

*Ec k yúcwementwecw-ep* (Take care of each other):

Exploring Sport in the Lives of Urban Living Indigenous Women

by

Megan McKenna

Bachelor of Kinesiology, University of the Fraser Valley, 2010.

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

in the School of Exercise Science, Physical Health & Education

©Megan McKenna, 2018

University of Victoria

All rights reserved. This thesis may not be reproduced in whole or in part, by photocopy  
or other means, without the permission of the author.

## **Supervisory Committee**

*Ec k yúcwementwecw-ep* (Take care of each other):  
Exploring Sport in the Lives of Urban Living Indigenous Women

by

Megan McKenna  
Bachelor of Kinesiology, University of the Fraser Valley, 2010.

### **Supervisory Committee**

Joan Wharf Higgins, Supervisor  
School of Exercise Science, Physical, and Health Education

Christine O'Bonsawin, Co-supervisor  
Department of History

## Abstract

This study explored the value of team sport in the lives of seven urban living/playing Indigenous women attending three open talking circles to discuss the influence of personal sport stories, definitions and experiences of wellness, and, prioritizing sport into adulthood. With a strengths-based approach and guided by the Indigenous methodologies that reflect the often-transformative journey of the Indigenous re-searcher, seven themes emerged from the stories, capturing the resilient and relational stories of these women: (1) *Cgwesgwsénk* (Sunny side of the mountain), acknowledges the overarching benefits of team sport participation and the strength-based perspective that the women shared. (2) *Ec k yúcwementwecw-ep* (Take care of each other), reflects the connectedness present in all of the women's stories, thus woven throughout the following five themes as well. (3) *Ye7éne ren ú7q'wi* (This is my sister), recognizes the sisterhood created through team sport in the city. (4) *Cnéwelc* (Follow the trail), captures the role model relationships the women shared as well as their feelings about being a role model. (5) *Letwílç* (Healthy once again), shares the views of wellness and how continually pursuing sport directly influences our wellness. (6) *Cíxelç* (Swim up-stream) acknowledges the many adversities for sport participation. Yet, the narrative revealed how women continue to overcome barriers in pursuit of sport. Finally, (7) *Cíxwtsnem* (Raise one's voice loudly), poses the question 'who needs to hear about this work and these stories of strength and sisterhood in sport in the city?' This work contributes to the relatively sparse body of literature acknowledging Indigenous women and

sport, and creates space for the voices of Indigenous women, both in the game and in the academy.

## Table of Contents

Supervisory Committee .....	ii
Abstract .....	iii
Table of Contents .....	v
Acknowledgments .....	vii
Dedication .....	viii
Glossary of Terms .....	ix
Chapter 1 .....	1
Self-Location .....	1
Introduction .....	3
Chapter 2 .....	6
Literature Review .....	6
Indigenous Women in Communities .....	7
Identity in Urban Cities .....	8
Indigenous Women as Role Models .....	11
Sport, Culture and Wellness .....	14
Indigenous Women in Sport .....	17
Conclusion .....	22
Chapter 3 .....	25
Methodology .....	25
Self-Location .....	27
The 4 R's of Relationality - Responsibility, Reciprocity, Relevance and Respect... ..	28
The Petal Flower .....	30
Storytelling .....	32
Methods .....	34
Participants and Recruitment .....	34
Story Collection .....	35
Data Management/Analysis .....	36
Ethical Considerations and Acknowledgement of Participants .....	38
Chapter 4 .....	40
Findings .....	40
Cgwesgwsénk (Sunny side of the mountain) .....	42
Ec k yúcwementwecw-ep (Take care of each other) .....	45
Ye7éne ren ú7qwi (This is my sister) .....	48
Cnéwelc (Follow the trail) .....	50
Letwílç (Healthy once again) .....	54
Cíxelc – (Swim up-stream) .....	57
Cíxwtsnem (Raise one's voice loudly) .....	60
Chapter 5 .....	64
Discussion .....	64
Strengths and Limitations .....	71
Looking Forward .....	73
References .....	76
Appendix A – #NoDAPL .....	87
Appendix B - Consent Forms .....	88
Appendix C - Open Talking Circle – Guiding Questions .....	94

Appendix D - Theme Flower ..... 95  
Appendix E -Talking Circle Word Cloud..... 96

## Acknowledgments

I must begin by acknowledging the women who made this work possible. Thank you for sharing your time, your energy and your laughter as we explored our stories about sport and life. What started out many years ago as a lingering question could not have come to light in this way without you. Steph, TA, Marianne, Lynai, Tami, Rayne, Dawson - Kukwstsétsemc.

I would also like to recognize the love and patience of my family and friends. You know who you are. Because of your boundless support, what started out as a daunting challenge turned into an incredible learning journey; I am so grateful I got to share it with each and every one of you – Kukwstsétsemc.

As well, my gratitude to all those who hold up the First Peoples House at the University of Victoria. The Elders, staff, students and faculty who so warmly welcomed me and supported my journey. I could not have imagined of a safer space to explore my academic dreams. I can truly call The House a home away from home -Kukwstsétsemc.

## Dedication

I dedicate this work to my mom and dad, for not telling but showing me how to live a good life. Witnessing your genuine love, and kindness for all who cross your path, and fearless commitment to your family has become so deeply rooted in my ways of knowing and being; because of this I am able to do this work today. Kukwstsétsemc.

To my partner Chris, I am so proud of you and your thesis work. Being grad students together was such an adventure. Your endless patience, love and laughter has made the highs, the lows, and everything in between, into a truly incredible story. I love you!

Finally, this work is dedicated to the warrior women of the past, present and future. To the women re-membering, re-claiming, re-connecting and resisting. Your power is felt everywhere; on the court, on the field, in the classroom, in our communities, across the land and water...your truth and courage inspires me every day.

Kukwstsétsemc.

## Glossary of Terms

**Indigenous** - In this document, I use Indigenous as a term inclusive of all First Peoples, (Inuit, Metis, and First Nations), or purely the people whose ancestors lived for millennia on the lands of Turtle Island, now known as Canada, before European colonization.

**Woman** -The use of the word woman speaks to any person who self identifies as female, associates with a female gender identity or chooses to utilize a feminine gender expression, informed by or regardless of biological sex.

**Wellness** - Elder Jerry Oldman, St'at'imc Nation from Tsal'alh shared these words with us at the 2017 Fit Nation 2.0 training program. “Wellness is the active pursuit of health. And the health we are pursuing is soundness of body mind and spirit” (Personal communication, December 5, 2017).

**Re-Search** - Anishinaabe kwe Kathleen Absolon (2011) acknowledges the colonial baggage the word ‘research’ carries. She presents the term ‘re-search’ as a reflection of Indigenous ways of searching, be it for knowledge, food or medicines. Throughout her book *Kaandossiwin: How we come to know* I felt connected to her use of re-search and its representation of ‘searching again’ from my own location. With gratitude, I borrow Absolon’s term ‘re-search’ in support of Indigenous ways of searching, knowing, and being.

**Sport** - While there are varying definitions of the word ‘sport’, the Oxford Dictionary (2018) states it is an “activity involving physical exertion and skill in which an individual or team competes against another or others for entertainment.” For the purpose of this document sport will be limited to team sport played at any level, on All Native or mainstream teams, for at least one season. As youth age out of sport programs, it

becomes more challenging to pursue team sport in adulthood, therefore this project only seeks the stories of women over the age of 20.

**Urban setting** - In the Canada 2011 Census, Statistics Canada re-designated urban areas with the new term "population centre"; the new term was chosen to better reflect the fact that urban versus rural is not a strict division, but rather a continuum within which several distinct settlement patterns may exist. Accordingly, the new definition set out three distinct types of population centres: small (population 1,000 to 29,999), medium (population 30,000 to 99,999) and large (population 100,000 or greater). Despite the change in terminology, however, the demographic definition of a population centre remains unchanged from that of an urban area: a population of at least 1,000 people where the density is no fewer than 400 persons per km<sup>2</sup> (Canada census, 2011). Though the sisterhood of Indigenous women playing team sport is felt across Turtle Island, this work connects those living/playing in the city of Victoria and greater Victoria region; which in 2016 had a population of 367,770 and ranked the 12<sup>th</sup> highest population center in Canada (Government of Canada, Statistics, 2016).

