

Community-Based Sport Research with Indigenous Youth Investigación deportiva basada en la comunidad con jóvenes indígenas

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Abstract. There is critical need to better understand how to enhance sport participation among Indigenous youth and how to provide sporting opportunities in ways that contribute positively to health and wellness. The purpose of this paper is to describe our attempts to 'deeply engage' Indigenous youth in sport research via a community-based participatory research (CBPR) approach. Specifically, we describe how a range of qualitative data generation techniques have been used in our research, that is focused on exploring how communities can support sport opportunities for Indigenous youth in Edmonton, Alberta. Our program of research, which included the use of one-on-one interviews, sharing circles, and photovoice, provides direction for utilizing collaborative research approaches that respect Indigenous youth as equal partners in sport research. Furthermore, findings from our research have provided in-depth insights into the experiences and meanings of sport for Indigenous youth, and contributed to furthering understandings of the necessary processes that are foundational to engaging in relevant and respectful sport research with Indigenous youth.

Keywords. youth; physical activity; sport; Aboriginal; participatory; Indigenous; collaborative

Resumen. La participación en el deporte puede jugar un papel en la reducción de las disparidades de salud experimentadas por los jóvenes indígenas. A pesar de la vasta literatura sobre el deporte que ha documentado los beneficios potenciales de la participación deportiva, relativamente pocos estudios han examinado la participación deportiva entre la juventud indígena. Hay necesidad crítica para comprender mejor la manera de mejorar la participación deportiva entre los jóvenes indígenas y cómo proporcionar oportunidades deportivas de forma que contribuyan positivamente a la salud y el bienestar. El propósito de este trabajo es describir nuestros intentos de implicar con profundidad a los jóvenes indígenas en la investigación del deporte a través de un enfoque de investigación participativa basada en la comunidad (CBPR). En concreto, se describe cómo se han utilizado una serie de técnicas cualitativas de generación de datos de nuestra investigación, que se centra en la exploración de cómo las comunidades pueden apoyar las oportunidades deportivas para la juventud indígena en Edmonton, Alberta. Nuestro programa de investigación, que incluyó el uso de entrevistas uno a uno, los círculos de intercambio y la técnica de foto voz, proporcionan una orientación para la utilización de enfoques de investigación en colaboración que respeten a los jóvenes indígenas como socios iguales en la investigación deportiva. Por otra parte, los resultados de nuestra investigación han proporcionado una visión en profundidad de las experiencias y significados del deporte para los jóvenes indígenas, y han contribuido a la promoción de la comprensión de los procesos necesarios que son fundamentales para la participación en la investigación deportiva correspondiente y respetuosa con los jóvenes indígenas.

Palabras clave. Jóvenes; actividad física; deporte; Aborigen; participativa; Indígena; colaborativa

Introduction

The Indigenous¹ population is the fastest growing segment of the Canadian population (Statistics Canada, 2011). Indigenous peoples in Canada experience more health disparities than the general population (Liu et al., 2006), such as an increased experience of chronic conditions including obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease (Pigford & Willows, 2010). Furthermore, when compared to other Canadians, Indigenous peoples experience major disparities in the various social determinants of health (e.g., income level, living conditions; Reading & Wein, 2009). The Indigenous population is also very young, in 2011, 28% of the total Indigenous population in Canada was under the age of 15 years, compared to 16.5% of the total non-Indigenous population (Statistics Canada, 2011). Indigenous peoples in Canada experience a disproportionate burden of health disparities, and physical activity may serve as one avenue for addressing the health of this young and growing population.

One of the primary ways in which children and adolescents engage in physical activity is through their participation in various forms of sport. Frequent participation (1-2 times per week) in sport in the after-school period during adolescence has been associated with high levels of physical activity during adulthood (Tammelin, Näyhä, Hills, & Järvelin, 2003). Furthermore, several cross-sectional studies with non-Indigenous youth have documented positive associations between sport participation and a range of psychosocial outcomes, including high levels of emotional regulation, problem-solving, goal attainment, and social skills (e.g., Barber, Eccles, & Stone, 2001; Eccles, Barber, & Stone, 2003; Richman & Shaffer, 2000) and increased self-esteem or feelings of control (Babiss & Gangwisch, 2009; Carreres-Ponsoda et al., 2012; Durlak, Weissbeg, & Pachan, 2010). Sport participation has also been linked to a lower likelihood of school dropout, improved grade point averages, and higher rates of college attendance (Marsh & Kleitman, 2003).

