



Tennis4Fun gave newcomers the opportunity to try out a community facility, new activity, meet others, be active, and have fun.

# Tennis Yukon’s Tennis4Fun inspires newcomers to “love” the game

**WHEN ELLA AKHSANOVA ARRIVED IN** Canada from Venezuela, sports were the last thing on her mind.

“In Canada, everything is more expensive,” she explains, adding that it was tough as a newcomer to access free recreational programming. “You could spend money, but it might be kind of risky because you might not like it.”



TENNIS YUKON'S TENNIS4FUN,  
YUKON

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Multicultural Centre of the Yukon (MCY)

But two years after settling in Whitehorse, Akhsanova had the chance to pick up a racket and play tennis, free of charge, through Tennis Yukon. The organization was able to give her and other newcomers the opportunity to try tennis at no cost, through its Tennis4Fun program - which was funded thanks to the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association's Reaching Each and Every One: A Community Sport Intervention program. This program, which was funded by Sport Canada's Community Sport for All Initiative, seeks to remove barriers and increase sport participation rates for equity deserving groups across Canada.

Stacy Lewis, a board member of Tennis Yukon, says the funding allowed the organization to create Tennis4Fun that could reach newcomers like Akhsanova, and hire the program's coach Ricardo Rokkit – an experienced instructor who could work with these newcomers.

“We're a non-profit, and couldn't have run this program without this funding. We might have been able to do a fun day or a try-it day, but it wouldn't have had the same impact,” says Lewis.

To recruit participants, Lewis connected with the Multicultural Centre of the Yukon (MCY) – who says that Tennis4Fun immediately appealed to their newcomer clients, who face many barriers to accessing sport due to many reasons including affordability, language and work schedules.

Lewis says Tennis4Fun helped them overcome these roadblocks by offering classes at different times, and Coach Rokkit says he saw participants help each other overcome language barriers.

“It was great. We created little mentor groups, essentially, and we had people who were filling other people in on the sidelines,” he explains. “That seemed to go over really, really well. Kudos to the people who took part in the program, because they took it upon themselves to help each other out. And that's the whole idea behind the program – to reach out and welcome people.”

Coach Rokkit adds that he enjoyed working with the participants who came in with self-confidence – many of whom were new to Canada, and also, to tennis.

“Whether they spoke our language or not, these people were willing to put themselves out there. I knew we were starting with something great,” he says.

Akhsanova says she now has a newfound love for tennis thanks to the program, and to Coach Rokkit's incredible coaching.

“I started to love this activity, and I didn't expect to like it,” she says. “I enjoyed being active, and playing on the court with others.”

MCY says that overall, the Tennis4Fun program had so many benefits for newcomers like Akhsanova – improving their physical fitness, mental health, and sense of belonging in their new home.

“Some of these participants were very active in their countries, and they might not have those possibilities here in Canada – especially if they cannot afford it,” the organization says. “This program opened doors for them, and helped them communicate with others and feel confident. We are really thankful for this funding.”