## Chapter 1

### Self-Location

*Weyt'k*

*Le7 re stskitsc. Megan McKenna ren skwest. Ren kwséltkten European ell*

*Secwepemc-ken ri7. Eileen McClennan re skwest.s ren kik7ece, Willian McKenna*

*re skwests ren qe7tse, ell Megan ren skwekwst. Te Stswecem'c Xgat'tem re*

*st'7e7kwen. Yiri7 re skukwstéc-kucw te skectéc-kucw te swumémc- Thank you for giving us life.<sup>1</sup>*

I would like to begin by sharing my gratitude for the opportunity to live, learn and play on these lands. I have been a visitor to the unceded, traditional and ancestral land of the Lekwungen and WS'ANEC' peoples for nearly six years now. I would like to recognize the Elders and loved ones whom support me in both my academic learning journey and my continual, personal journey of self-location. My family is of Secwepemc and settler ancestry. My mother is Eileen McKenna (McClennan) and my father is William McKenna. I am older sister to Matthew McKenna and Melanie Cardinal (McKenna), Auntie to Amelia and Augustine Cardinal and granddaughter to Ken and Irene McClenna (Robertson) of mixed European ancestry, and Leslie from Tk'emlúps and Evelyn McKenna (Gaspard) from Stswecem'c Xgat'tem.

As a born and raised urban living Indigenous woman, I have been fortunate to grow up surrounded by strong, educated women and committed, supportive men. This environment has had great influence on learning and understanding my ways as an

---

<sup>1</sup> I am a new Secwepemctsin learner, still in the very early stages of my language journey. The written language presented in this thesis has been translated from the online Aboriginal language database FirstVoices.com

athlete, re-searcher, programmer, partner, friend and woman. My mother graduated high school and immediately entered nursing school at the University of British Columbia. Her drive and commitment not only to her education and career but to raising a family of educated athletes played a great role in my story and why I am here today. My siblings and I grew up with the space to explore without question, the encouragement to take risks, and the support to rise strong from failure. We grew up playing sports. We tried all sports and competed at all levels. My father, with no coaching or personal team sport experience, signed up for all the coaching clinics he could and quickly became a prominent, long-standing member of our youth sport community. For over two decades my father was a dedicated coach, starting with minor league hockey and then switching to high school basketball teams. He is still recognized and respected throughout the community for the role he played in youth sport.

Growing up, our extended family was always close to our hearts but lived across Coast and Interior Salish lands, and because there was a limited cultural presence in our town, sport became our family's ceremony. Now as a thirty-one-year-old woman exploring our histories, and in the process, re-membling, re-awakening, re-searching and re-connecting with our people, I often reflect on the core values of respect, responsibility, reciprocity, relationship, and deeper ways of being and knowing that I was raised with, through sport.

*The woman is the foundation on which nations are built. She is the heart of her nation. If her heart is strong and her mind is clear then the nation is strong and knows its purpose. The woman is the centre of everything.*

*(Art Solomon, Ojibway Elder)*

## **Introduction**

As both academic and athlete, I and the women participating in this project have “learned and grown as a result of exploring our relationship with this topic” (Wilson, 2008, p. 69). The grounding intention of this work is greater than graduation; the motivation is to create the opportunity for likeminded women to connect in a safe space to share their stories, thus growing the female Indigenous sport sisterhood of Victoria, and possibly create new opportunities that are not yet offered in this city. As well, I follow past and present Indigenous women in re-search who are pushing academic discourse and expanding the space for future Indigenous women re-searchers to continue these conversations.

This study explores the value of team sport in the lives of urban living/playing Indigenous women. This exploration used three open talking circles to discuss our personal sport story and its significance in our lives as urban-living Indigenous women; how we define and experience wellness as it relates to sport and why we continue to prioritize sport into adulthood. This study is necessary and important for three reasons. First, it answers the calls to action laid down by Indigenous sport re-searchers Victoria Paraschak (1995), Janice Forsyth (2007) and together, Paraschak and Forsyth (2010), to

explore the many roles of Indigenous women in relation to sport and recreation and for Indigenous sportswomen to talk more extensively about their experiences. Secondly, the findings can be used to shape future sport programming and policy that is currently lacking for this population in the city of Victoria. Finally, this work responds and speaks to wider conversations concerning the resilience and wellness of Indigenous women. Our resilience directly contributes to our wellness, and the wellness of individuals, families, communities and nations.

In the following pages, the literature relevant to this re-search study is presented and discussed, including an introduction to the presence of women in Indigenous communities, the search for identity in an urban city, Indigenous women as role models for future generations, and an exploration of wellness, sport and culture. The literature review concludes with an exploration of Indigenous women in sport history and sport literature.

Following the literature review, I present the methodology and methods for this work. Indigenous ways of being and knowing ground the chosen methodologies and this re-search journey. I engaged with seven women who play sport in three talking circles to explore and share experiences and perspectives on the impact sport has on our lives in the city. Participants were invited to be part of the interpretation of the data gathered through the talking circles as well as in the dissemination of the findings.

I then go on to describe and detail the seven themes generated from the collected stories, and discuss them in relation to the current literature, limitations and strengths of the study, and conclude with future recommendations for re-search and implications for practice.

With the paradigm-shifting toward strength-based Indigenous re-search, I have consciously chosen not to locate my re-search within the known health disparities of Indigenous women. Instead, I hope to address a void in the discourse around the sisterhood of urban Indigenous sport and the space sport creates for women to re-connect in the city in spite of ongoing assimilative colonial practices. I intentionally work from a strength-based perspective to create space for the women “in the action”, the women playing their hearts out on the floor/field, the like-minded athletic Indigenous women committed to making time for sport in their busy adult lives. Aligning with Paraschak’s (1995) experience and stories collected by Stroanch, Maxwell, and Taylor (2016), my past experience in various roles as athlete, academic, coach, fan, organizer, teammate, and re-searcher with Indigenous women and community sport, have me convinced that we are enthusiastic, active members of a sporting world that only partially resembles mainstream sport practices.

## Chapter 2

### Literature Review

*When I first read “Indigenous Storywork” by Sto:lo re-searcher JoAnne Archibald, one of her self-reflection on searching for appropriate Indigenous research methodologies really resonated with my own feelings of starting my first ever academic re-search journey. “I didn’t really want to deal with colonial history... But unlike old man coyote, I knew that I had to venture into unfamiliar territory of decolonization by questioning my motives and methods and ensuring that the negative legacy of research history was addressed” (Archibald, 2008, p. 36). I repeatedly ask myself, how is my work benefiting these women, and their sisterhood, and the next generation of Indigenous female ballers and potential re-searchers? Though I am writing this to meet academic requirements for graduation, this work is not for me, it is for them.*

In gathering information for this review, I turned to the works of past and present Indigenous re-searchers, and as often as possible, the re-search works of Indigenous women. Knowing the traumatic history our people experienced with ‘research,’ I felt it was important to support those who embody what it means to do Indigenous re-search in a good way. In this chapter, I discuss the relevant literature and acknowledge the importance of this work as it addresses an unrepresented group in the literature. This review begins broadly, with a look at the role of Indigenous women in community, identity in urban cities, and our value as role models for the next generation. I then briefly address Indigenous women’s wellness, sport and culture before looking more

closely at Indigenous women in sport history and the limited selection of Indigenous women in sport literature, in preparation for my own searching for the value sport brings to our lives as urban living Indigenous women.