However, there is a 'dark side' of youth sport, which is rarely acknowledged in rhetoric, policy, or within the mainstream sport sector (Coalter, 2010). That is, numerous negative outcomes have been associated with sport participation (again, mainly among non-Indigenous youth) including adults modeling inappropriate behaviors (Hansen, Larson, & Dworkin, 2003); low levels of moral development and legitimization of aggressive acts (Solomon, 2004); stress, anxiety, and burnout (Wiersma, 2000); the excessive use of alcohol and binge drinking (Kwan, Bobko, Faulkner, Donnelly, & Cairney, 2014); engagement in delinquent behaviors (Begg, Langley, Moffit, & Marshall, 1996); and, the use of performance-enhancing drugs (Siegenthaler & Gonzalez, 1997). Researchers have also shown youth sport participation poses risks of violent acts by coaches and other athletes, including sexual (Brackenridge, 2001; Harthill, 2009) and emotional abuse (Stirling & Kerr, 2007), and injuries (Emery et al., 2010).

Reflecting the positive rhetoric often associated with mainstream sport programs (Coalter, 2010), scholars have suggested sport programs for Indigenous youth can have 'healing potential' and be a 'powerful medicine' that can contribute to all of the dimensions (i.e., physical, mental, spiritual, emotional) of holistic health (Hanna, 2009; Lavallée & Lévesque, 2013). However, several factors may limit the potential for sport to have a positive influence on the health of Indigenous youth. Forsyth (2007) provided a detailed critique of the way in which the Indian Act shaped sporting opportunities for Indigenous peoples in Canada. She described how the Indian Act served to legitimize Euro-Canadian sports (e.g., basketball, baseball, ice hockey) as the most appropriate forms of sport, and how such Euro-Canadian sports were used as 'part of the broader assimilative agenda in Canada' (Forsyth, 2007, p. 108). In a more recent case study, Forsyth (2013) shared the intimate stories of a man named Bill, who described how sports were used to exert power and control over Indigenous youth within the Indian residential school system in Canada. Given that the last residential school in Canada (Gordon Residential School) only closed its doors in 1996, such institutions and their lasting effects on sport participation are not something of the distant past (Forsyth, 2013). The Indian Act and the Indian residential school system continue to shape sport opportunities for Indigenous youth in Canada, and certainly raise

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questions about the potential use of sport to achieve personal, social, and community developmental ends.

There are a number of additional barriers that may limit the sport participation of Indigenous youth. Financial barriers and time constraints limit opportunities to engage in sport (Forsyth & Heine, 2008). Some Indigenous athletes experience discrimination and racism when participating in mainstream Euro-Canadian sport contexts (Schinke et al., 2010). In a recent study, based on interviews with Indigenous youth in Alberta, Canada, Mason and Koehli (2012) described a myriad of structural (e.g., transportation, equipment), institutional (e.g., facilities), intrapersonal (e.g., substance abuse), and cultural (e.g., racism) constraints that limited their participation in sport. Yet, despite these barriers and constraints, sport appears to be remarkably popular among Indigenous youth. Data from the Aboriginal Peoples Survey 2001 showed that approximately 65% of Indigenous youth in Canada participated in sport at least once per week (Findlay & Kohen, 2007).

