to continue to grow.

Introduction

We see existing inequalities of opportunity in sport and recreation for Asian people and acknowledge a duty to work towards the elimination of racial disadvantage, discrimination and, promotion of good race relations in sport. Sport and recreation has the ability to change lives and empower people from the playground to the podium. The government has advocated for the importance of sporting participation in reducing social exclusion among ethnic minority communities.

This report demonstrates the diversity of activities within the Asian community ranging from cultural games, leisure activities, funded projects, workshops, and networking opportunities. It collects insights from Asian people of various ages, genders, abilities, and sexualities. It highlights their voices, experiences and expectations living in Aotearoa and indicates the value of sport and recreation in supporting their settlement. The following insights portray Asian people as active participants- delivering programmes and hosting events; and critically analyses their initiatives and the perceptions of wider community.

We hope you enjoy reading this report. It provides a useful reference for sport and recreation community, organisations and ethnic groups. It will help to guide our own work at Sport Waitākere.

Methodology Review

Honglu Zhang our Asian Community Connector, has been taking the time to sit down with Asian communities to listen, respond and participate in their activities and events, eliciting a deeper response.

Using multiple insight-gathering methods, including interviews, surveys, informal conversations, participatory observations, reflective notes, and document analysis, this report is a reflective summary of mahi from a ten-month period from March to December 2022.

This report explores how we engage with Asian communities in West Auckland, with the intention of answering the following questions:

- How do Asian children experience sport and recreation in schools and in communities?
- What would improve their sport and recreation experience?
- Who are the key organisations/groups in West Auckland, and what are their expectations?
- What assumptions do Asian people have about the NZ sporting environment and funding system?
- What expectations do Asian people have on life and for the younger generations?

Insight 1: The elderly are the experts and main providers of cultural play and recreation.

Much of the elderly Asian community are contemporary migrants, moving to New Zealand fulfil the traditional role of looking after their family, especially their grandchildren.

Quality of life for migrants is greatly impacted by deculturalisation-the older population have a part to play in helping to mitigate this.

Older people in West Auckland were more likely to say they have poor/fair physical health. And while the older people in West Auckland tend to have a lower quality life (Auckland council, 2022)

Many senior Asians, have an expectation that they will pass their culture to the youth. They also have the energy and free time These activities not only enrich their wellbeing but increases cross-generational ideas between the old and the young and cross-cultural learning between different ethnicities.

Deculturalisation begins when people are away from home, away from their own culture, own traditions, and languages. It is a slow process of divesting a tribe or people of their indigenous traits and replaced its own culture by the culture of the dominating group.

Both older Asian and West Aucklanders were more likely to not be part of any network or group, then other population groups.

Backboning and creating structure.

Sport Waitākere has been backboning a network for Asians aged over 60 years old, which had its beginnings in organising regular walks and hikes. Three major Chinese organisations are involved: Synergy Community Trust, Chinese Association of West Auckland, Waitakere Chinese Association.

These groups organise and deliver diverse activities, with a focus on traditional Asian recreations, such as different types of traditional dancing (Ming Yue group), Tai Chi, martial arts, hiking, table tennis and food making.

"Our intention is to lead Chinese and our young people to adapt to the New Zealand culture. we came to New Zealand and our future generations will all live here. NZ is our second home. We want to promote Chinese culture, connect our people together, connect ourselves to our own culture, and eventually blend in with the NZ culture."

Mr Zhu, Chairperson of West Auckland Chinese Association & Waitakere Chinese Association

"I have time and energy. We are having less pressure than you."

Member of Waitakere Chinese Association



Walk With Us programme

Co-designing traditional play-based activities.

We have partnered with these Associations to co-design events that they were interested in sharing with young people (e.g., Dancing with Grandmoms, Asian Heritage Walk). These activities upskilled them to deliver more recreational activities with younger generations.



In most Asian culture, dragons symbolise power, strength, goodness, endurance and success. Finding your dragon encourages Asian children to be physical and active via cultural activities.

Finding Your Dragon was funded by Tū Manawa Active Aotearoa to engage more than 40 Asian tamariki over 20 sessions to learn traditional Chinese dances and games in July 2022.