### **Indigenous Women in Communities**

Historically, Indigenous womanhood was sacred. From generation to generation, women's roles as mothers, grandmothers, aunties, daughters, and sisters have brought strength, resilience, and transformation to their communities. Women are the keepers of their culture. They teach children to respect our Mother Earth and ensure our leaders walk in a good way (Anderson, 2011; Jefferies, 1991; Martin-Hill, 2003; Simpson, 2011). As Mary Ellen Turpel (1991) states, "it is the women who give birth, in both the physical and spiritual sense, to the social, political, and cultural life of the community" (p. 180). Women's ability to pass knowledge onto the next generation, as well as their capacity for traditional role modeling, was deeply disrupted by colonial interventions and assimilative practices. From the early beginning of Indian residential schools to today's failing child welfare system, families and communities have been fractured by these ongoing colonial systems (Adelson, 2005; Anderson 2000; Hovey, Delormier, & McComber, 2016; Krieg 2016; Lawrence 2004; Martin-Hill, 2003; Mason & Koehli, 2012). Despite the turmoil wrought by such colonial practices, it is largely through the resilience of Indigenous women, sisters, mothers, grandmothers and aunties, the bearers of future generations, that Indigenous families and communities find strength and continue moving forward (National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health, 2012). For generations, Indigenous women continue to resist colonialism and thus continue to re-connect, re-search and re-member our ever-evolving identity. Through all of these colonial

interventions Indigenous sport across Turtle Island has evolved into a pathway for connection and kinship specifically in urban settings.

### **Identity in Urban Cities**

From past to present, Indigenous worldviews differ from nation to nation. Absolon (2011) acknowledges that our creation stories vary, the animals we revere are different, and our languages are diverse. Still, across the nations, we share commonalities in that “our worldviews are Earth centered philosophies, which express strong ties to the land and water, and hold reverence for Spirit and ancestors” (Absolon, 2011, p. 57).

Cree/metis re-researcher, Kim Anderson further supports that before European contact our communities, systems, lifestyles, and values demonstrated reverence for our women; as part of a balanced, complex system of relations, womanhood was promoted as a sacred identity (Anderson, 2000, p. 57).

The colonial and settler nation-building process included defining physical place boundaries. Reserves were created to isolate Indigenous populations, clearing the land for settler foundations to grow into present day “urban” spaces. Opaskwayak Cree re-researcher, Shawn Wilson acknowledges that, while definitions and policies related to these boundaries continue to change, binary identities of ‘First Nations’ and ‘Canadian,’ and off reserve and city, are remarkably persistent (Wilson, 2008). In fact, from the early beginnings, within urban spaces, Indigenous peoples have been seen as ‘out of place.’

Mi'kmaq re-researcher Bonita Lawrence supports that “Because identities are embedded in systems of power based on race, class, and gender, identity is a highly political issue, with ramifications for how contemporary and historical collective

experience is understood” (Lawrence, 2003, p. 4). The journey of self-location for Indigenous peoples is a personal, ever-evolving, lifelong process of self-discovery.

As a result of systemic assimilation, there are whole generations of Indigenous peoples who have lost ties to their culture and family. The loss of cultural continuity and identity leaves many Indigenous peoples facing racism, stereotypes, and shame with no foundation for strength in self-identity (Krieg, 2016) as cultural identity has a significant influence on confidence and self-esteem (Smethurst, 2012). There is abundant writing documenting the destruction of Indigenous cultural continuity as well as the socioeconomic and health-related disparities of Indigenous peoples, specifically women living both on and off reserve across Turtle Island (Adelson, 2005; Anderson 2000; Hovey, Delormier, & Mccomber, 2016; Krieg 2016; Lawrence 2004; Martin-Hill, 2009; Mason & Koehli, 2012).

As strategies used in upholding identity in the city are not simply transferred practices from the primordial past, Indigenous people continue to learn and adapt to the realities of living in an urban environment. This is especially the case for Indigenous women, who have been resisting stereotypes, imposed gender roles, and negative definitions in defence of their identities for generations (Anderson, 2000).

Indigenous women are finding and creating roles to counter the negative impacts of colonialism in their communities. Often these roles are created at the forefront of intellectual and social movements, health and healing efforts, the arts, and the transmission of culture and language to the next generation (Guthrie Valaskakis, Dion Stout, & Guimond, 2009). These movements are present in our everyday lives, from speaking our languages at home and singing our songs in primary classrooms to

international nation uniting movements like the water protectors of Standing Rock in 2016 (#NoDAPL- Appendix A). Despite the influence of patriarchy and paternalism, Indigenous women are rejecting the Eurocentric overemphasis on individualism, and are tenaciously pursuing legal, economic and political equality for their communities. They do so while maintaining their role of family nurturers, keepers of culture and for the most part, running band offices, health programs, education boards, and other community-based institutions (Guthrie Valaskakis et al., 2009; Paraschak & Forsyth, 2010; Settee, 2011; Turpel, 1991).

Through these movements, women are creating space for the development of a powerful sisterhood. In the urban setting, this sisterhood is bringing together women who may have left their homelands to find employment, education, or safety in the city; as well as those who grew up in the city and, with no connection to their ancestral land or culture, are just beginning their self-location journey. Anderson's book, *A Recognition of Being: Reconstructing Native Womanhood*, supports that, be it on reserve or through urban organizations, immersion into Indigenous communities "protects and builds a positive sense of identity" (Anderson, 2000, p. 124).

This growing sisterhood gives admission to non-linear, non-western worldviews which, in themselves, are nurturing much more than a sense of identity and well-being for Indigenous women, and are cultivating alternative ways of being in the contemporary world (Anderson, 2000; Guthrie Valaskakis et al., 2009; McIvor, 2009). Anishinabe researcher Kathy Absolon and Cree re-researcher Cam Willet explore this identity searching in the frame of "re-membering", explaining, "the word "remember" can have two different meanings: (1) to recall from memory or (2) to reconnect." Re-membering

ourselves “through our DNA, through our spirituality and through our blood memory of cultural origin” allows us to locate ourselves with our ancestors and our nations (Absolon & Willet, 2005, p. 116). As we re-member our histories, we continue to re-member ourselves to our Nations, both figuratively and literally. Further, Swampy Cree/ Scottish-Canadian re-searcher, Onowa McIvor (2009) argues that culture is dynamic, adaptable and evolving process. Women at all stages of their identity re-search, re-cover, and re-membering may present modernized versions of old teachings to fit contemporary life, which may include teachings from other nations and traditions. Creating the space to learn and engage in culture in an urban landscape allows for the creation of pathways leading to balanced health and wholeness. Absolon and Willet (2005) speak truth when they say, “we are proud that after so many generations of oppression and genocide (attempts to make us disappear, be forgotten, and forget), we are able to “re-search” and “re-member” ourselves with the mental, physical, spiritual, and emotional aspects of our beautiful heritage” (p. 117). As Indigenous women everywhere continue to move forward on their self-location journey, we are following the footpaths of our ancestors but also role modeling the way for the next generation.

### **Indigenous Women as Role Models**

In chapter three of Anderson’s book *Recognition of Being*, she reflects on past conversations about the collective resistance of Indigenous women. From the stories she has heard, the foundation of resistance was strong families; ‘family’ has a different makeup for everyone across Turtle Island but the same underlying notion of kinship. Many of the women in Anderson’s interviews spoke of strong, independent female role models, who instilled strength, resistance, and resilience, demonstrated through action,

not words. Anderson quotes a participant remembering, “without ever letting us know, without being ambitious for us or pushing us, mother held on to the belief that she had it in her to ‘be somebody’” (Anderson, 2000, p. 118). Witnessing acts of resurgence and resistance in overcoming obstacles creates powerful nonverbal lessons of autonomy. I can speak to this as well. I grew up knowing driven, educated women, admiring dedicated female athletes, and modeling after parents who did not preach lessons but instead, demonstrated through action.

Metis re-searcher, Brigitte Krieg’s (2016) work with urban living Indigenous female youth recognizes that not all young women grow up with a strong familial role model, and further highlights a desire these girls have for positive female role models in their community. Ideally, girls learn the skills they would need as women through observation of Elders and family members. The desire expressed through Krieg’s work relates to a growing body of literature on motherhood, highlighting that female role modelling became distorted through colonization and the natural order was changed (Anderson, 2000; Krieg, 2016; National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health, 2012; Simpson, 2011). In 2016, Karen Tang and Cynthia Jardine facilitated conversation with youth and adults of a Yellowknife Dene First Nation regarding physical activity and culture. Several times the Elders’ presence as role models in community came up in these discussions; as bearers of knowledge and culture but also their way of being, and they inspired young people to engage in healthy active ways of life (Tang & Jardine, 2016).