The enduring popularity of sport among Indigenous Canadian youth may be, in part, related to some of the potential benefits arising from participation. Indeed, scholars have revealed some positive aspects of sport participation among Indigenous peoples, including athletes' achievements in various national and international competitions, such as the Arctic Winter Games (AWG) and the Olympic Games (e.g., Forsyth, 2014; Hall, 2013; Heine, 2013). For instance, Heine (2013) provided a detailed overview of the evolution of the AWG, which are biennial games that were established for the purpose of providing opportunities for northern athletes to compete in high level sports competitions. The AWG, which includes northern and arctic athletes, have grown into a prominent circumpolar gathering that now includes traditional Inuit and Dene games as part of the official competition schedule. Heine (2013) described how these sports (e.g., two foot high kick, pole push) support the development of physical skills and they also promote cooperation, which is reflective of the 'cooperative nature of the land-based way of life' common to Indigenous peoples in the north (Heine, 2013, p.177). Arctic sports, such as those offered at the AWG have many physical benefits to participants and are significant to traditional culture (Heine, 2013).

Hall (2013) outlined the outstanding cross-country ski careers of Sharon and Shirley Firth; these Indigenous identical twins from Northern Canada competed in an unprecedented four consecutive Winter Olympic Games. The outstanding contributions of other Indigenous athletes, such as Tom Longboat (distance runner), Alywn Morris (sprint kayaker), Waneek Horn-Miller (waterpolo), and Ted Nolan (ice hockey) are just some of the more prominent Indigenous athletes in Canada whose accomplishments have been circulated through research and media (Forsyth & Giles, 2013). More recently, Forsyth (2014) wrote about Carey Price's role as starting goalie for the Canadian men's ice hockey team that won gold at the Sochi Olympics. Price is a member of the Ulkatcho First Nation² in British Columbia, and Forsyth (2014) argued that his successes are a source of pride for all Canadians and a reminder of the numerous barriers that Indigenous youth must face when trying to achieve their sport dreams.

Although the studies described above have made important contributions to the literature, there are relatively few studies examining sport participation among Indigenous youth. This is problematic since sport programs and policies are currently being implemented in the absence of a strong evidence base (Forsyth, 2014). There is critical need to better understand how to enhance sport participation among Indigenous youth and how to provide sporting opportunities in ways that contribute positively to health and wellness. With a lack of published studies, researchers, practitioners, and policy-makers have little guidance as to how to engage Indigenous youth in sport. One of the challenges in conducting such research to provide a basis for practice and policy is that traditional western methods may not be appropriate for conducting research with Indigenous youth (Battiste, 2002; Smith, 1999). To assist researchers in the development and use of more appropriate research methods, in this paper we describe our attempts to 'deeply engage' Indigenous youth via a community-based participatory research (CBPR)

approach.

Leaders in Indigenous research (e.g., Battiste, 2002; Smith, 1999) have argued that it is essential to include community experiences and Indigenous expertise when engaging in research with Indigenous peoples. Not only should Indigenous peoples be engaged in the research process, Brant Castellano (2004) argued that Indigenous peoples have the *right* to participate as research partners. Participating as a research partner means that Indigenous peoples should have input and decision-making power from the very onset of research (development of the research questions) to the end of the research process (sharing research findings). The well-documented recent history of the unethical treatment of Indigenous peoples in research has led to uneasiness by many Indigenous peoples to participate in research (Willows, 2013). Many Indigenous peoples have concerns over who serves to benefit from the research, as well as who is in control of the research (Battiste, 2002). To ensure that Indigenous peoples do have control of research, Battiste argued for Indigenous peoples' involvement throughout the entire research process. Our commitment to engaging in respectful and relevant sport research, helped shape the CBPR approach that has guided our sport research with Indigenous youth.

Our Community-based Research

Recognizing that children and youth are 'meaning-making' agents, there has been a recent call for 'deep research engagements' with respect to research focused on sport, children, and youth (Messner & Musto, 2014, p. 116-117). The purpose of this paper is to describe our attempts to 'deeply engage' Indigenous youth via a CBPR approach. Our research, which explores how communities can support sport opportunities for Indigenous youth in Edmonton, Alberta, used a range of qualitative data generation techniques. In this paper, we describe our use of one-on-one interviews, sharing circles, and photovoice in our research with Indigenous youth, and demonstrate how such approaches can promote relevant and respectful research processes. All CBPR projects are unique but our lessons learned may be valuable to other community members or researchers engaging in projects with similar goals (Fletcher, 2003).

