

FROM THE SPECIAL EDITOR

Over the past several years, major funding agencies have begun to allocate research dollars to investigations intended to reduce lifestyle diseases (e.g., Type 2 diabetes) in Aboriginal populations. Though sport, recreation, and physical activity have all been shown to have impacts on many aspects of well-being, these activities rarely garner critical attention or funding unless they examine metabolic measures, such as body fat or insulin production. My frustration with the marginalization of sport, recreation, and physical activity within Aboriginal health research served as the impetus for this special issue.

What initially started as a project born out of frustration has developed into a collection of nine strong articles that challenge community members, sport and recreation leaders, health care practitioners, policymakers, educators, and scholars to consider more complex insights into the ways in which physical practices can serve to facilitate Aboriginal health.

While Giles, Baker, and Rousell's article focuses on the ways in which the NWT (and now Nunavut) Aquatics Program can be used to enhance physical activity, drowning prevention, and leadership development, it also points to the ways in which the Program's approach is tied tightly to Euro-Canadian, Southern-based understandings of water safety knowledge, health promotion, and leadership, all of which curtail the Program's effectiveness. Similarly, Forsyth's paper on sport for Aboriginal women exposes the different ways ideas about inclusion have been put into practice and shows how "sometimes, these ideas have the unintended effect of marginalizing and silencing the very people whom were meant to be empowered."

Though sport may not be inherently empowering, Lavallée's contribution illustrates the ways in which an Aboriginal-based martial arts program that uses the medicine wheel can bring one's life into balance and also be used to address the "unremitting trauma [that] has produced intergenerational 'post-traumatic effects' demonstrated today in many Indigenous communities."

Cargo et al.'s article also draws on the medicine wheel. Their findings suggest that there "may be some merit to promoting physical activity and reducing television watching through interventions that nurture wholistic health or balance rather than taking a pure problem-based approach to prevention" with youth in a Kanien'kehá:ka community.

Furthering this line of investigation, Kirby, Lévesque, and Wabano's paper provides a qualitative investigation of physical activity challenges and opportunities for residents of Moose Factory, Ontario. It illuminates the fact

that community members are the true experts on issues that pertain to their physical activity behaviours, and it thus makes a great deal of sense for community consultations to serve as the starting point for program planning.

Sutherland et al.'s paper also focuses on the process of gathering community input for physical activity programming for youth in the Mushkegowuk Territory. Together, Cargo et al.'s and Sutherland et al.'s papers help to address what Findlay and Kohen's article identifies as a dearth of information concerning Aboriginal children's participation in sport. Findlay and Kohen's findings suggest that "Aboriginal children are actively engaging in sport, although demographic, environmental, or cultural factors may affect rates of participation."

The theme of the need to recognize difference and challenge Pan-Aboriginal strategies that fail to account for many axes of difference can be found to varying degrees in all of the articles contained within this issue, but especially within Small's article and Nicholls and Giles's contribution. Small's report on recreation need for Aboriginal peoples is situated within the City of Calgary, while Nicholls and Giles's work on sport for development is situated within the global South, with applications pertaining to Aboriginal peoples in Canada. From global to local, both of these articles emphasize that the "one size fits all" approach is short-sighted and results in sub-optimal programming that fails to address Aboriginal peoples' health needs and broader issues of inequity in a meaningful fashion. Instead, we must work to understand local needs; certainly, the best way of understanding such needs is to go beyond prescriptive programming and move towards sport, recreation, and physical activity programming that is driven by locally identified needs and practices.

Together, the nine papers in this issue present kaleidoscopic views of the ways in which sport, recreation, and physical activity can be used by Aboriginal communities to obtain (w)holistic health. What started as an exercise in frustration became a labour of love. For that I would like to extend my sincere thanks to the authors, reviewers, and the general editors Nancy Gibson and Patii-LaBoucane-Benson, all of whom helped to ensure that this issue makes a vibrant contribution to our field.

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