

1 **Supporting Indigenous Youth Activity Programmes: A Community-Based Participatory**  
2 **Research Approach**

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38 **Supporting Indigenous Youth Activity Programmes: A Community-Based Participatory**  
39 **Research Approach**

40 The purpose of this three-year, multi-phase community-based participatory research (CBPR)  
41 programme was to explore how to support Indigenous youth activity programmes and  
42 programme planners in Alberta, Canada. This CBPR programme was comprised of five phases:  
43 (1) Identifying mutual interests and learning how to partner, (2) Building culturally-relevant  
44 activity programmes with and for youth, (3) Defining CBPR programme goals and  
45 understanding our roles, (4) Exploring how to support Indigenous youth activity programmes,  
46 and (5) Applying and informing practices for supporting Indigenous youth activity programmes.  
47 Phases Four and Five of this CBPR are the focus of this paper. Phase Four was an exploration of  
48 programme planners' experiences of, and recommendations for, building partnerships and  
49 programmes to identify how to support Indigenous youth activity programmes and programme  
50 planners. Fifteen programme planners from four urban areas in Alberta participated in one-on-  
51 one interviews. Findings are represented by three themes: (1) Building capacity for collaboration  
52 and programme planning, (2) Connecting partners and existing programmes, and (3) Aligning  
53 and integrating goals and resources with existing programmes. Phase Five, the application phase  
54 of this CBPR, involved the co-development of a gathering event to apply areas for support (i.e.,  
55 themes) from Phase Four of this CBPR, as well as to reflect on the strengths and challenges of  
56 applying such supports. Partners can use implications from the research programme processes  
57 and outcomes to explore their role in and practices for supporting these programmes.

58 *Keywords:* Indigenous youth, Aboriginal youth, activity, holistic health, capacity-building,  
59 networking, partnerships, community-based participatory research, qualitative research, action  
60 research

**61 Introduction**

62 Activity programmes, which include physical activity (PA), sport, or recreation initiatives, have  
63 been described as beneficial and relevant to the holistic development of Indigenous<sup>1</sup> youth<sup>2</sup> (e.g.,  
64 Hanna 2009; McHugh, Deal, Blye, Dimler, Halpenny, Sivak and Holt 2018). Specifically, youth  
65 have described the perceived emotional, physical, mental, and spiritual benefits of activity  
66 programmes<sup>3</sup> (e.g., McHugh *et al.* 2018). For example, Indigenous youth have shared that  
67 mental benefits, such as communication skills, are fostered through sport and recreation  
68 (McHugh 2011). Indigenous youth have commonly described their activity experiences as being  
69 fun and making them happy, exemplifying the emotional benefits from these experiences (e.g.,  
70 Halas, McRae and Petherick 2012). There is also evidence of the important role of cultural  
71 activities in this context, such as powwow (Kerpan and Humbert 2015), praying, and teachings  
72 from Elders (Sasakamoose, Scerbe, Wenaus and Scandrett 2016), which youth have perceived as  
73 spiritual health benefits. Lastly, youth have shared their perceived physical benefits from  
74 activity, such as a reduced likelihood for diabetes (Tang, Community Wellness Programmes and  
75 Jardine 2016), and the importance of making good health choices to perform an activity well  
76 (Petrucka, Bickford, Bassendowski, Goodwill, Wajunta and Yuzicappi *et al.* 2016).

77 In addition to the potential holistic health benefits that can be experienced through  
78 activity programmes, negative experiences of racism, bullying, or exclusion have also been  
79 reported (Bruner, Hillier, Baillie, Lavallee, Bruner and Hare *et al.* 2016), making the context in

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<sup>1</sup> The term ‘Indigenous’ is used when referring to peoples and youth who are native to a land or country. In a Canadian context, this also is inclusive of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Peoples.

<sup>2</sup> In this paper and research projects cited in this paper, the age of youth reported being involved in activity, sport, and/or recreation programmes and studies ranged from age 5 to 19 years.

<sup>3</sup> ‘Activity programmes’ include any planned activities or initiatives that include the promotion of physical activity for youth within a community.

80 which activity occurs important to both youth and programme development. Activity  
81 opportunities have the potential to foster spaces for the positive development of Indigenous  
82 youth when these spaces promote holistic health, traditional culture and values, connections to  
83 the land (e.g., hunting and fishing), and relationships to Indigenous communities (e.g., family  
84 and community member support; Bruner *et al.* 2016; Hanna 2009; McHugh *et al.* 2018).  
85 Furthermore, those promoting or facilitating activity opportunities should also address social  
86 (e.g., exclusion, racism), financial (e.g., registration and travel), and physical (e.g., facilities, lack  
87 of cultural relevance) barriers to participation (McHugh *et al.* 2018).

88         Community-based researchers and practitioners have created and/or informed the  
89 development of Indigenous youth activity programmes using community-based and collaborative  
90 approaches (e.g., Blodgett, Schinke, Fisher, George, Peltier and Ritchie *et al.*, 2008; McHugh,  
91 Coppola and Sinclair 2013; Schinke, Yungblut, Blodgett, Eys, Peltier and Ritchie *et al.* 2010).  
92 Collaboration involves relationships between Indigenous youth, communities, and partners<sup>4</sup> who  
93 can put the pieces together to facilitate programme development that elicits positive experiences  
94 for Indigenous youth (e.g., Blodgett *et al.* 2008). Collaboration is particularly important when  
95 working with Indigenous communities because of their right to self-determination of decisions  
96 and programmes concerning their lives and wellbeing (Smith 2012). For example, McHugh and  
97 colleagues (2013) worked with community members to develop relevant PA-based research  
98 questions with communities, and findings from this research subsequently informed local  
99 Indigenous youth activity programmes. In these collaborative approaches, community members  
100 partnered with community-based researchers and/or practitioners whose roles support

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<sup>4</sup> The term “partners” refers to any person or organization who seeks to or is currently collaborating with Indigenous youth activity programmes or programme planners. If a specific partner is being referred to, the type of partner or partnership is elaborated on.