Various community-based and action research frameworks (e.g., Fletcher, 2003; Israel, Schulz, Parker, & Becker, 1998) fit within a subjective and collaborative form of inquiry known as participatory research. CBPR is recognized as a partnership approach that includes community members as equal partners in the various phases of the research process (Israel et al., 1998), and it has become an important tool for researchers working with Indigenous peoples (Fletcher, 2003). Fletcher argued that this approach to research acknowledges and promotes the need for different ways of knowing by providing equal value on the role of scientific knowledge and traditional knowledge that is held by Indigenous peoples. Given that the knowledge of Indigenous youth is so noticeably absent in sport research, a CBPR approach provided the necessary framework for integrating the knowledge of Indigenous youth in this sport research.

The development of legitimate relationships with community partners is a necessary first step in the establishment of research partnerships with Indigenous communities (Fletcher, 2003). Furthermore, Fletcher argued that the most critical phase of research is the initial contact and relationship building. This CBPR project emerged out of my, TLM's (the first author), ongoing program of research, which is broadly focused on exploring the sport and physical activity of Indigenous youth in Canada (e.g., McHugh, 2011; McHugh, Coppola, & Sinclair, 2013) and collaborative research approaches with Indigenous youth (e.g., McHugh & Kowalski, 2011; McHugh & Kowalski, 2009; McHugh, Kingsley, & Coppola, 2013). Over the last four years in particular, I have worked to establish respectful research relationships with numerous Indigenous youth and community partners in Edmonton, Alberta. The current CBPR project is focused on exploring the role of communities in enhancing sport opportunities for Indigenous youth in Edmonton, Alberta. To address this goal, the research team has grown to include a broader range of research expertise. The team includes

NLH, who contributes his expertise on the psychosocial dimensions of youth sport and CBPR approaches (e.g., Holt et al., 2013), including studies with Indigenous youth (e.g., DyckFehderau et al., 2013; Pigford et al., 2013), and CA who shares his expertise on Indigenous peoples' identity and notions of community (for an encapsulation of CA's past decade of work on these issues, see Andersen [2014]).

Throughout the various research projects that comprise this CBPR, the research team has included Indigenous youth, all of whom are students at secondary schools in Edmonton whereby the majority of the students self-identify as an Indigenous person. Various Indigenous adult partners, primarily teachers and various educational resources, have also contributed to the research team over time. One partner³ in particular, has been part of the research team since the onset four years ago. She is a self-identifying Indigenous woman who works in an organization that provides educational programming for Indigenous youth in Edmonton. She has been central in identifying the respectful methods of data generation that have been used in this CBPR project. The remainder of this paper will outline the ways in which one-on-one interviews, sharing circles, and photovoice have been used to engage Indigenous youth in this program of research that is focused on enhancing sport opportunities for Indigenous youth.

One-on-one interviews

At the onset of this CBPR, our research was broadly focused on the physical activity of Indigenous youth, and it had not yet been refined to a specific focus on enhancing sport opportunities. Recognizing the limited research that provides an in-depth understanding of the factors that influence the physical activity of Indigenous youth (Willows, 2005), we were committed to ensuring that the voices of Indigenous youth were at the forefront of this necessary exploration. Scholars (e.g., Battiste, 2002) have argued that researchers may be able to support Indigenous peoples in sharing their experiences, but speaking for Indigenous peoples is denying them self-determination. As such, one-on-one interviews were identified by our research team as a form of data generation that would support Indigenous youth in sharing their experiences, and such interviews have been used as a primary form of data generation in our CBPR with Indigenous youth (i.e., McHugh, 2011). Individual interviews highlight the knowledgeable and meaningful perspectives of the participants (Patton, 2002) and, consistent with the oral traditions of various Indigenous cultures, one-on-one interviews provide opportunities for storytelling (Rothe, Ozegovic, & Carroll, 2009). Mason and Koehli (2012) argued that, compared to group interviews, one-on-one interviews promote a comfortable environment whereby Indigenous youth can share their experiences. They further explained how such interviews support the sharing of detailed experiences, and provide an opportunity for youth to discuss potentially sensitive topics without feeling judged by their peers.

