How recreational summer camps can help refugee children integrate

Exploring belonging: Experiences of refugee children and families in a Montreal recreational setting

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SUMMARY: Recreation initiatives such as summer camps can provide opportunities for children to improve their language literacy, learn Canadian norms, and develop friendships – contributing to overall belonging.

LINK: Click here to read the executive summary; click here for the research report.

By participating in a recreational setting such as a summer camp, children and their families can:

- Practice new language skills
- Make friends and learn social skills
- Learn about social norms and Canadian culture
- Learn about new places and activities to share with their families
- Gain greater sense of belonging and feeling at home in a new city
- Share cultural concepts, learn about resources and support each other
- Develop friendships with children and families from different cultural backgrounds
- Interact with older children and staff they identify with and admire
- Learn and grow in a positive, supportive environment

Recommendations:

- Offer staff and volunteers training on working with children who have experienced trauma
- Consider sliding fee scale to accommodate campers from diverse economic backgrounds.
- Hire staff with diverse experience and professional training.
- Pay attention to children’s differences in personalities and physical needs.
- Choose a location near public transport and closer to families.
- Ensure the camp space is large enough for camp activities.
- Encourage participation and inclusion by engaging campers in designing activities and programs.

This research was supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.