101 community members to inform or develop activity programmes that Indigenous youth and  
102 communities may benefit from.

103         The purpose of this three-year, multi-phase community-based participatory research  
104 (CBPR) programme was to explore how to support Indigenous youth activity programmes and  
105 programme planners in Alberta, Canada. The research questions that guided this CBPR included:  
106 (a) What are Alberta Indigenous youth activity programme planners' experiences of building  
107 (i.e., co-creating and engaging in) partnerships and programmes? (b) What are Alberta  
108 Indigenous youth activity programme planners' recommendations for building partnerships and  
109 programmes? Gaining a better understanding of how to support Indigenous youth activity  
110 programmes and programme planners can inform community-based practitioners' and  
111 policymakers' collaborative practices.

112         This CBPR was created from my (AMC<sup>5</sup>) long-term experiences of working with, and  
113 learning from, an Indigenous Elder and youth in urban school-communities. After a couple years  
114 of community engagement and reflections of cultural humility (i.e., my constant reflections of  
115 my role, and relational and methodological practices in the CBPR; see Coppola & McHugh 2016  
116 for an example), I realised that I was not meant to deliver programme outcomes in communities,  
117 rather my role was to learn how to support my research and programme partners in their journey  
118 of facilitating or promoting activity programmes among Indigenous youth. In this paper, the five  
119 phases of a CBPR programme are described, with Phases Four and Five being the focus of this  
120 paper.

## 121 **Community-Based Participatory Research Method**

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<sup>5</sup> 'My' or 'I' in this paper refers to the first author.

122 A CBPR framework (Israel *et al.* 1998) is conceptualised as a partnership approach that  
123 equitably involves academic and non-academic partners in all phases of the research process.  
124 Each partner contributes their expertise and knowledge to understanding the community issue  
125 and enhancing the wellbeing of a community (Israel *et al.* 1998). Given this is a collaborative  
126 method which involves the inclusion of research practices, Israel and colleagues (2005) have  
127 offered several principles, such as building relationships and community partnerships, to guide  
128 the development and implementation of CBPR. Specific to CBPR with Indigenous Peoples,  
129 Fletcher (2003) describes how developing a self-determined research agenda involves the  
130 identification of community needs and the discussion and development of a research  
131 relationship.

132 As described in the following sections, various research partners were involved  
133 throughout the five phases of this CBPR. The research partners identified with diverse ethnic  
134 backgrounds including Indigenous backgrounds, such as Cree, Mi'kmaw, and Metis Peoples.  
135 Indigenous Peoples and community members have a right to decision-making in research or  
136 programmes that concern their community and wellbeing (Smith 2012), and this CBPR approach  
137 facilitated the development of a research agenda and the inclusion of community members who  
138 participated as research partners throughout the research process. A CBPR approach also aligns  
139 with the first author's research paradigm. I identify as a Caucasian-American woman, and a  
140 feminist participatory researcher. Specifically, my feminist perspective facilitates a balancing of  
141 power dynamics, which is important as I and my ancestors have not experienced colonisation.  
142 Feminist research from a participatory approach stresses the need for inclusion, participation,  
143 action, social change, research reflexivity, and placing the experiences and perspectives of  
144 participants at the core of the research (Frisby, Reid, Millar and Hoerber 2005; Reid 2004).

145 Conducting research from a feminist participatory research paradigm has enhanced my process  
146 of cultural humility (Tervalon & Murray-Garcia 1998) and building long-term research  
147 partnerships with those who have different experiences (e.g., racial marginalisation) and  
148 perspectives (e.g., Indigenous ways of knowing) than my own. Thus, my role is to support  
149 Indigenous Peoples' and community members' perspectives and voices as partners in CBPR, and  
150 to facilitate their engagement and decision-making in the research process. NLH and TLFM  
151 served as advisors and mentors to the first author, guiding her through partnership and  
152 methodology decisions.

153 While there is no specific set of guidelines for engaging in CBPR, researchers (e.g.,  
154 Israel, Eng, Schulz and Parker 2005) have identified five phases to guide the development of a  
155 CBPR programme. The phases are broadly named and described, and can be renamed to be  
156 context-specific. The first phase is 'partnership formation and maintenance,' which is described  
157 as the fundamental phase that involves assessing and reflecting on each members' capacities,  
158 learning each partners' needs and interests, and working together to achieve mutual goals, and  
159 was renamed in this study as *Phase One: Identifying Mutual Interests and Learning how to*  
160 *Partner*. During the second 'community assessment and diagnosis' phase, CBPR partners gain  
161 an understanding of the relevant needs of the community based on a mutual area of focus or  
162 study. CBPR partners also identify a community assessment or consultation procedure. This  
163 phase was renamed *Phase Two: Building Culturally-Relevant Activity Programmes with and for*  
164 *Youth*. The third phase, 'definition of the issue,' involves the use of relevant data collection  
165 methods to formally refine the focus of the research partnership. This phase was titled *Phase*  
166 *Three: Defining CBPR Programme Goals and Understanding Our Roles*. In the fourth phase,  
167 'documentation and evaluation of the partnership process,' the research goals and design are



168 implemented, CBPR partners identify a balance between knowledge and action, and re-assess the  
169 mutual benefits of the partnership. This phase was renamed *Phase Four: Exploring How to*  
170 *Support Indigenous Youth Activity Programmes*. The ‘feedback, interpretation, dissemination,  
171 and application of results’ phase includes the collaborative development of the application of  
172 results, and an exploration of the feedback, strengths, and challenges of the application. This  
173 phase was contextualised as *Phase Five: Applying and Informing Practices for Supporting*  
174 *Indigenous Youth Activity Programmes*.