Recently, a longitudinal study completed in Australia (Young, Symons, Pain, Harvey, & Payne, 2015) explored the influence role models, of a mainstream population

of grade 7 and 11 girls, have on the girls' physical activity levels. The study showed that regardless of geographic location, the majority of girls identified role models who engaged in sport or physical activity. These girls were also more likely to play sport and be physically active because their role models engaged in physically active ways. Young et al. found that 41% of girls nominated a female, familial role model, most often their mother. This study includes definitions of metropolitan and non-metropolitan living girls but does not address ancestry. Nonetheless, it does support our understandings of the importance of women fulfilling a need for positive female role models, and it is recommended that community initiatives create space for mother-daughter physical activity programming.

In Australia, an exploration by Māori re-searcher Stella Coram looks at the inclusion of Indigenous athletes from the Australian Football League in development of role model programs (Coram, 2007). The program intends to reach at-risk Indigenous male youth living in rural outposts. While there is mention of the emergence of all Indigenous sporting events and how they have created space for Indigenous athlete role models, there has been little to no work acknowledging the value of women in this role model relationship.

The traditional lifestyle for all genders of Indigenous peoples was physically demanding. It was not until land dispossession, as associated with colonization that culture and physical activity became separate. Part of living a traditional, physically engaging, lifestyle, was that children were not separated from the adult world; this is how they grew up knowing their location in the community (Anderson, 2000; National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health, 2012). In relation to sport, this practice is

present in today's contemporary world. Indigenous sporting events (specifically, tournaments with men's and women's teams) are known family events, and at any given tournament many generations will be present. Notably, children and youth are everywhere, whether actively watching or playing amongst themselves, these children are witnessing their mothers, aunties, sisters, and cousins who are role modeling healthy, positive behaviour. Without being told or participating themselves, these children learn invaluable lessons about women, community, relationships, respect, and the value and ability of their body. These experiences and lessons, whether learned consciously or not, will have great influence on their developing worldview. Creating space for dialogue about Indigenous women role modeling through sport will allow for re-connecting, re-searching, and re-membling the value of this role modeling practice.

There are many great resources that speak to various traditional role modeling practices (Guthrie Valaskakis et al., 2009; Simpson, 2011; Sunseri, 2008; Thomas, 2011; Wilson, 1996), a body of work on mainstream sport role models (Young et al., 2015), as well as research into positive male role modeling for Indigenous youth (Bedard, 2007; Coram, 2007; Robidoux, 2012). Yet, with few exceptions highlighted in this chapter, the literature has been virtually silent in acknowledging Indigenous women's positions as role models in sport.

### **Sport, Culture and Wellness**

The Traditional Indigenous way of life embraced physical movement, so there was no need to make room specifically for physical activity. Over time, many re-searchers have explored the relationship of traditional land-based practices with physical activity, games, and wellness (Absolon, 2011; McIvor, 2009; Tang & Jardine, 2016). Tang and

Jardine's (2016) work in Yellowknife NWT, reflected the need to be fit to be out on the land, to do everything for oneself and for the community to survive; because of this, physical activity is part of the community's cultural identity. While it has been acknowledged that traditional activities are protective factors (Chandler & Lelond, 2008) the great majority of this knowledge comes from reserve communities, leaving out the relationships urban living Indigenous people have with the land, physical activity and health.

When addressing the topic of health and wellness, we need to be aware of the greater meaning of "health" (Parlee & O'Neil, 2007), since most Indigenous languages did not have a word translating to "health" as it was not a separate entity but a part of a larger whole (McIvor, 2009). Some authors identify the divergence in worldviews (Indigenous and Western) as a major reason for the limited impact of health promotion interventions in Indigenous communities (Adelson, 2005; Findlay & Kohen, 2007; Martin-Hill, 2009). Healthy living and wellness are grounded in relationships, culture, connection to land, and are wholistically inclusive of all aspects of being (mental, spiritual, emotional and physical) (Dion Stout, 2015; Martin-Hill 2009; McIvor, 2009; Tang and Jardine, 2016). Thus, culturally appropriate wellness services need to work between the two paradigms, acknowledging elements of both Western biomedical and Indigenous knowledge (Dion Stout, 2015; Iwama, Marshall, Marshall, & Bartlett, 2009; Reading & Reading, 2012; Ziabakhsh, 2016). There is an emerging knowledge base that explores and promotes physical activity and sport as it relates to the wellness of Indigenous youth; including improving mental, spiritual and emotional wellbeing as well as physical health outcomes (Findlay & Kohen, 2007; Mason & Koehli, 2012; Sport for

Life Society, 2015). Péroquin, Doering, Alley and Rebar (2017) briefly explore facilitators and barriers of physical activity among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander regional sport participants but still, at this time, there is no re-search directly connecting the positive strength and wellness of Indigenous women with team sport participation.

In relation to culture and wellness, McIvor (2009) suggests we “must recognize that culture is dynamic and may be defined differently as it is experienced differently by each individual and community, particularly urban communities” (p.7). The research also acknowledges that communities need to define for themselves what culture is and how it can be used positively to promote wellness amongst their people (McIvor, 2009). That said, it would logically follow that culture and cultural activities would morph and adapt over time as well. Across Turtle Island culture has long been acknowledged as a social determinant of wellness, and McIvor further asserts that the Public Health Agency of Canada now considers culture among the key determinants of health (McIvor, 2009). According to McIvor (2009):

In Aboriginal communities across Canada, the fiddle and jigging are popular in the north and on the prairies; rodeos in Alberta and the B.C. Interior; basketball in Northwestern BC, and soccer on Vancouver Island. Because these activities have evolved into their own Aboriginal styles and within Aboriginal communities, it can be argued that they, like more standard cultural pursuits, are also cultural activities (p. 17).

As such, Indigenous peoples across the country continue to use European based sports as a platform for creating community and family cultural connection.

Though settler populations brought mainstream sports to Turtle Island, Indigenous peoples have always used sport to create and strengthen community and kinship. Only recently sport has been proven to be one of the most “salient mediums for recapturing spirits in a slow process toward cultural self-determination for Indigenous peoples” (Forsyth & Wamsley, 2006, p. 294). Paraschak (1995), Forsyth (2007), and Paraschak and Forsyth (2008) further sustain that sport is more about the process, how you develop as a person, who you meet, what you learn, and the confidence and opportunities it creates. With a dedicated provincial strategy and resources for Indigenous youth and family sport programming since 2009 (Aboriginal Sport, Recreation and Physical Activity Strategy, 2009), we can expect that there has been a growing population of Indigenous female athletes in the city of Victoria. Despite the known health disparities and barriers, by continually pursuing opportunity through sport, I argue that Indigenous women are re-connecting and taking ownership of their wellness.

### **Indigenous Women in Sport**

Several female re-searchers have explored the history and evolution of Indigenous sports and games (Forsyth, 2007; Hall, 2013; O’Bonsawin, 2011; Paraschak, 1995). This body of work specifically stories the Indigenous women’s participation in Indigenous and non-Indigenous sports and games. In the book *“The 1904 Anthropology Days and Olympic Games: Sport, Races, and American Imperialism,”* Linda Peavy and Ursula Smith’s chapter titled *“Leav(ing) the White(s)...Far Behind Them’: The Girls From Fort Shaw (Montana) Indian School, Basketball Championships of the 1904 World’s Fair,”* reveals the story of an Indigenous girls’ basketball team and their experiences at the ‘Model Indian School’. The girls, from four different nations, seized the opportunity to

learn basketball; they grew up hearing stories of their grandmothers' athleticism, as girls and women's participation in tribal games was as intense as the boys and men's games. Together the girls "overcame racial and gender barriers to emerge as basketball champions of the 1904 St. Louis World's Fair...leaving the white athletes of Illinois and Missouri far behind them" (Peavy & Smith, 2008, p. 271). The stories of their teamwork and accomplishments on and off the court were handed down for generations, and carried on beyond their tribal kin to Indigenous youth across Turtle Island. For all those who have heard of them, the girls from Fort Shaw Indian School are role models.