The fact that we utilized one-on-one interviews in this sport research is not particularly novel in and of itself. We are committed to highlighting the underrepresented voices of Indigenous youth in the sport literature, and one-on-one interviews were a natural choice to achieve this goal. However, the *processes* that were embedded as a necessary component of the one-on-one interviews are particularly noteworthy. Indeed, our general exploration of the physical activity experiences of Indigenous youth in Edmonton, Alberta (see McHugh, 2011) highlighted various benefits of, and barriers to, physical activity. By providing an opportunity for Indigenous youth to share their rich experiences, we gained a deeper understanding of the complexities surrounding physical activity participation. Participants explained how physical activity 'costs money' and 'makes one better, faster, stronger and smarter' (McHugh, 2011, p.14), and the experiences shared by participants make a unique contribution to the physical activity and sport literature. However, equally important to the current CBPR project is that this initial research study helped to solidify trusting research relationships and the necessary research processes that are being used to guide our current CBPR practices.

Development of relationships. The process of research with Indigenous peoples is often more important than the outcomes of research (Smith, 2005). Within the early stages of our CBPR project, prior to conducting any interviews, we spent extensive amounts of time and resources establishing relationships. The team knew that trusting relationships would be a necessary to ensure that the Indigenous youth participants felt that the research was relevant and respectful. By volunteering my time to various sport and physical activity programs offered within the participant' schools, I (TLM) was able to build relationships with youth. Youth became more familiar with me, as a person and a researcher, and the trust established provided a strong foundation for open discussions about the CBPR project. Researchers who engage in CBPR have acknowledged the extensive amount of time that is necessary for establishing research relationships (Boog, 2003; Holt et al., 2013; McHugh & Kowalski, 2009). Describing her first year of research in a CBPR project, one participant in Castleden, Morgan, and Lamb's (2012) study said, 'I spent the first year drinking tea' (p.168). This quote really resonated with me, in that much of the first year of this CBPR project was spent in a community setting having lunch, or engaging in discussion over coffee and tea, with Indigenous youth and adult partners. The majority of these meetings were not focused on research or research topics per se, but the level of trust that was established during our meetings has been foundational to the processes of engaging Indigenous youth and adult partners in this sport research.

Most importantly, the establishment and maintenance of trusting relationships served as a strong foundation for ensuring that the research is relevant and respectful for participants. However, we would be remiss if we did not also acknowledge the specific benefits of such relationships to the research team. The team knew that trusting relationships with Indigenous youth would need to be developed if interviews were going to support a sharing of in-depth information. An in-depth understanding is necessary for addressing our constantly evolving research questions. Furthermore, many research agencies have made partnerships with communities and organizations a requirement for receiving research funding. As such, our team knew that the establishment of relationships would be necessary to support our ongoing goals to secure future research funding. When engaging in research with Indigenous peoples, it is imperative that the benefits of research be shared among participants and researchers (Battiste, 2002). Through open communication and ongoing dialogue with our research participants, our research team has been (and continues to be) committed to ensuring that we are honest in describing the ways that we too benefit from the relationships that are established and the research as a whole.

Sharing circles

Findings from our initial study provided insight into the physical activity experiences of Indigenous youth, and the research team was drawn to the participants' claim that physical activity and sport need what we termed 'Aboriginal community support' (McHugh, 2011, p.18). Although the team was keen to explore this notion of Aboriginal community support, we knew it was important to engage Indigenous youth and adult partners in the development of a specific research question. CBPR is described as a research approach that involves participants as equal partners in the research process (Fletcher, 2003). However, participants are rarely included in the development of research questions and, instead, they are included in the processes of data generation. To be responsible and responsive to the knowledge held by participants, researchers must include Indigenous partners in the development of research projects (Battiste & Henderson, 2000).