### 175 **Phase One: Identifying Mutual Interests and Learning How to Partner**

176 In the Winter of 2012, I began volunteering in a Junior-High/High School Indigenous  
177 Studies class taught by Marie (pseudonym), a Cree Elder. I helped her set up and implement  
178 activities in the class, however, it was not until I volunteered for a month that we had our first  
179 personal conversation. She asked me if I would like to bead with her and the students. Although I  
180 have poor craft skills, I agreed to it. After she gave me materials and showed me how to bead, I  
181 started working on my own project. Thirty-minutes later, we laughed together for the first time  
182 while looking at the result of my poor technique. Over the next couple months, Marie and I  
183 started to get to know one another and our mutual interests. We talked about the importance of  
184 connecting youth to Indigenous culture and traditions. Alongside the students, I learned about  
185 colonisation and the importance of Indigenous cultural revitalisation. Marie and I learned about  
186 our areas of interest and expertise. Her interests included traditional games and sport promotion,  
187 and connecting youth to culture. I was broadly interested in building relevant activity  
188 programmes with and for youth. My capacities or expertise were my knowledge of research  
189 practices, and my strengths in developing and facilitating youth sport activities. Her capacities or  
190 expertise were traditional Cree knowledges and practices, including traditional games

191 instruction. She also knew local and relevant issues in the Indigenous youth community in  
192 Edmonton as an educator and Elder. Combining our interests, Marie and I worked closely with  
193 youth to learn about Indigenous youths' meanings of sport (McHugh *et al.* 2013).

194 While collaborating to plan a 'sport sampler' event and a photovoice project, we learned  
195 how to work and research together. Marie and I had discussions about relevant research and  
196 ethical practices in the community as well as university ethics processes. We learned the  
197 importance of communication and specifically what each other should know before events or  
198 research activities are implemented. For instance, after a miscommunication about data  
199 collection, I learned how important it was to discuss recording purposes and, specifically, when  
200 and why recording would occur. Fueling our work was our mutual interests and values of  
201 cultural knowledge and traditions, and Cree language education through physical activities for  
202 youth. The research partners at this time consisted of myself, Marie, and Indigenous youth.

### 203 **Phase Two: Building Culturally-Relevant Activity Programmes with and for Youth**

204 In the second phase of this CBPR Marie and I developed an activity programme with and  
205 for Indigenous youth. Marie and I met to discuss the goals and components of the programme.  
206 First, our programme goal was to promote cultural revitalisation and culturally-relevant sport and  
207 PA opportunities for youth. We created the Cree sport programme, wherein I would identify  
208 activities for the grade one and two youth, and consult with them (as our partners) to see if they  
209 liked the activity. Marie would then translate components of activities into the Cree language.  
210 For instance, we planned a jungle obstacle course. Marie translated verbs like jump, throw, and  
211 run in the obstacle course instructions so that students could learn the language while engaging  
212 in activity. The youth enjoyed a version of the game Gopher Tag. In Gopher Tag, the youth  
213 played a regular game of tag and were considered 'safe' if they were in a 'gopher hole' or hula

214 hoop. If a youth wanted to switch with another in a ‘gopher hole,’ she would high-five her and  
215 say, ‘tanisi miscanaskos’ which translates to ‘Hello, Gopher.’

216 From our perspectives, the strengths of this programme were the ease of implementation,  
217 and the youth’s consultation and informal feedback. One key challenge was identifying *how* to  
218 promote this type of programming and *how* community members could partner to share  
219 resources, and enhance relevancy and sustainability. In order to address these “how” questions,  
220 Marie and I knew we needed to consult with additional community members. We applied for and  
221 received a grant from the Interdisciplinary Health Research Academy at the University of  
222 Alberta to support the hosting of community consultations. The implementation and outcomes of  
223 the community consultations are described in the following third phase of this CBPR  
224 programme.

### 225 **Phase Three: Defining CBPR Programme Goals and Understanding our Roles**

226 As is recommended by Israel and colleagues (2005), relevant data collection methods  
227 were identified and used to formally refine the focus of the CBPR programme. Community  
228 consultations were identified by Marie and a newly formed advisory group of Elders and  
229 community members as relevant and respectful practices for gathering knowledge. Marie and I  
230 provided peace offerings (i.e., blankets, tobacco, and cloth) to the advisory group members, and  
231 these members served to guide the purpose, agenda, and traditional ceremony practices for the  
232 gatherings. Four community consultations were attended by approximately 30 community  
233 members including Elders, Indigenous youth, parents, social workers, teachers, and members  
234 from organisations, such as the City of Edmonton, and Alberta Recreation and Parks Association  
235 (see Coppola & McHugh 2016). Ultimately, Marie and I learned through the consultations that

236 these community members wanted to engage in Indigenous youth activity programmes, but were  
237 not sure *how* to partner with programmes or what programme supports are needed.

238 Marie, myself, and a group of approximately 15 interested consultation participants co-  
239 created a research purpose that would support us in addressing this gap in knowledge. We also  
240 discussed that my role would be to lead the subsequent “research-focused” phase (i.e., Phase  
241 Four described in the following section), and that I would share the findings with our research  
242 partners, research participants, and any community members interested in engaging in  
243 Indigenous youth activity programmes. The processes of data generation (i.e., interviews), and  
244 sampling of participants who have played a role in creating and implementing Indigenous youth  
245 activity programmes were also confirmed.