Show Your Dragon was the final festival on 5th Oct at Synergy Centre, New Lynn. Sport Waitākere partnered with Synergy Trust and was supported by Whau Local Board. This showcase attracted children's, the elderly and people of other ethnicities, with over 60 attendees "



"I am very keen. I also played these games. Kids can know some of their culture. We have some legacies to pass to younger ones...But I do not know how to deliver and what to deliver..."

(Danny, CEO of Synergy Community Trust)

Growing Asian Cultural Competency for wider communities

A presentation of traditional Asian games from the Chinese community was held at the HALO (Healthy Active Learning Opportunities) event that offers professional development for teachers. This enabled teachers to improve their understanding of Asian cultures through interactive workshops.



Twenty Chinese elders came together to showcase traditional Asian games to over 30 teachers from 13 West Auckland schools in Sep 2022.

Despite the language barrier, the Chinese community members were confident and comfortable using body language and simple words to communicate with the audience. They were happy performing what they were passionate about. Part of their comfort was the presence of a trusted Sport Waitākere ActivAsian staff member:

“...because you are here ...we know we are protected and nothing could go wrong.”



Our HALO advisor Ollie was playing the dragon

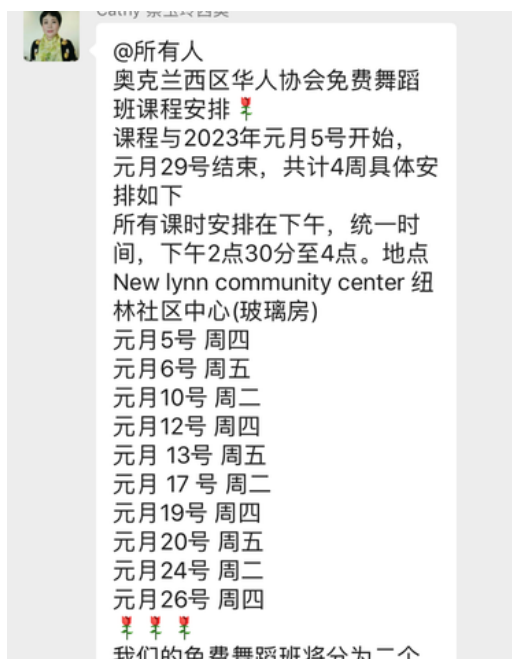
Insight 2: The Asian community needs to celebrate their successes in sport and recreation more often.

Where Asian community groups place their advertising, their expectations, and perceptions of what a successful event looks like, and their humble attitudes fail to make visible their past achievements and their expertise to wider West Auckland.

WIDEN THE REACH

Events tend to be marketed within Chinese-only networks and social media. There is a closed circle of people that see these events, and the wider Chinese community also misses out.

Below is Advertising for Dance with Grandmoms.



WeChat group of 62 was created at 11.11am, and the activity information was send out at the same time



9 participants signed up by 2pm on the same day

Alternatively, the opportunity of connecting into platforms that the Asian community use such as WeChat could enhance more collaboration and understanding.

HIGH EXPECTATIONS, HUMBLE MINDSETS

There is a different understanding of what a successful ‘event’ looks like for the Chinese community.

Chinese groups have high expectations for their events and the humble mindset means that they often struggle to express and acknowledge their past achievements and expertise.

Many ethnic groups, particularly Chinese, have asked the same questions when discussing their projects:

Is 20-30 children enough?

Do you need more?

Do you need to invite local boards?

How formal should it be?

“We (Chinese) always over plan things. We should learn from locals.”

Danny, CEO of Synergy Community Trust



Volunteers teach children to play badminton

High expectations, the humble mindset and a narrow definition of an ‘event’ (e.g., it must be formal, with over 100 invitees and special guests of high status) discourage Chinese groups from advertising events that don’t live up to that criteria.

The incredible achievements- despite language barriers and the impacts of migration and deculturation- are often not promoted by the organisers. For example, Autism Eden Trust has been providing different physical activity and recreation opportunities to Asian children with autism for 10 years, however they undersold their efforts with,

“We do things because of our passion and sympathy”.

PRIORITISING HIERARCHY AND HIGH-STATUS



For example, providing two types of catering at an event – catering for VIPs and takeaway pizza for the public.

As mentioned above, expectations for ‘events’ are large showcases that honour people and organisations of perceived high status (e.g., local government, CEOs).

This comes at a cost for the community.

Insight 3: Asian youth want to be active and are longing for equitable access.