Various provincial and federal funding agencies in Canada are well aware of the critical need to include Indigenous peoples as equal partners in the research process and, as such, funds have recently been allocated to support projects that are focused on working with Indigenous peoples. Our research team seized a unique funding opportunity from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, and we obtained

funding to enhance our community-based research partnership and to engage in sharing circles to identify physical activity research questions that are meaningful to urban Indigenous youth (McHugh, Kingsley et al., 2013). When engaging in sport-focused research with Indigenous communities, Schinke, McGannon, Watson, and Busanich (2013) argued for the need to move beyond mainstream research approaches to CBPR approaches that involve extensive consultation and the centralization of local voices. Our CBPR approach used sharing circles to support the local voices of Indigenous youth and adult partners in identifying relevant and respectful research questions.

Promotion of culturally respectful research. Six sharing circles, consisting of 10-15 Indigenous youth, family members, Elders, and other Indigenous community partners from Edmonton, took place over a 3-month period (McHugh, Kingsley, et al., 2013). A total of 68 Indigenous youth and Indigenous partners participated in sharing circles, in an effort to identify research questions. Similar to focus groups, sharing circles support the sharing of experiences or stories within a group setting. However, sharing circles hold sacred meaning to many Indigenous cultures, making them distinct from focus groups (Lavallée, 2009). Used by various Indigenous groups as a traditional communication tool, sharing circles support the discussion of topics and issues in a supportive manner (Rothe et al., 2009). Making the distinction between sharing circles and focus groups as a form of data generation, Rothe et al. (2009) provided a brief summary of nine differing features. For instance, in terms of the interviewer, sharing circles are typically led by a well-respected community member whereas focus groups are typically led by a trained facilitator. As well, it is not uncommon for sharing circles to last for more than 3 hours (or until everyone is done sharing), whereas focus groups are more commonly restricted to less than 2 hours.

Sharing circles promote a culturally respectful research environment and have been successfully employed in sport research with Indigenous peoples (e.g., Blodgett et al., 2010; Schinke et al., 2010). Within the context of our CBPR project, sharing circles were identified by our Indigenous research partners as the most appropriate method for generating information about relevant research questions. All sharing circles took place at a community organization and were facilitated by one of the Indigenous research team members. This team member is well-respected by many Indigenous communities within Edmonton, and the research team was confident that the participants would feel comfortable sharing their knowledge with her.

Identification of relevant research questions. Initial findings from the sharing circles highlighted Indigenous community members' interest in more research that is focused on addressing the barriers to physical activity and sport participation (e.g., cost, racism) for Indigenous youth. More specifically, participants described the many benefits of sport participation for Indigenous youth and argued for the need to move beyond research that merely identifies barriers to research that explores the role of communities in addressing such barriers. The need to focus on youth sport, rather than physical activity, also emerged from the sharing circles. Sport Canada's Policy on Aboriginal Peoples Participation in Sport (Canadian Heritage, 2005) describes how the holistic perspective held by many Indigenous peoples does not support the distinction of the terms sport, physical activity, and recreation. Regardless of the manner in which the terms may be intertwined, the knowledge generated in the sharing circles, highlighted the need for our CBPR project to focus on youth *sport* rather than physical activity. By shifting our focus and using the term sport, our research team demonstrated our commitment to engaging in research that is meaningful and respectful to the knowledge shared by our Indigenous partners.

It is important to note that although the participants did describe the importance of 'incorporating our culture' into sport and physical activity (McHugh, 2011, p. 299), most of the stories shared by participants in the sharing circles were focused on Euro-Canadian sports, such as ice hockey and basketball. Forsyth (2007) argued that Indigenous peoples' conceptualizations of sport might be influenced by westernized

messages that legitimize certain sports (e.g., ice hockey). For example, although Dene and Inuit games are incorporated into the official completion schedules at the AWG, within other major sporting events (e.g., Canada Games) such activities are only included in the cultural program. Forsyth (2007) argued that the exclusion of Indigenous games from the official completion schedule sends a specific message about what actually constitutes sport. By listening to the stories of participants in sharing circles, our research team gained a deeper understanding of the manner in which sport is conceptualized and described by some Indigenous youth and partners.

Throughout the sharing circles participants emphasized the need for research that incorporates sport, community, and culture. By listening to the words of community members, the research team identified the research question that is currently guiding our CBPR project. As such, our current guiding CBPR question is focused on exploring how communities can support sport opportunities for Indigenous youth. Sharing circles served as a culturally-respectful form of research engagement and also as a process for actively engaging Indigenous community members in the identification of relevant research questions and, ultimately, the research process.