#### 246 **Phase Four: Exploring How to Support Indigenous Youth Activity Programmes**

247 The purpose of this fourth phase was to understand how to support programmes and programme  
248 planners by exploring Indigenous youth activity programme planners’ experiences of, and  
249 recommendations for, building partnerships and programmes. Fifteen programme planners (12  
250 women and three men) from Alberta, Canada were purposefully selected to participate in this  
251 phase of the CBPR programme. Purposive sampling involves the recruitment of individuals who  
252 can speak to a specific experience to better understand a phenomenon of interest (Mayan 2009).  
253 Thus, individuals who had current or previous experiences of co-creating (i.e., collaborating and  
254 engaging with partners to develop and implement) Indigenous youth activity programmes were  
255 invited to participate. The participants’ experiences with activity programmes ranged from five  
256 to 20 years, with programming taking place at friendship centres, schools, or non-profit  
257 organisations. These programmes promoted overall health, PA, cultural teachings, and self-  
258 identity. Participants identified as First Nations, Métis, and non-indigenous Peoples. Their

259 experiences ranged from school to community programming on reserves near urban areas or in  
260 urban areas of Alberta, with a couple participants drawing on experiences in the Northwest  
261 Territories as well. Their experiences were rooted in a collaborative approach, and ensured  
262 connections to culture and traditions, as well as their respective communities. Pseudonyms are  
263 used to protect the participants' identity.

#### 264 ***Data Generation***

265 Upon institutional Research Ethics Board approval, all participants engaged in one-on-one semi-  
266 structured interviews at their convenience. One-on-one interviews seek the participants'  
267 interpretation of their personal experiences of social phenomena (Dicicco-Bloom and Crabtree  
268 2006; Mayan 2009), which in this phase was their experiences of building (i.e., co-creating and  
269 engaging in) partnerships and programmes. One participant also engaged in a follow-up  
270 interview, and three engaged in follow-up email discussions. A semi-structured interview guide  
271 was developed based on suggestions from consultation community members from Phase Three,  
272 and piloted with an Indigenous youth activity programme planner. The interview guide included  
273 questions about creating partnerships and programmes with partners (e.g., How did you and  
274 partners co-create the programme? What were the facilitators and challenges? What are your  
275 recommendations for creating partnerships and programmes?), and engaging partners in  
276 programming (e.g., Please describe your process of engaging community members and youth in  
277 this programme).

278         The average interview duration was 66 minutes and approximately 18 hours of interviews  
279 including follow-up interviews were generated. Each participant received \$10 amazon.ca e-gift  
280 cards for each hour of participation for contributing their time and knowledge. Interviews were  
281 conducted face-to-face in the participants' respective communities or via conference call

282 services. Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed by a professional transcription agency,  
283 and the first author then reviewed the completed transcriptions for accuracy. A reflexive journal  
284 was used to be responsive throughout the research process and to document the progression of  
285 data generation (Mayan 2009). Thus, interview reflections were noted to highlight the  
286 participants' key interview discussion points and messages.

### 287 *Data Analysis*

288 Transcripts were analysed using Morse's (1994) four processes of contextualising and  
289 recontextualising data for practical use. The first three processes comprised the contextualising  
290 phase. Specifically, the first process involves *comprehending* in which the researcher learns  
291 about the setting from the participants and usually begins with data collection and continues  
292 through analysis. The first author read and re-read the transcripts to summarise the general  
293 message that the participants' conveyed. Then, she coded the transcripts by analysing pieces of  
294 participants' descriptions for information that addressed the research purpose. For instance, one  
295 participant mentioned that programmes could benefit from reducing pods or silos of initiatives  
296 and resources, so this was coded 'reduce pods.' *Synthesising* the data is a process of merging  
297 participants' experiences to describe patterns in the data. Within this study, the first author  
298 reviewed the codes to identify patterns, and reflected on how the patterns address the research  
299 purpose. For instance, participants' shared specific training and professional development (PD)  
300 supports which was synthesised to 'training and PD.' *Theorising*, or considering why a  
301 researcher is seeing specific patterns, involves a review of other theoretical or empirical sources  
302 that align with the findings. In this research, CBPR principles most closely related to the  
303 experiences and recommendations of programme planners. For example, building capacity is a  
304 key principle of CBPR (Israel *et al.* 2005), and one of the themes or patterns in this research was

305 the recommendation to offer PD or capacity-building for programme evaluation. The generated  
306 knowledge is then used for *recontextualising* or synthesising into a form that is applicable to the  
307 context and other settings. The resulting themes are named and described to be applicable to  
308 Indigenous youth activity programme partnership and programme development practices.

### 309 ***Results***

310 This fourth phase of this research sought to better understand how to support programmes  
311 and programme planners by exploring Indigenous youth activity programme planners'  
312 experiences of, and recommendations for, building partnerships and programmes. The findings  
313 are represented by three themes: (a) Building capacity for collaboration and programme  
314 planning, (b) Connecting partners and existing programmes, and (c) Aligning and integrating  
315 goals and resources with existing programmes.

#### 316 *Building Capacity for Collaboration and Programme Planning*

317 The participants described and recommended the need for PD experiences that help them to build  
318 capacity to support their programmes. The two key areas identified for building capacity were  
319 collaboration and programme planning. In terms of collaboration participants described how  
320 communication skills are critical. In building collaborations, Saoirse explained how programme  
321 planners should communicate important aspects of their programmes, and can do so using key  
322 messages:

323 [You think about] the key parts of your programme and then your longer key messages  
324 that are anywhere from 2 to 30 minutes-what's most important for people to understand  
325 about our programme to be able to partner with us? So have a bullet list of maybe three or  
326 four points for each potential stakeholder that you think you'll have, so what would I say  
327 to youth about this?, what would I say to a school teacher about this?, what would I say to

328 a parent?, what would I say to a funder?