Other historical Indigenous women in sport to note are twin sisters Sharon and Shirley Firth from Alavik NWT. Margaret Ann Hall (2013), a women's sport historian, acknowledges the sisters, (as well as Rosanne Allen from Innuvik NWT), and their success in becoming the first Indigenous women to compete in an Olympic Games. Albenaki re-researcher of Olympic and Indigenous sport history, Christine O'Bonsawin (2000) further explores the personal experiences and elite sporting careers of the Firth sisters, and their membership in a government-sponsored and directed program intended to assimilate Northern Aboriginal youth into the competitive urban Canadian lifestyle. Even though the Firth sisters went on to be the top female Canadian cross country skiers from 1967 to 1985, attending four Olympic Games (Hall, 2002; O'Bonsawin, 2000), their accomplishments are otherwise rarely, if at all, noted in historical or contemporary literature. In fact, it was not until 2017 that they were quietly inducted into Canada's sports Hall of Fame. Even in today's Olympics, with the overwhelming world of social media, those interested in the achievements of Indigenous women in sport had to search for stories about 2018 female Indigenous Olympians, including hockey player Brigette

Laquette from Cote First Nation and Kwakwakw'wakw snowboarder Spencer O'Brien, as their stories were given limited media attention. That said, these athletes push on and continue to do good work for their people and the next generation. Laquette is spending spring 2018 touring First Nations communities, sharing her personal story, and on ice practice time with children and youth across Canada (CBC Online News - March 9, 2018).

Identifying the lack of recognition and accessible information, Vicky Paraschak is currently heading a Wikipedia research project. As lead researcher she is using information from her past and present re-search work to make historical and present day Indigenous sport stories available to the general public; ensuring better international and public knowledge about elite Indigenous athletes in Canada (Paraschak, 2017). This leads us to the topic of Indigenous women in sport literature.

As mentioned previously, few have taken up re-search in Indigenous women's sport history and fewer who have explored the present day relationship of Indigenous women and sport. It was over two decades ago, Paraschak (1995) noted the lack of Indigenous female athletes in the body of sport-related research and media recognition. She stated that the work addressing Indigenous sport, in general, makes a minor note of female participants, creating the false belief that "male" Aboriginal sport is Aboriginal sport" (p.71). While there have been many successful women competing in both mainstream and Indigenous sport realms, trends have not changed in regards to their support systems or recognition. In most Indigenous sport systems today, male sport is still favoured over female sport, and Indigenous women's involvement in sport is shaped by the same patriarchal relations which underline mainstream sport (Paraschak, 1995). In

her paper “Invisible but not absent: Aboriginal women in sport and recreations,”

Paraschak (1995) writes:

Despite those problems, they [Aboriginal women] have been active participants in their own right, generating unique approaches for addressing the dynamic issues of race and gender. They remain, however, largely invisible in the current record on women's sport. Hopefully Aboriginal sportswomen will, in the future, write and talk more extensively about their experiences (p 72).

By gathering the stories of Indigenous sportswomen in the city of Victoria, I am directly answering Paraschak’s call to action.

In 2008, after the North American Indigenous Games in Duncan BC, Cree scholar Janice Forsyth, a former nationally ranked Canadian athlete, called for more support for Indigenous athletes during the games. In that same year, Paraschak and Forsyth wrote the Final Report on the 2008 National Roundtable on Aboriginal Women in Sport and found there are few supports for Indigenous female athletes in Canada. The roundtable brought together Indigenous women from nations across Canada to discuss the issues specific to Indigenous women regarding sport and recreation involvement. Over time there have been similar spaces for dialogue among Indigenous peoples to discuss sport and recreation (IndigenACTION Roundtable Report, 2012; Canadian Heritage: Sport Canada’s Policy on Aboriginal Peoples Participation in Sport, 2005); however, the inclusion of non-Indigenous women or Indigenous men can create conflicting inspiration and isolation (Forsyth & Paraschak, 2008). The 2008 roundtable discussion was unlike others in that it was exclusively female Indigenous athletes, coaches, and organizers,

from mainstream and traditional sport settings. The intention was to create a safe and supportive environment to discuss the place and importance of sport, to examine the conditions that have helped and hindered their participation, and to identify strategies to enhance participation, as well as to raise public awareness of these issues by keeping their Final Report open to public access (Paraschak & Forsyth, 2008). Knowing “existing literature does not address cultural notions tied to childrearing, community and volunteering in sport” (p. 166), Paraschak and Forsyth (2010) followed up with the roundtable participants for in-depth conversations about the topics that arose from the 2008 discussions. In spite of gender stereotypes influencing career paths and familial responsibilities, the women continued to pursue work and volunteer roles in the sport and recreation field. Their research highlights how “the women [they] interviewed reinforced the point that volunteering at the community level is one of the few spaces where Aboriginal women can meaningfully and consistently contribute in sport while maintaining valued caretaker role(s) with their family” (Paraschak & Forsyth, 2010, p.166).

With such a limited pool of resources on the topic, the 2008 Final Report and follow up re-search by Parashcak and Forsyth in 2010 were very powerful documents to read. However, the majority of comments on participation were of children and youth involvement, and youth sport opportunities and supports. Further, the majority of the discussion revolved around the women’s involvement in policy, facilitation, and volunteer experiences and community organizational structures. In their 2010 conclusion they call on

researchers...to work with Aboriginal women to document and analyze their multiple roles in sport and recreation at the community level, to make clear the male privilege made possible through women's work and to generate with them possible ways to enhance all roles women may aspire to take on in these fields (p. 170).

This discourse is a positive step forward, and my study answers their call to action by exploring a role, and steps to possibly enhance a role that was not addressed; the urban living Indigenous women's role as the athlete and the sport programs offered to women.

It is important to note that even without the support, funding, or recognition of achievements and abilities, generations of Indigenous women have continued to find inspiration and ways to ground themselves in the city through sport. From recreational to elite (and international) sport, Indigenous women are making time and space for sport because we know from experience the value it brings to our lives and those we share these experiences.

## **Conclusion**

There has been valuable work done with Indigenous children and youth sport and physical activity concerning all aspects of health and wellness, specifically through development programs (Aboriginal Sport Recreation and Physical Activity Partners Council, est. 2009 now know as Indigenous Sport, Physical Activity & Recreation Council; Sport for Life 2015). There has also been dialogue on the role of Indigenous women as organizers, facilitators, coaches, volunteers, and community advocacy leaders in regards to sport and recreation opportunity and participation (Paraschak & Forsyth 2008; 2010). The health disparities of Indigenous women are prominent in literature, and

significant attention has been paid to the lived experience of Indigenous women regarding health, community, and culture (Dion Stout, 2015; Martin-Hill, 2009; McIvor, 2009; Paraschak, 1995; Paraschak & Forsyth, 2010; Tag et al., 2016). However, as demonstrated in the review of literature, there have been few opportunities for urban-living, Indigenous women to come together and share what playing team sport means to them and the presence it has in their lived experience. Kim Anderson (2000) speaks of a conversation with Lee Maracle where she shared the need for deeper dialogue around the sacredness, the power and beauty of womanhood (Anderson, 2000).

Through my experience in this re-search process, I hope to contribute to the dialogue that Maracle speaks of and to the sisterhood of sport in Victoria B.C. As well, my work responds to the previously mentioned calls to action laid down by Paraschak (1995), Forsyth (2007), and, Paraschak and Forsyth (2010): for Indigenous sportswomen to talk more extensively about their experiences and their many roles in relation to sport and recreation. Further, providing academic support for future sport programming that is currently lacking for this population in the city of Victoria, and finally contributing to wider conversations about Indigenous women's resilience and wellness. Our resilience directly contributes to our wellness, wellness of self, family, community and our nations. The book *Restoring the Balance* reminds us that we are the mothers and future mothers of our next generation (Anderson, 2000). As we re-claim and re-gain personal power, we are offering clear and accessible demonstrations of Indigenous women's strength for all ages, particularly the young ones (Guthrie Valaskakis et al., 2009, p. 27).

In the following chapter, I provide an in-depth look at the importance of self-location in Indigenous re-search, the 4 R's necessary to do this work in a good way,

Absolon's petal flower framework and storytelling methodology. Following the methodologies that have framed my re-search journey are the methods that I used in the story collection and analysis stages.