Photovoice

As our CBPR project became focused on supporting sport opportunities for Indigenous youth, our collaborative research efforts enabled us to obtain a second grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. Driven by the research question that emerged from sharing circles with Indigenous community members, we are working to better understand how communities can support sport opportunities for urban Indigenous youth. However, in doing so, our research team had to take a step back to ensure that we do not perpetuate Eurocentric assumptions around the meanings of sport and community for Indigenous youth. Indigenous voices have rarely been the focus of sport research, and our ongoing research with Indigenous youth suggests that the term sport likely holds various meanings for the diverse population of youth in Canada. The words that are often used in Euro-North American language and research are often viewed as self-evident and the complex meanings and histories of such words often go unexamined (Fox, 2007). Optimizing on a unique opportunity that was presented to our research team by one of our Cree⁴ elder research team members, we engaged in a photovoice project to explore the meanings of sport to urban Indigenous youth.

Incorporation of decolonizing research approaches. Photovoice has been described as a decolonizing and participatory approach to research, which is often used to balance power and build trust among researchers and communities (Castleden, Garvin, & Huu-ay-aht First Nation, 2008). Within a photovoice approach participants use photographs, which are then accompanied by personal narratives, to share their knowledge (Wang & Burris 1997). As such, this research approach supports the active involvement of participants in the research process (Castleden et al., 2008). The inclusionary and decolonizing aspects of a photovoice approach ensures that Indigenous knowledge is at the center of research (Poudrier & Mac-Lean, 2009). Specifically, when compared to other research that can position research participants as 'passive victims' that are studied by outsiders, photovoice positions participants as 'empowered activists' within their own communities (Poudrier & Mac-Lean, p.309). Researchers have used photovoice to explore the health of Indigenous youth (e.g., Shea, Poudrier, Chad, & Atcheynum, 2011). As well, researchers have used photovoice to explore the sport experiences of the general student population (e.g., Pope, 2010). Our photovoice extended the sport literature by focusing on the unique experiences of Indigenous youth. Specifically, photovoice was used in our CBPR project to better understand the meanings of sport to Indigenous youth in Edmonton, Alberta.

There is an identified need to better understand the meanings of sport to Indigenous youth (Paraschak, 2013), and findings from our

photovoice provide insights into the complex meanings of sport to urban Indigenous youth. Through photographs and supporting narratives, participants described sport as ‘fun’, ‘believing in yourself’, and ‘activities I’ve grown up playing’ (McHugh, Coppola, et al., 2013, p. 297). Similar to participants in the sharing circles (McHugh, Kingsley, et al., 2013), participants shared examples of contemporary sports (e.g., volleyball, ice hockey). Furthermore, they emphasized how sport means ‘being with nature and others’, suggesting that their meanings of sport are influenced by their traditional or indigenous knowledge (McHugh, Coppola, et al., 2013, p.301). The detailed descriptions of participants’ meanings of sport that were derived from photographs and supporting narratives provide a necessary understanding and foundation for moving forward in our CBPR project that is focused on enhancing sport opportunities for Indigenous youth.

Respect of cultural protocols and traditions. In addition to better understanding meanings of sport, the *processes* that were incorporated into this photovoice project were also deemed (by the research team and participants) an equally important component of our CBPR. Specifically, sharing circles were used as a culturally respectful process for supporting participants in sharing their narratives about their photographs (McHugh, Coppola, et al., 2013). The sharing circles were led by a Cree elder and a graduate research assistant, both of whom are part of the research team. To support Indigenous cultural protocols and traditions, the sharing circles were opened with the elder being presented with a package of natural tobacco. This tobacco served as an offering of peace and thanks to the elder for sharing her knowledge in the sharing circles. As well, to the close the sharing circles and to thank the participants for sharing their knowledge, all participants were offered a feast that consisted of cheeses, meats, fruits, and vegetables. The incorporation of these cultural protocols supported our research teams’ efforts to ensure that we are engaging in respectful and mutually beneficial sport research with Indigenous youth. Furthermore, the youth participants described how much they enjoyed the photovoice and even asked when they would be provided with another opportunity to engage in such research (McHugh, Coppola, et al., 2013). Consistent with Smith’s (2005) contention that the research process is often more important than the outcomes for Indigenous peoples, our research team is confident that the processes (rather than the findings) are what made this photovoice so enjoyable to the youth.