329 Programme planning was also identified as an area for building capacity. For instance,  
330 when describing the role of programmes in her community, Harper shared that ‘Programming  
331 and evaluation is important because we [programme planners] have to reflect on what we’re  
332 doing.’ When talking about her experiences of evaluation and identifying programme outcomes  
333 for grants, Saoirse said these typically include physical literacy skills, but there are also hard to  
334 measure outcomes that she and her partners would like to consider:

335 The less measureable outcomes, a lot of those come from the informal things like trust  
336 being built and just confidence. Like you see kids that show up, they’re so shy, and then  
337 by the end of the program...they’re really taking initiative and you can just see them  
338 totally opening up. Often one of the unplanned outcomes is that a lot of kids that we  
339 [programme planners] work with end up going back to school.

340 Taken together, these results provide examples of capacity-building efforts that partners can  
341 address in the context of Indigenous youth activity programmes. Because these are specific, it  
342 would be beneficial for partners to ensure the relevancy of certain capacity-building activities  
343 before providing these supports. This can be achieved by making connections to build  
344 partnerships with programme planners, which was the foundation of the second generated theme.

#### 345 *Connecting Partners and Existing Programmes*

346 The participants described the important role of connections between partners and to existing  
347 programmes, specifically, through networking and knowledge-sharing. Networking was  
348 described as fostering connections between programme planners and potential partners.  
349 Knowledge-sharing was described as sharing programme experiences and examples to inform  
350 programme practices. For instance, Tiffany described the importance of connections:



351 I've always focused my ideas and initial strategies around what the youth would want so  
352 of course that has always meant having to have those relationships in place already or  
353 having youth interested in talking to me and giving me direction to start with.

354 These connections were described as informal conversations (e.g., asking questions) to get to  
355 know one another, or even as larger gatherings to exchange information. As an example of  
356 informal connections, when asked about her experiences of engaging youth and community  
357 members in programmes, Superwoman said, 'I just like to connect with people on a personal  
358 level and, you know, get to know them. And asking them questions and being just in their life, so  
359 that's basically like what I do.'

360 Participants also explained how they would benefit by being connected to existing  
361 programmes, and being introduced to various activity programme options through  
362 demonstrations. For instance, when Cally discussed networking opportunities, specifically, she  
363 said:

364 I think having [a] demonstration with things that are happening, like whether it is a  
365 traditional game or having those kind of things shared is part of it too, just to give people  
366 an idea of what else is happening or some of these projects, and like little tidbits of what  
367 people are working on. I think that would be valuable.

368 Lauren described how she and her programme partners connect with partners through a monthly  
369 gathering, and said, 'we just come together and it's all about communication, it's all about how  
370 can we [programme planners and partners] help each other, and really it's about how are we  
371 better supporting our students?' Networking and knowledge-sharing between partners could  
372 involve discussions related to the next theme of aligning and integrating goals and resources with  
373 existing programmes.

374 *Aligning and Integrating Goals and Resources with Existing Programmes*

375           The participants recommended the need to reduce silos, combine programmes and  
376 resources, and build upon existing programmes. As stated by Joyce, ‘the community  
377 organisations aren’t connecting with the schools, and the schools are running their own  
378 [programmes].’ After describing the issues with recruiting youth for separate programmes  
379 running at the same time, she shared that programme planners ‘have a hard [time], ‘cause there’s  
380 no relationship...so I think we [programme planners] should be working together more, and you  
381 know supporting each other more. There needs to be more communication, more interagency  
382 work.’ The participants shared the importance of knowing existing programme goals and  
383 expectations, and your role in the programmes. Bowden said, ‘with the programme, you have to  
384 find your role,’ and went on to say that in the youth centre he worked, he played a supporting  
385 role in already existing programmes. He and his partners,’ ‘role was to support and add on to  
386 things, so if someone asked us to help out with this, we [co-programme planners] would be there.  
387 It is totally dependent on what’s there, and what’s going on already.’

388           Aligning programmes and resources was also described as an important recommendation  
389 because without alignment of priorities, there was added stress of sustaining the programme. The  
390 participants shared that there was a lack of alignment between some government or funders’  
391 priorities and the community priorities. For example, Briana stated:

392           [The government is] completely ignoring what the community is saying are issues and  
393 just focusing on what they think is an issue, and then just forcing the community through  
394 funding to provide programming that they think is important or relevant.

395 The participants shared that clear funding criteria, funding flexibility, combining programmes to  
396 share grant resources, and core (i.e., long-term or multi-year) funding would be beneficial to

397 existing programmes. Many of the programmes received pilot (short-term, one-year) funding,  
398 which was viewed as problematic, because if there is no continued support, there is no  
399 consistency for youth. It can also seem like programmes and programme planners are coming  
400 into communities and leaving quickly. When discussing her funding support, Stacy shared:

401       We prefer core funding because a lot of our programmes aren't just yearly based. Now, if  
402       there was the opportunity to do pilot funding and then have it turn into core funding so  
403       that a programme can be sustainable, that would be a lot better, whereas opposed to  
404       certain programmes, if you get pilot funding, it's only for a year. So you introduce a new  
405       programme to the community, well everybody loves it, at the end of the year it's kinda  
406       like OK, money's out, program's ended, that's it, that's all.

407 In summary, those partnering with Indigenous youth activity programmes might consider the  
408 resources they can share, and what role they can play in supporting existing programme goals.  
409 Funding partners should consider how to align priorities and the length of funding opportunities  
410 with the needs of communities offering Indigenous youth activity programmes.