Asian youth believe in the importance of an inclusive and equitable physical environment as well as a cultural environment. Asian students often reflect their parents' attitudes towards the ideal sport and recreation environment, and believe that their parents support them to be physically active - particularly through cultural-related physical activities.

Asian parents' attitude towards sport and recreation

Too often, Asian children are stereotyped as academic-focused and of not valuing sport and recreation.

Parents are very occupied with after school tutoring of their children, encouraging extracurricular activities.

This is the after school schedule of five West Auckland Asian students:

Students	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Student 1	Chemistry	Chemistry	Guitar	English	Chinese	Math	Badminton table tennis
Student 2			Art	English	Math	Piano Chinese	
Student 3	Piano	Origami				Math origami Piano Guitar	Chinese
Student 4	Piano	English	Art	Piano	Chinese	Piano	Free play
Student 5	Dancing	Swim Science	Art	History	Dramas	Math Chinese	

But does this mean that their parents are not keen for them to be physically active?

Asian parents do value academia, but they also value sport and recreation, particularly traditional activities.

Student 4
Honglu
Students:
Student 1

*My uncle has a pool; my dad teaches me how to swim.
Do you parent support you to do sports.
Yeah...*

*This is what she said 你这么懒...I even cook
(You are so lazy, implying move up)*

All students
Student 2
Honglu
Student 3
Honglu
All students
Student 1

*...
If I like, they will be fine.
You said you do not like sports.
If it is super fun, I want to go.
Will your parents let you learn some traditional Asian games?
Oh yeah.... that that...lion dancing, spinning tools (very excited).
Definitely. My mum will be like just kick you out of home for some exercise.
Plus, this is traditional.*

INCREASE ACCESS TO RESOURCES AND THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT.

When asked about the perfect sport and recreation environment, Asian students said they wanted:

Imagination VS Reality

Age: 10
Sport: Badminton, cycling, ping pong, soccer

<p>Name one thing you like about sports.</p> <p>Want: lot's of energy to continue (more)</p> <p>Reality: to exercising my body</p>	<p>Imagination: one wish, what sport you wish to join?</p> <p>Tennis Archery</p> <p>Reality: draw the sport you are playing now?</p>
<p>Imagination: You in a game?</p> <p>Outside of school I'm normally a goalkeeper.</p> <p>Reality:</p>	<p>Imagination: who do you wish to play with?</p> <p>Friends and family, Cousin</p> <p>Reality: Who are you playing with?</p> <p>Friends and Family, cousins</p>
<p>Ideal location:</p> <p>any flat large area that's allowed (school?)</p> <p>Reality:</p> <p>Backyard, park.</p>	<p>One thing to make sports easy for you!</p> <p>more equipment choices, rest time, substitutes, ↑</p> <p>(Time table full/work) (Cousin everyday)</p>

Indoor is ok need to be large

- Warmer swimming pools in summer.
- The chance to trial activities with perceived risk (e.g. archery, rugby) so that students can see if they like it and dispel safety concerns.
- Prioritize fun, low energy, non-competitive, activities.

“It is because I have class every day. I don’t have time to rest”.

Student 5

- The chance to play traditional western sports (golf, soccer, tennis) where the parent perception is that the cost is too high (as it is in their native countries)
- They want to play and interact with everyone – make friends and mix & learn about other cultures. Children’s worlds are simpler than adult’s worlds. As we grow older, we tend to only mix with our own culture, however children have more opportunity to spend time with other cultures.

CREATE AN INCLUSIVE CULTURE.

It is not an uncommon experience for young Asian migrants to experience discrimination.