Conclusion

Findings from the various projects embedded within our CBPR with Indigenous youth have made valuable contributions to the sport literature (e.g., McHugh, 2011; McHugh, Coppola, et al., 2013; McHugh, Kingsley, et al., 2013). The lessons learned from the processes of these various emergent projects also make a significant contribution to the sport literature. Specifically, our research provides direction for ensuring that Indigenous youth are included as equal partners in sport research. For too long the unique voices and experiences of Indigenous youth have been overlooked in the sport literature and by incorporating voice-centered methods of data generation, our research (e.g., McHugh, 2011) demonstrates how researchers can respect Indigenous youth as the experts of their physical activity and sport experiences. Our research also serves as a practical example of how to include Indigenous community members in *all* phases of the research process, including the identification of relevant research questions (e.g., McHugh, Kingsley et al., 2013). This partnership approach is necessary for engaging in respectful and relevant research with Indigenous peoples. Again, Indigenous youth are rarely the focus of sport research and it is necessary to ensure that there are meaningful and relevant outcomes for all those involved. By engaging Indigenous community members in sharing circles, relevant research questions and terminology were identified, subsequently providing the foundation for a successful CBPR project. Finally, our processes of ongoing relationship building with Indigenous youth and community members, combined with the incorporation of

cultural protocols and the inclusion of decolonizing data generation approaches, provide evidence of our commitment to engaging in meaningful sport research with Indigenous youth.

Despite the many strengths of the research we have described, it is also important to acknowledge the limitations and challenges associated with such research approaches. In particular, our research team is confident that the methods we have used (e.g., interviews, sharing circles, photovoice) have been successful primarily because of the relationships we have developed with participants. The development of relationships is very time consuming and even though there may be good intentions by all parties, not all efforts result in meaningful relationships. We are not suggesting that researchers forego the pursuit of such relationships or research approaches in fear of the time commitment that is required. However, with pressures to publish research and time restrictions for certain research funding opportunities it is necessary to consider ways to address such external demands (e.g., publish papers that document the research process and not just results), while at the same time respecting the rights of participants to be engaged through meaningful relationships.

Our sport research with Indigenous youth has identified some critical areas for future research that need to be addressed. Throughout our program of research we have been committed to working with Indigenous youth, but challenges associated with engaging youth in such processes have been acknowledged (McHugh, Coppola et al., 2013). There is a continued need for more research that seeks to better understand ways to *engage* Indigenous youth in sport research and programming, and we hope our research contributes to conversations of this subject. Finally, there is a need to expand sport research with Indigenous youth to include those (e.g., Indigenous youth in Northern Canada) who engage in traditional games and sports (e.g., Dene games). Indeed researchers (e.g., Heine, 2013) have described the practice and culture of such sports, but few researchers have provided in-depth insight into Indigenous youths’ experiences of traditional games. Such research may provide valuable insights into ways to enhance sport opportunities for all Indigenous youth.

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(Footnotes)

¹ Indigenous peoples in Canada are often referred to as Ab original peoples. Aboriginal peoples are those individuals who identify as First Nations, Metis, or Inuit (Statistics Canada, 2006).

² There are a total of 617 First Nation communities in Canada (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, 2013).

³ In an effort to ensure the anonymity of youth participants, the identifying information of our adult partner has not been shared.

⁴ The Plains Cree (or Nehiyaw) are an Indigenous subgroup, situated on the northern Plains of what is now Western Canada, that are part of a much larger Algonquian linguistic group whose traditional territories spread across much of Canada. The Cree in our study region were signatories to Treaty #6 and constitute the largest Indigenous people today. For a recent discussion of Cree history in western Canada, see Innes (2013).