#### 411 *Discussion*

412 The findings from Phase Four of this CBPR provide insight into how to support programmes and  
413 programme planners by building capacity, connecting partners, and aligning and integrating  
414 programme goals and resources, all of which are integral to partnerships and programmes with  
415 and for Indigenous Peoples (e.g., Ball and Janyst 2008; Fletcher 2003; Loppie-Reading and Wien  
416 2009). Broadly, capacity-building can be conceptualized as supporting community potential for  
417 responding to health issues (e.g., Chino and DeBruyn 2006). Based on the findings, it is  
418 recommended that partners begin exploring capacity-building for programme planning (e.g.,

419 evaluation) and collaboration (e.g., communication) skills that programme planners could use in  
420 the development and implementation of programmes.

421         Researchers adopting collaborative and participatory approaches draw upon mutual  
422 capacity-building (Ball and Janyst 2008) or co-learning (Israel, Schulz, Parker and Becker 2001)  
423 in which community members and their partners both share and receive knowledge to build  
424 specific skills needed to develop and implement a programme or service. Thus, this type of  
425 capacity-building can be adopted to promote programme sustainability (Hacker, Tendulkar,  
426 Rideout, Bhuiya, Trinh-Shevrin and Savage *et al.* 2012). In an indigenous context, mutual  
427 capacity-building is encouraged (Ball and Janyst 2008; Chino and DeBruyn 2006) to ensure that  
428 partners understand that their expertise (e.g., programme evaluation) is important, but there are  
429 knowledge and skills (e.g., traditional practices) to be learned from Indigenous community  
430 programme planners and/or members. Taking this into account, it is recommended that partners  
431 also explore what knowledge and skills they will need from community members or programme  
432 planners in the partnership to establish co-learning and mutual capacity-building.

433         Partnership-building with community members is key to developing Indigenous youth  
434 activity programmes (e.g., Blodgett *et al.* 2010). Therefore, connecting partners and existing  
435 programmes, specifically through networking and knowledge-sharing, support and extend upon  
436 the partnership-development literature in this context. Specifically, the study findings indicate  
437 that partners can support Indigenous youth activity programmes by facilitating connections  
438 between existing programmes and between programme planners and potential partners, and these  
439 connections might involve opportunities to network and share knowledge. These connections  
440 could also occur through informal discussions or through community gatherings or meetings.  
441 Ultimately, those supporting programmes can facilitate partnership-building, a key component to

442 the development in Indigenous youth activity programmes (e.g., Blodgett *et al.* 2010), by  
443 creating connections (e.g., community gatherings, meetings, and informal group discussions that  
444 include networking and knowledge-sharing activities) between existing programmes and  
445 between programme planners and potential partners.

446         Aligning and integrating programme goals and resources can support programmes and  
447 programme planners. Reading and Wien (2009) shared that a silo approach fails to address the  
448 health of Indigenous Peoples because it is inconsistent with their historically collectivist  
449 worldview and does not take into account the complexities or multiple determinants (e.g.,  
450 education, income) of health. Building upon Reading and Wien's (2009) discussion, partners  
451 might consider their complementary roles in existing Indigenous youth activity programmes  
452 instead of building new and separate programmes with similar missions. Furthermore, aligning  
453 programme goals and resources are important to ensure that partners are supporting the needs  
454 and priorities of communities and programme planners (e.g., Israel *et al.* 2005). The Indigenous  
455 youth activity programme planners in this study described funding providers as partners.  
456 Multiple participants shared that federal funding agencies focused on economic development  
457 programmes, however, community members wanted support for other community- or school-  
458 based holistic health programmes, which they perceived would facilitate economic development.  
459 Thus, funding partners can ensure that their priorities are consistent with community priorities  
460 (e.g., holistic health approach; Reading and Wien 2009) or have less strict funding criteria,  
461 recognising that Indigenous Peoples and communities should (and have a right to) determine  
462 their own initiatives (Smith 2012). Funding partners can also ensure more long-term as opposed  
463 to short-term or pilot funding opportunities are available.

464 **Phase Five: Applying and Informing Practices for Supporting Indigenous Youth Activity**  
465 **Programmes**

466 You have given life to a purpose and like a child, it needs to be nurtured, keep feeding...the child  
467 will mature. – *Anonymous participant from Phase Five*

468 As recommended by consultation community members in Phase Three, a preliminary analysis  
469 and report of the Phase Four research was shared with a group of consultation community  
470 members in Phase Three and research participants from Phase Four to facilitate discussions of  
471 how to apply the research findings. Such discussions supported the development of the fifth and  
472 final “application phase” of this CBPR programme, which involved a gathering event to support  
473 Indigenous youth activity programmes in Alberta. Three formal pre-gathering discussions were  
474 held with a group of 12 consultation community members from Phase Three and research  
475 participants from Phase Four to inform the development of the gathering, including the  
476 programme agenda and potential gathering participants. The main goal of the gathering was to  
477 apply recommendations (i.e., themes) from Phase Four of this CBPR, as well as to reflect on the  
478 strengths and challenges of applying such recommendations.