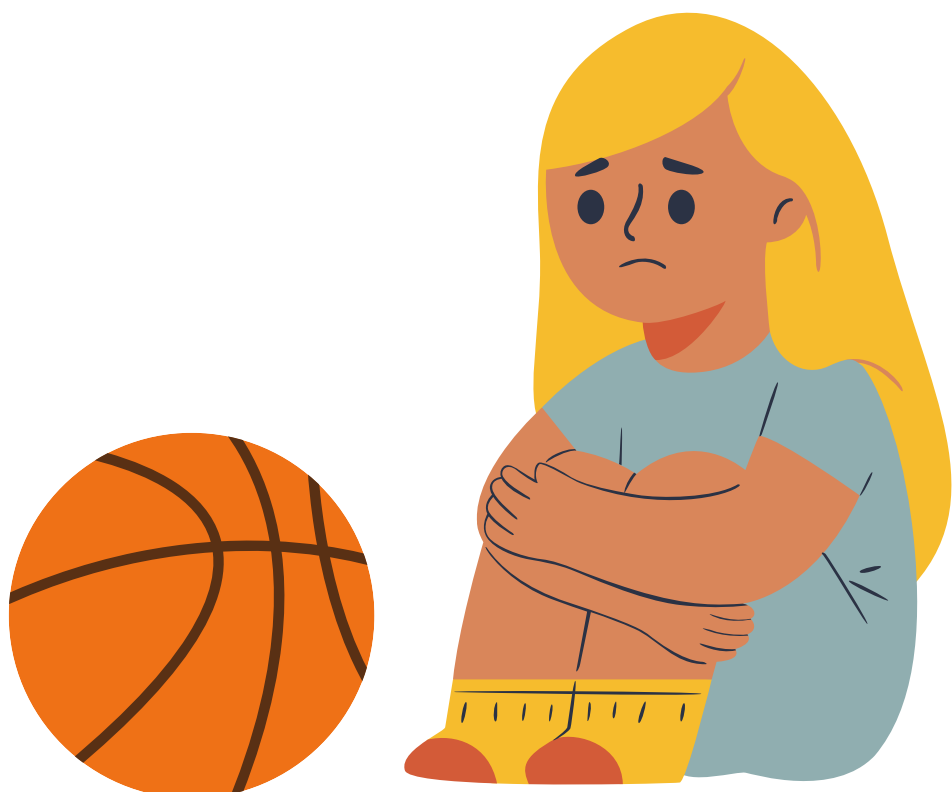
"I do not feel safe playing basketball. I was at a basketball competition earlier this term. A referee did lots of things and kicked me out of games. I am super angry.

They usually do stuff, but I can still play. So, I was ok. But this time, they kicked me out.

I am angry."

"This also happened at football when I played football".

Student, 17yo



Insight 4: Minorities within minorities

There are always communities within communities, minorities within minorities. Asian people with different sexuality and physical/intellectual impairments are particularly marginalized communities. Due to certain circumstances and capabilities, there are Asian organisations that organize and provide activities, guidance, and networks for them.

This section shares some insights and our early actions/practices with these groups.

CHINESE RAINBOW GROUP



Chinese Queer Women group at the multi-sports day, December 2022.

There is a lot of interest in creating space for the Asian Rainbow community. China NZ Pride has been on pause since Covid-19 and has recently gained funding to bring people together again.

After understanding their expectations and barriers, Sport Waitākere and Asian Culture & Sport collaborated to organize a 3 multi-sports day, focused on badminton and basketball, and table tennis. Each event was much more successful than the last. We noticed that off of the back of their experiences attending, participants were encouraging their own networks of friends to join them.

This network only has funding for basic operations. There is no paid organizer and current members have family duties that limit their capacity.

NEURODIVERSE CHILDREN

There are volunteer groups within the Asian community that are providing care and opportunities for neurodiverse children. This includes Autism Eden that offered activities such as: water sports, family BBQ, regular table tennis, handcrafting workshops.

These are often voluntary groups led by Asian parents, creating activities within their community, but who are not confident to share with outsiders.

“Initially, we volunteered to organize activities for our children. We also wanted to have a platform to connect to other similar families. Most of us do not share information with others because most feel ashamed, and pressured. Most importantly, we have other duties.”

A volunteer of the Autism Eden trust



The Super-Stars event (supported by Sport Waitakere and the Tu Manawa fund) had over 35 families joining in a day of basketball, badminton, drums, table tennis and even an early Christmas gift exchange.

There is a lack of support for these group and organisers often find that they need assistance to ensure quality experience for children as well as caregivers.

“Whenever organizing/participating in events, it needs so much effort. All parents look after children. It was so busy. We did not have time to do other things. With time, we all feel tired...”

Insight 4: Chinese people love the beach.

The ActivAsian team was interviewed and shared experiences of working with Asian communities with two researchers from Waikato University (see <https://rb.gy/gntg1n>), especially around promoting ocean and coastal recreational activities.