## Chapter 3

### Methodology

*I first heard Qwul'sih'yah'maht (Robina Thomas) speak for the first time when she presented for our LE,NOENT class in fall 2015. It was later that year that I read her chapter in Research as Resistance: Critical Indigenous, and Anti-Oppressive Approaches. In the first pages she reflects on a conversation about her thesis topic with her then grad school re-search supervisor. She tells, "After a moment of silence (and verging on tears), I looked up at her and said, "All I ever really wanted to do was tell stories." And she replied, "Well, why don't you tell stories?" This is where, for me, storytelling as a research methodology began" (Thomas 2005, p. 239). As I did the first time, I feel tears behind my eyes when I read this today. I too just wanted to tell stories. I realize the stories we worked with are very different, as was our process but she states, "All stories have something to teach us. What is most important is to learn to listen, not simply hear, the words that storytellers have to share. (p.241). I reflect on this often and have carried this with me throughout my re-search journey.*

Before delving into the methodological direction for this work, or any work including Indigenous worldviews, I must acknowledge that there is no universal methodology or paradigm for Indigenous re-search (Aboslon, 2011; Brandt-Castellano 2004; Loppie, 2007; Wilson, 2008). Within cultural and colonial academic contexts, Indigenous methodologies and their "emancipatory goals are products of Indigenous worldviews, principles, values, beliefs and experiences" (Absolon, 2011, p 26). Nation to

nation, Indigenous re-searchers acknowledge that Indigenous re-search paradigms are based upon the fundamental belief that knowledge is wholistic and relational, as in our relations with all of creation (Absolon, 2011; Kovach, 2005; Wilson, 2001). As an Indigenous female re-searcher, I follow the lead of past and present academic Indigenous women maneuvering the complex, hegemonic, colonial systems in search of ways to gather and share knowledge in a good way.

Algonquin, Cree, and French Métis re-searcher Lynn Lavallée (2009) shares that “Indigenous research is not objective, nor does it see itself as unbiased” (p. 23). She further supports that all parties involved in re-search are interconnected and that “emotions are connected to all mental processes. Every time we think, use reason, and figure, emotion is tied to that process; therefore, it is impossible to be free of emotion and subjectivity in research” (Lavallée, 2009, p. 23). K. Tsianina Lomawaima (2017) asks how do *thinking, feeling and doing* interact to produce Indigenous histories? She acknowledges that “emotions connect scholars, subjects, and Indigenous communities through expansive Indigenous theories of kinship” (p. 61). Unlike most known Western scientific research paradigms that seek unbiased observation, an Indigenous re-search paradigm, grounded in respect, reciprocity, relevance and responsibility, is fundamentally incapable of separating the relationships between the re-searcher the re-search subject, participants and environment (Loppie, 2007; Wilson, 2008). I often turn to the word of Aboriginal re-searcher Aileen Moreton-Robinson (Quandamooka Nation, Australia) words for guidance:

Even when we are developing Indigenous methodologies we are influenced by discourses that presuppose our existence as scholars within academia. To recognise

our disciplinary knowledges and academic training as part of our (research)... is not a case of being either Indigenous or academic but of recognising the epistemological, ontological, and axiological complexities of being an Indigenous researcher that is politically challenging, intellectually creative and rigorous (Moreton-Robinson, 2017, p. 70).

Throughout my academic experience, I am continually un-learning, learning, re-learning, reflecting, and re-framing how I conduct myself as an Indigenous re-searcher. I am committed to grounding my work in Indigenous paradigms, worldviews, principals, processes, and protocols while still finding balance in meeting the requirements of the university systems by using western methods of consent, transcribing and thematic analysis. The following methodologies continue to support me in focusing on the strengths that each worldview has to offer. Guided by Elder Albert Marshall's principal of "Two Eyed Seeing" which "adamantly, respectfully and passionately asks that we bring together our different ways of knowing to motivate people, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal alike, to use all our understandings so we can leave the world a better place and not compromise the opportunities of our youth." (Iwama et al., 2009 p. 3).

### **Self-Location**

*Being of mixed ancestry and fair skin, I acknowledge the privileges I grew up with while re-claiming, respecting and re-membling my Indigenous histories. Conducting this work, rooted in my ways of knowing and being, is the only way I could imagine doing re-search. At this moment, I am many things; daughter, sister, partner, auntie, friend, teammate, campus cousin, Indigenous re-searcher, doula, athlete, hiker, plant enthusiast,*

*urban living Secwepemc woman, lover of the land and water, the list goes on. But I am only one person. These relationships are who I am, I carry them with me everywhere I go; none are ever left behind.*

Presenting myself and my worldviews create relational accountability (Wilson, 2008), holding me responsible for the way in which my re-search is conducted, and the way in which participants stories are shared. Within Indigenous re-search, self-location means cultural identification, and it manifests itself in various ways. Kovach (2009) suggests that, for many Indigenous people, this “act is intuitive, launched immediately through the protocol of introductions. It shows respect to the ancestors and allows community to locate me” (p. 110). I open this and each chapter, with self-location because it creates consistency with a knowledge system that tells us we can only interpret the world from our own lived experience. Kovach supports critically reflective self-location as a way to find grounding in our re-search, purpose and motive; location prevents personal realities from being misrepresented as part of a global collective and allows mutuality with all those who share their stories (Absolon & Willet, 2005; Kovach, 2009). I must stress that this work is not inclusive of all Indigenous women who play sport in the city (past, present or future). Beyond relational accountability, I self-locate to ensure understanding that this work is a portrait in time of my personal experience and interpretation of and engagement with the topic.

### **The 4 R’s of Relationality - Responsibility, Reciprocity, Relevance and Respect**

*When I first learned of the 4 R’s (in an institutional, academic setting) I remember thinking after class, how my parents’ role modeled the 4 R’s to us as kids, it was never a lecture, they did it as naturally as they taught us*

*to braid. I envisioned the 4 R's together, as a braid; how challenging to unbraid the strands and define each one separately, as each strand of the braid finds strength in the other. Relationality is not relationality without respect; you cannot overlook reciprocity and still be respectful and leaving out relevance would not be responsible. Really, a braid with only one strand is just a ponytail.*

As mentioned in my initial self-location, the 4R's are a way of being that I was raised with and try to uphold each and every day, they are not simply a reproducible methodological re-search tool. Shawn Wilson (2008) shares that "relational accountability requires me to form reciprocal and respectful relationships with the communities where I am conducting research" (p. 41). Knowing that relationality is a "presupposition of an Indigenous social research paradigm" (Moreton-Robinson, 2017, p. 69), I based this project on questions and conversations I have carried with me throughout my adult life. Understanding that "respect is more than just saying please and thank you, and reciprocity is more than giving a gift" (Steinhauer, 2002, p. 73), respect, reciprocity, relevance and responsibility are layered throughout this re-search process. Respect for the women directly involved and those who chose not to be, but also for the past and present re-searchers whose knowledge I uphold, respect for the future Indigenous sport re-searchers and players, and respect for myself. Reciprocity is not a difficult concept, as Kovach (2009) states, "there are a host of ways to give back, and for Indigenous academic researchers sharing knowledge is the most obvious means...and relevancy is integral to giving back" (p. 149). I feel this work will assist our community of urban living, sport playing Indigenous women, not only in raising awareness of the

need for an opportunity but also in strengthening our sisterhood. When speaking to relational responsibility Kovach states, “Responsibility implies knowledge and action. It seeks to genuinely serve others, and is inseparable from respect and reciprocity” (Kovach, 2009, p. 178). From the way I proposed and discussed the direction of the project with the sisterhood, to the way I interpret and present their stories, it is my responsibility to uphold and respect their truth. Guided by relationality, and continually braiding the 4 R’s within this re-search process, the women’s worldviews are “honoured with ethical responsibility and sensitivity” (Atkinson, 2001 in Wilson, 2008, p. 59) and I am staying true to who I am as an Indigenous re-searcher in the academy.