479 The gathering included approximately 35 attendees from various provincial and  
480 community organisations, university, education, and First Nations communities in Alberta. As  
481 requested by the pre-gathering discussion participants, an Indigenous leader shared traditional  
482 ceremonies, specifically prayer and smudge, to open and close our gathering and acknowledge  
483 community protocols. The gathering was held at a community hall in Edmonton, Alberta.  
484 Gathering participants were given a conference bag, food for lunch, and refreshments throughout  
485 the day. Previous research (e.g., Blodgett, Schinke, Fisher, Yungblut, Recollet-Saikkonen and  
486 Peltier *et al.* 2010; McHugh *et al.* 2013) has acknowledged the importance of respecting cultural

487 protocols, and included a feast and refreshments when conducting sharing circles with  
488 Indigenous youth to offer thanks for sharing their knowledge. The pre-gathering discussion  
489 participants and I also incorporated activity into the agenda to enhance opportunities for informal  
490 relationship-building and to simply be active. For instance, a walk in the river valley of  
491 Edmonton was an opportunity to engage in informal conversations about each other and our roles  
492 in programmes.

493 Two key components made up the gathering agenda: professional development (PD)  
494 speakers and open space technology discussions. The PD session topics (i.e., Connecting with  
495 Youth, Sustaining Programmes, and Promoting Stronger Interagency Support) were based on  
496 identified needs of participants that were highlighted in Phase Four and during the pre-gathering  
497 discussions. For the “Connecting with Youth” session, a community leader with over 12 years of  
498 experience engaging with youth as a fitness instructor, and a community athlete and programme  
499 developer shared their experiences and strategies for connecting with youth and the community.  
500 The “Sustaining Programmes” session included a community-based researcher and evaluator  
501 who shared knowledge and resources for conceptualising programme evaluations in a  
502 community setting. In the “Promoting Stronger Interagency Support” session, partners in the  
503 Mi’kmaq Physical Activity Leader (MPAL) programme (i.e., a MPAL and the Regional  
504 Physical Activity Consultant) shared their experiences of bridging the gap between the Nova  
505 Scotia government and Mi’kmaq communities to support PA opportunities. Open space  
506 technology (OST; Owen 1993), a highly engaging process whereby the attendees propose topics  
507 of discussion and facilitate those discussions with other attendees, was also used to provide a  
508 space for discussion of relevant issues related to Indigenous youth activity programmes.

509 Feedback was solicited, and twelve gathering participants filled out the feedback form.  
510 Gathering participants who provided feedback were primarily from university, non-profit  
511 organisations, and social services and heard about the gathering through word-of-mouth or email  
512 listserves. They attended the gathering primarily to network, to find support, and to learn from  
513 and engage with others. They shared their thoughts on components they found useful and  
514 beneficial, their ability to network, their key take-away points, and their next steps in supporting  
515 Indigenous youth activity programmes. Using the feedback, OST discussion outcomes, and my  
516 personal reflection, I identified outcomes, strengths, challenges, and recommendations for future  
517 application. The reflections were guided by the three areas of support identified in Phase Four.

518 The gathering participants who provided feedback reported that they learned and will  
519 apply skills and strategies shared in the professional development (PD) sessions, with many  
520 asking for future workshops, and one participant even volunteering to plan future gatherings.  
521 However, a barrier to understanding capacity-building in this setting was that I was unsure if the  
522 gathering participants applied knowledge and ideas even though they indicated they would.  
523 Therefore, scheduling follow-up interviews or programme visits is recommended in order to  
524 identify the strengths and limitations of applying knowledge in their context, and ultimately to  
525 provide long-term support.

526 A welcomed surprise and perceived strength of the gathering was that capacity was not  
527 only enhanced during PD sessions, but also during the OST (Owen 1993) discussions. Several  
528 gathering participants who provided feedback mentioned that they learned new ideas in OST  
529 sessions, and would apply the ideas in their own context, which was the ultimate goal of the  
530 gathering. For instance, one participant shared that she would apply learned community  
531 engagement strategies from an OST session, saying she took away ‘ideas for community



532 engagement,’ and would ‘like to apply some of the ideas with the families I work with.’ This  
533 indicates that pre-planned PD activities are important, but capacity-building also occurs through  
534 participant-driven activities and discussions (e.g., OST).

535 OST discussions fostered a space in which participants’ voices were heard and respected.  
536 When discussing open space discussions, a gathering participant who provided feedback shared  
537 that she ‘enjoyed them because it offered an open, safe atmosphere.’ OST discussions also  
538 facilitated genuine knowledge-sharing and networking between programme planners. One  
539 gathering participant who provided feedback summarised the relationship between OST and  
540 knowledge-sharing clearly, stating:

541 Open space sessions gave participants a chance to contribute as well as gain. Knowledge  
542 exchange is very valuable in each sector, not only for moving forward for ‘next steps,’  
543 but also just for affirmation and encouragement.

544 It was encouraging to see from participant feedback that this component of the agenda was  
545 deemed valuable. In my role, it was important to learn from the research programme partners and  
546 implement their ideas. Supporting findings from Bryson and Anderson (2000), a strength of OST  
547 is that the technique promotes a participant-driven agenda. A recommendation is to continue  
548 exploring the co-development and implementation of OST to support Indigenous youth activity  
549 programmes.

550 There was evidence that gathering participants considered their roles when sharing their  
551 next steps in programmes. For instance, one gathering participant stated, ‘I know I need to show  
552 up and be a role model [for youth], we [programme planners] as leaders and individuals need to  
553 be part of the change.’ Another shared that the most useful, valuable, and beneficial part of the  
554 gathering was ‘finding out what is going on in Alberta, [the] challenges, and how I can help.’

555 Therefore, it is recommended to continue prompting and promoting opportunities for partners  
556 and programme planners to consider their roles. Whereas role identification was evident, the  
557 gathering could have better facilitated the alignment and integration of goals and resources  
558 between programmes and partners. For instance, policymakers were invited, and there was a  
559 representative from the Ministry of Health. A couple representatives of the Legislative Assembly  
560 of Alberta were invited, and one representative RSVP'd, but did not attend. Thus, co-developing  
561 a plan for contacting and/or working with government representatives or decision makers to  
562 discuss collaboration or policy change to support programme planners is recommended.