Activities near or on the water (particularly the marine environment) are very popular with Asian communities.

Preferred activities focus on being on the land rather than in the water and include: being on the sand, hiking/walking, fishing and gathering kaimoana, picking up litter.

Barriers to accessing the coast include:

- concerns/lack of education about safety in the water
- fear of getting tanned,
- cost of activities (e.g. boat/kayak hire, fishing equipment)
- lack of boat handling skills.

Pre-existing aptitudes, values, behaviours and practices from their homeland also have an impact on their engagement with the environment such as excessive rules, bans and protocols around interaction with open water.

“...anything that we push out that is water related, whether it be like ‘Sailing have a go day’, a program with MERC. It was fully subscribed within days. It shows that the interests are there. It could be also due to maybe there aren't too many opportunities, hence why people were flooding to sign up for it.”

Alvin, ActivAsian Manager

Recommendations

Almost 30% of West Auckland's population are Asian. Many are longing for belonging, for a place to stand. Yet, many are still struggling.

Participating in sport and recreation is a major contributor to quality of life, health, and general wellbeing. It helps us feel included and supported, with a sense of belonging. It also helps us feel proud of our communities, increasing social interactions and building relationships within and across diverse communities, especially for our tamariki and rangatahi.


At Sport Waitākere, we recognize the value of sport for community, particularly for Asian communities. Through sport and recreation, we help Asians find their ways of knowing, be(com)ing, doing and seeing Asian heritage and living between cultures in New Zealand.

Here are our top recommendations for engaging effectively with Asian communities:

1. Capability-building support for sport and recreation event planning:

- a. Show communities wider options to advertise their sport and recreation events- on local media channels and platforms (increasing visibility of their events to non-Asian people)
- b. Support for event planning which includes applying for and managing funds, invoicing, reporting, venue booking.
- c. Understanding the community system of the West Auckland – key stakeholders/organisations, local government structure and funding sources.
- d. Identify opportunities for learning about being Tangata Tiriti

2. Build connections across complementary organisations and events in the wider West Auckland community.



3. Cultural competency workshops/information for the wider community to increase understanding about Asian cultural beliefs and values, communication styles, where to find the latest news and information relevant to the Asian community (e.g., WeChat).


4. Increase opportunities for the Asian community to share their aspirations, expertise, and experiences. This will need a proactive approach in order to get past language and cultural barriers.

- a. Encourage ethnic groups to share their pictures and media releases of their past activities.

- b. Identify opportunities for groups to talk about their experiences to a wider audience.

- c. Seek and encourage partnerships with influential established organisations to increase visibility.

5. West Auckland needs to increase its number of leaders representing and advocating for ethnic populations in community sport. This will give others confidence to be active participants in the sports sector and the benefits will multiply.



6. Co-design traditional play-based activities with Asian communities including those organisations that are already active in this space.

7. Create an Asian games resources/manual to share with Asian people for learn about the rich traditions in physical literacy and heritage. This creates a base of cultural values that will increase interest, connection and sustained engagement. This could also be shared with schools and wider community organisations that serve a superdiverse population.

8. Being inclusive is not just a slogan. Build teachers' capabilities around Asian practices, awareness of discrimination, and how microaggressions impact students. Its important that teachers are aware of unconscious bias, and keep pushing themselves to critically reflect on their practices.

9. Diversity within diversity. Recognise the complex and diverse organisations that are active in the Asian Community, that have their own unique needs (e.g. Rainbow groups, Autism Eden). These organisations would like more opportunities to communicate and collaborate with other ethnic groups that have similar values to them.

10. Build capability of Asian communities to understand Te Tiriti o Waitangi and te ao Māori, helping them to make connections across cultures and understand their role as Tangata Tiriti. This would help feel more connected to New Zealand culture and society, increasing engagement and wellbeing.

Acknowledgements

We want to acknowledge the following Asian organisations' in sharing their experiences:

Synergy Community Trust
Synergy Sport
Waitākere Chinese Association
Chinese association of West Auckland
Moon dancing group
Filipino Auckland Trust
Asian Sport & Culture
Linking Sport
China pride
Vray Volleyball
Whau ethnic collective

We also want to acknowledge individuals and schoolteachers who gave time to connect us to Asian youth and share their thoughts on physical activity engagement.

**Aroha and manaaki
Ngā mihi nui**



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