### **The Petal Flower**

*Early on I was hesitant to share my methodological paradigm in such a personal way, especially in such a western science-focused program, but Kathleen Abosolon’s work has been a great inspiration for me on this learning journey. I read Kaandossiwin for the first time, in my first year and felt an instant connection to the ‘petal flower’. It was a visual representation of what I was feeling and experiencing as I tried to make sense of my place and my work in the academy. I found autonomy in my methodology, strength in my self-location, confidence in my roots and value in exploring and sharing my journey.*

In her book *Kaandossiwin: How we Come to Know*, Kathleen Absolon (2011) offers her use of the petal flower to create a framework that “acknowledges and validates the Indigenous leadership and scholarship displayed within a climate that is often foreign, alienating and marginalizing” (p. 49). Each element of the petal flower is inter-related

and interdependent, connected to the whole flower just as Indigenous knowledge, worldviews, and methodologies are wholistic, relational and interdependent. I humbly borrow this petal flower framework to ground my thesis re-search journey and to support my methodological process of ‘searching and gathering’.

The petal flower, as a whole, is rooted in Indigenous paradigms, worldviews and principles. Wilson (2001) suggests that “We now need to move beyond an ‘Indigenous perspective’ in research to researching from an Indigenous paradigm” (p.175). Being able to ground my re-search in my own Indigenous worldviews brings an invisible strength to my methodologies, just like the roots of the petal flower. The flower centre represents self in relation to the re-search. As Indigenous re-searchers, we are not only accountable to the institution but also to our ancestors, family, community, Creator and all our relations.

Accordingly, to honour the reciprocal nature of Indigenous communities, it is essential to locate myself in relation to the re-search in order to address issues of accountability, validity, and reliability of the work at hand. The leaves of the petal flower embody the often-transformative journey of the re-searcher. Through their interactions with both the ever-changing external environment and the grounding support of the roots, the leaves represent my journey of learning. This process includes learning about who I am and what I learned through the searching and gathering process. The stem of the petal flower is the connector between all parts of the whole. It represents my methodological backbone, it is the “critical consciousness to express commitment to ‘rewriting and re-righting’ our histories, experiences and realities” (Absolon, 2011, p. 50). By continually acknowledging my personal, community and cultural strengths and supports throughout

the re-search process, I am prepared to confront, cope and problem-solve when inevitable obstacles arise in the re-search process, and to resist pressures to conform. The petals of the flower represent the diversity of Indigenous methodologies, yet all include the “spirit, heart, mind, and body because Indigenous methodologies are wholistic in nature and encompass the whole being” (Absolon, 2011, p. 118). The petals’ “distinction lies in their intimate connection to the worldviews, histories, cultures, languages, experiences, and contexts of Indigenous re-searchers” (Absolon, 2011, p. 139). Finally, the environment of the petal flower is not separate because, as a whole, it is affected by its environment, just as Indigenous re-searchers are affected by the environment of academic institutions. I find strength in Absolon’s petal flower framework, with continual reflection I have been able to find harmony in this re-search process.

### **Storytelling**

*Growing up, and still today, I have always loved bedtime stories. I was four and my brother was two when our baby sister was born. It was sometime after her birth that dad started telling us ‘our family story’ as a bedtime story. He would start by telling us all about the day each of us was born, then we would ask questions about being babies or about other family members, and it would always lead to more story.*

Since time immemorial storytelling has been the most natural mode of knowledge transfer for Indigenous peoples around the world (Anderson, 2011; Archibald, 2008; Billy, 2015; Kovach, 2009; Thomas, 2005; 2011; Wilson, 2008). In her work exploring the use of traditional Secwepemc stories to teach language, Secwepemc re-searcher Janice Billy (2015) writes, “storytelling can be a way of connecting ourselves to a shared

culture and identity” (p. 26). Storytelling has supported me personally in re-membering, re-searching and re-covering who I am and my lived experience (Absolon & Willet, 2005), allowing me to re-connect with storytelling as a valid re-search methodology. This entire re-search process is grounded in storytelling; the way my re-search question evolved, the way I present my personal story, the way each woman had space to share her sport story, the way all the stories were gathered together and shared with you, the reader, and the way this entire story will be presented within the walls of the academy and beyond to community.

Shawn Wilson (2008) explains three levels of storytelling, as told to him by Cree Elder Jerry Saddleback. The higher level are “sacred stories, which are specific in form content and structure... and carry the history of our people” these stories are sacred, need permission to be told and are not for research. The second level, are the “legends you may have heard or read in books. There are certain morals, lessons or events.” Storytellers may modify the details to fit their experiences and the audience but the underlying message does not change. The third style is “relating personal experience or the experiences of other people” (p. 98). I use only this third style of storytelling in this study to re-connect with the greater sport sisterhood, to re-connect with academia, to re-connect with my own experiences and with future Indigenous women on their sport focused re-search journeys. While exploring the intricacies of using storytelling as methodology, Kovach (2009) supports that “story is a means to give voice to the marginalized and assists in creating outcomes from research that are in line with the needs of the community. Reliable representation engenders relevancy and is a necessary aspect of giving back to community” (p. 100). Using storytelling as methodology is a

decolonizing action as “stories of resistance inspire generations about the strength of the culture” (Kovach, 2009, p. 103).

These four ‘methodologies’ are a part of me and ground me as both an academic and as a lifelong learner. I understand that an “Indigenous paradigm comes from the fundamental belief that knowledge is relational” (Wilson, 2001, p. 177). And, I recognize that all aspects of an Indigenous re-search paradigm are interrelated; there is no (real) definition of where one point ends, and another begins (Wilson, 2008, p. 68).

The remainder of this chapter now turns to detailing the methods used in this study, including invitations for participants to become involved in the re-search process, the collection of their stories, and the management and analysis of these data. Honouring participants’ contributions and tending to concerns of ethical standards are also presented.

## **Methods**

### **Participants and Recruitment**

As mentioned in the description of the petal flower framework, through this re-search project my leaves have grown and I am honoured to know a sisterhood of Indigenous female athletes playing and living on the unceded territory of the Lkwungen-speaking peoples, known today as Victoria. Purposive sampling included snowball and convenience approaches (Patton, 2002) to recruit Indigenous female athletes to participate in the study. Participants in this study are aged 20 and over, identify as female and live in the Greater Victoria region, and have experience playing team sports, all native and or mainstream (at least one season of playing and the level of experience does not matter). Through 18 verbal invitations and email messages, there was an open invitation to all those who play a team sport to attend one of two open talking circles at

the First Peoples House at the University of Victoria. At this point, the proposed research study was explained in full, and participants were given a consent form detailing the study protocol, including time commitments, risks and benefits (Appendix B). With this information, participants were asked to either select a pseudonym if they wished their identity to be protected or choose to use their names. Seven women agreed to participate, and ultimately shared their stories in one of three circles. Each circle lasted between one to two hours.

A limitation of this project was scheduling. When starting this work, months before securing ethical approval, I had the support of 10-12 Indigenous women whom play/played a team sport in Victoria. When the time finally came to come together in circle, it was early December. There was six weeks of playing phone tag and coordinating schedules around exams, Christmas and New Year's, birthdays and back to school before I had to set a deadline, resulting in a total of seven women available to participate.

### **Story Collection**

This re-search project supports storytelling through open talking circles. Traditionally, storytelling is a means of transmitting knowledge, values, and beliefs (Kovach, 2005; Lavallée, 2009). By participating in talking circles, we are removing the 'expert' and giving everyone space to share knowledge and ideas (Lavallée, 2009; Ziabakhsh, 2016). As I have placed myself in the centre of this project, I join the circles, not only as "re-searcher" but as part of the urban-living, sport-loving, sisterhood of Indigenous women in Victoria. Recognizing that circle work may change and shift in direction, depending on the work that needs to be done, there was a prepared list of 'guiding questions' (Appendix C), rather than a more structured interview approach.