### 563 **General Discussion**

564 This research offers a practical example of responsive participatory research that led to the  
565 identification and direct application of areas for supporting Indigenous youth activity  
566 programmes. Importantly, the findings from this research are inclusive of the voices of  
567 Indigenous peoples, and the research process and outcomes are timely for two main reasons.  
568 First, the findings might be useful to policymakers or community-based researchers and  
569 practitioners who collaborate with Indigenous Peoples to support and develop Indigenous sport  
570 policy, programmes, and initiatives in Canada. Second, the processes and outcomes of this  
571 research participatory research programme provide an example of inclusion of underrepresented  
572 populations, and a collaborative process of knowledge generation that can deepen our  
573 understandings of phenomena in qualitative research in sport, exercise, and health (McHugh  
574 2017).

575 The findings of this research contribute to the PA literature by identifying necessary  
576 considerations for supporting Indigenous youth activity programmes. Recent research has  
577 synthesised the sport and recreation experiences of Indigenous youth (McHugh *et al.* 2018) and

578 systematically reviewed research on the positive development of Indigenous youth through sport,  
579 activity, or recreation (Bruner *et al.* 2016). The aforementioned research outlined important  
580 factors that should be considered when developing Indigenous youth activity programmes, such  
581 as programmes that promote holistic health, integrate culture and traditions, and optimize on  
582 community relationships. This CBPR project adds to these recent reviews by identifying areas  
583 for supporting programmes and programme planners who work in these contexts (i.e., by  
584 building capacity for collaboration and programme planning, connecting partners and existing  
585 programmes, aligning and integrating goals and resources with existing programmes, and  
586 exploring the implementation of the aforementioned areas for support).

587         In addition to deepening understandings of how to support Indigenous youth activity  
588 programmes, this CBPR project also makes an important methodological contribution to the PA  
589 literature. I shared detailed descriptions and reflections on how I (as an academic partner)  
590 considered my role complementary to the role of my research programme partners. A  
591 recommendation for future researchers is to consider including such detail when describing not  
592 only CBPR projects, but other equally relational research projects, such as many qualitative  
593 studies. Furthermore, co-learning and capacity-building typically evolves as part of a  
594 participatory research programme (Israel *et al.* 2005), but is not always reflected on and reported.  
595 Informing McHugh's (2017) suggestions for deepening our understandings in qualitative  
596 research, exploring and reporting these pieces may contribute to a deeper understanding of the  
597 necessity and complexity of collaborative research.

598         National, provincial, and local policymakers and community-based practitioners that are  
599 hoping to support Indigenous youth activity programmes may benefit from these findings that  
600 can inform their roles in developing practices and policies with community members. One future

601 direction or recommendation is for researchers, community members, and policymakers to  
602 collaboratively explore how and where the findings can be shared. Knowledge-sharing or  
603 translation is important to bridge the gap between research and practice (CIHR 2014), and doing  
604 so with these findings can inform role identification in various positions when collaborating to  
605 develop Aboriginal sport, activity or recreation programmes and policies. That said, these  
606 findings may have international relevance as, for example, Sport and Recreation Victoria  
607 (Australia) promotes the Indigenous Sport and Recreation Programme with a mission to create  
608 sport and recreation opportunities that are inclusive of and accessible to Indigenous communities  
609 (Victoria State Government, 2017). Therefore, researchers, community-based practitioners, and  
610 policymakers in this context in other countries working collaboratively with programme planners  
611 may use the findings to explore how to support Indigenous youth activity programmes.

612         A key strength of this research was the rigor that was established as a result of the  
613 prolonged engagement with participants (Schinke, Smith and McGannon 2013). I facilitated a  
614 democratic and equitable process over time, promoting prolonged engagement of the research  
615 programme partners throughout this CBPR (Schinke *et al.* 2013). This helped me reflect on my  
616 responsiveness as a researcher (Morse *et al.* 2002) in which I would ask myself if research  
617 questions, methods, practices were relevant to the research programme partners and addressed  
618 the purpose of the research programme. If unsure, I would consult with the research programme  
619 partners. Despite the various contributions of this research, it also has some limitations, which  
620 have subsequently highlighted areas for future directions. For example, with the exception of one  
621 participant, single one-on-one interviews were conducted with participants in Phase Four of this  
622 CBPR project. To enhance the depth of experiences shared, future researchers might consider  
623 more iterative processes for data generation. As well, Phase Five of this CBPR project also had

624 some limitations. Despite the invitation of youth to participate in the gathering, there was very  
625 little representation from Indigenous youth. The purpose was to discuss how to better support  
626 Indigenous youth activity programmes in Alberta, and it would have been beneficial to have  
627 more youth voice and representation. In this programme, the Phases Four and Five participants  
628 were those who planned programmes with youth. However, Indigenous youth could have  
629 provided insight into their basic and holistic health needs, yielding a much richer experience for  
630 gathering participants. Thus, exploring youths' involvement and role in programme support  
631 initiatives in the future would be beneficial.

632 In conclusion, this research programme's processes and outcomes yielded several  
633 implications for supporting Indigenous youth activity programmes, and advancing  
634 understandings of collaboration in research, practice, and policy. This research programme  
635 outlines CBPR phases, specifically descriptions and reflections of the processes and outcomes of  
636 collaboration and identification of areas of support for Indigenous youth activity programmes.  
637 Based on the current CBPR process and outcomes, methodological and practical ideas are  
638 offered for elaborating on the process of Indigenous youth activity programme development  
639 (e.g., Bruner *et al.* 2016) and participatory research development (McHugh 2017).

640

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