Ultimately the women directed the flow of the circle with their stories, some were light and conversational in nature and others were very open with lengthy personal stories needing very minor prompting. Collecting stories in this way aligns with Lavallée's (2009) *Practical application of an Indigenous research framework and two qualitative Indigenous research methods* where Indigenous re-searchers bring forward their own epistemologies, methodologies, ethics, and theoretical and conceptual frameworks in the delivery of two qualitative Indigenous re-search methods, including sharing circles and Anishnaabe symbol-based reflection. Further, these open talking circles support the above mentioned Indigenous methodologies by allowing the women to have a direct voice in this re-search project.

After each of the three circles, I reflected with the group on the next steps of transcribing and thematic analysis and explained their opportunity for feedback in each stage. I informed the women that their advice would be considered, and appropriate modifications would be made in subsequent stages; however, no suggestions were provided. For those who chose to participate, there was the option to regather at a follow-up circle to talk further about the re-search process, address any questions and reflect on past talking circle transcripts (member checking), add new or clarifying information and comment on the evolving patterns of meaning. Again, participants expressed their satisfaction with the process and a second circle was not required.

### **Data Management/Analysis**

The talking circles were audio recorded using a handheld Sanyo digital recorder and the app Smart Record for backup. These recordings were transcribed verbatim by myself immediately following each talking circle. Transcripts were made available to the

participating women for review and revisions, but no feedback was given. Using NVivo software to organize and manage the data, the analysis began with open and descriptive coding of the transcripts using an editing analysis approach; that is, I reviewed each sentence as an editor looking broadly for descriptive labels for the main ideas (Crabtree & Miller, 1992). The aforementioned methodological frameworks guided the process, as concepts tied to relationship, kinship, sport, wellness, barriers and roles models, were used to group ideas, reduce data, and create broad categories. This initial process generated three broad categories. This process was followed by thematic analysis where such strategies of memoing (noting relationships and reflections on the data), and clustering (grouping like ideas together) were employed to more deeply interpret patterns and relationships among and between categories, to collapse and group codes more conceptually (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). In doing so, the three higher level concepts began to reveal more specific themes. The boundaries of these themes were blurred until I turned to Secwepemctsin (Secwepemc language) words and phrases for support, after which the seven resulting themes clearly emerged. Summaries of the seven themes were made available to participants, and there were no requests for edits. This approach respects Indigenous principles, worldviews, and values, by honouring the true ownership of the stories gathered for this project.

Throughout this process, I followed the principles of Ownership, Control, Access and Possession (2007). OCAP builds trust in the re-search process by ensuring consent of all participants throughout the project (National Aboriginal Health Organization, 2007). Ownership and control were respected through the signing of detailed consent forms and the option to include or exclude their identity in the final paper. Access to the

project and their stories were available throughout the entire process – from the initial informal talking circle through the review of transcripts and themes. All participants will receive a copy of the final thesis, are invited to its final oral presentation, and will be provided with written and presentation materials to share within their communities. Pulling all these practices together, Kovach (2009) explains OCAP as “a set of principles that work to decolonize the Indigenous-Western research relationship” (p. 145).

Grounded in the 4R’s and the above mentioned methodologies, methods and ethical considerations of OCAP, I ensured the voice of each women was heard in the following presentation of themes.

### **Ethical Considerations and Acknowledgement of Participants**

Kovach (2009) explains, within institutional contexts, ethical standards such as member checks and informed consent are most often associated with liability concerns. “However, Indigenous epistemic research conducted under western funding or academic parameters holds a unique ethical complexity that is less about liability and is more relational” (p. 147). Research involving Indigenous peoples requires that we “view contemporary ethical standards for Aboriginal health research within a broader historical context and through both Aboriginal and Western scientific perspectives” (Bull, 2010, p. 13). I met the requirements of the University of Victoria’s Ethics Board before recruitment and maintained relational accountability, with the support of the above mentioned methodologies and the principles of OCAP. As Wilson notes,

Rather than the goals of validity and reliability, research from an indigenous paradigm should aim to be authentic or credible. By that I mean that the research must accurately reflect and build upon the relationships between the ideas and

participants. The analysis must be true to the voices of all the participants and reflect an understanding of the topic that is shared by researcher and participants alike. In other words, it has to hold relational accountability (Wilson, 2008, pp.101-102).

In staying true to protocol and the 4 R's that guide this re-search, we came together over a meal, or snacks and tea, and circle participants were each gifted for their time and contributions of knowledge and ideas. As well, financial considerations were addressed as all participants were offered bus fares and parking passes when needed. To honour role modeling practices, activities were set up in the room for the young ones attending with their mothers.

## Chapter 4

### Findings

*After transcribing, reading and re-reading the women's stories I sat down and read them once again. I really wanted to connect with each of these stories and conversations as a whole. When the time came, it was hard to break them up. At this point I did a lot of reflection on storytelling as methodology (Archibald, 2008; Billy, 2015; Kovach 2009; Thomas 2005; Wilson, 2008) knowing there is no prescription for how to do this work I trusted the conversations would guide me. Slowly bigger concepts began to reveal themselves but I was really struggling to give them labels, I could not find words that wholly encompassed the experiences the woman were sharing. Recognizing my frustrations, I did not want that energy determining the outcome of this chapter and ultimately this work, so I stepped away from the analysis stage completely for three weeks while attending family matters. Coming back to my computer with a clear mind and spirit I began to explore the Secwepemctsin language of my ancestors for guidance. I am still a baby language learner but working through it, I was finally able to clearly see the seven themes presented below*

This chapter explores the themes generated from my analysis of the seven collected stories. The women's stories revealed seven primary themes that capture a narrative about the connectedness of sport, life in the city, wellness and relationships. Each theme is summarized below including the support of direct participant quotes. This chapter will begin with a brief introduction to the participating women and themes.

Having lived on the unceded traditional territory of the Lekwungen and WS'ANEC' speaking people for nearly six years now, I am fortunate to find myself part of a strong sporting community. Of the seven women participating in this project, five I knew quite well before starting, and two I was introduced to for the first time through this project. The majority of the women have strong connections to their home communities and, for various reasons, have found their way to Victoria. Four women play basketball, three at a recreation level (both co-ed and women's all native) and one competitively at the collegiate level and on all native teams. One woman was a competitive mainstream, track and field athlete, who is not competing at this time, and two play women's soccer (on both mainstream and all native teams). The ages of the women ranged from 25 – 49 years, and all seven women have been involved in team sport for the majority of their lives. It is important to acknowledge that these themes and stories are not representative of all Indigenous women who play sport in the city. This work is merely a snapshot in time of the opinions and stories of seven women and myself who currently live and play in the City of Victoria.

The seven themes are presented as follows. *Cgwesgwsénk* (Sunny side of the mountain), acknowledges the overarching benefits of team sport participation and the strength-based perspective that the women shared. *Ec k yúcwementwecw-ep* (Take care of each other), this theme of connectedness is present in all of the women's stories, thus woven throughout the following five themes as well. *Ye7éne ren ú7qwi* (This is my sister), recognizes the sisterhood created through team sport in the city. *Cnéwelc* (Follow the trail), explores the role model relationships the women shared as well as their feelings about being a role model. *Letwílč* (Healthy

once again), shares the views of wellness and how continually pursuing sport influences our wellness directly. *Ci'xelc* (Swim up-stream), acknowledges the many adversities women face for sport participation, although the narratives revealed how women continue to overcome barriers in pursuit of sport. Finally, *Ci'xwtsnem* (Raise one's voice loudly), are the women's answers to the question 'who needs to hear about this work and these stories of strength and sisterhood in sport in the city?'

### **Cgwesgwsénk (Sunny side of the mountain)**

*I started playing basketball in fourth grade and never looked back. It is hard to find words to define what it is about playing that has kept me coming back all these years. The endless life lessons, the physical challenge, the competition, the relationships, the list goes on but what tops it off is the laughter. As a grown woman there are many things that keep me coming back each season, but there are days at my computer that I crave the laughter of game day!*

I open with *Cgwesgwsénk*, because the positive, strength-based perspective that all the women spoke from is important. Their stories did not focus on their barriers but rather benefits of their sporting experiences. That said, these positive experiences shine through in each of the following six themes as well. In addition, this theme reflects the more significant concepts of 'learning life lessons' through team sport and that we don't 'outgrow' sport, but continue to learn from it. Six of the seven women spoke of the life lessons learned through sport and one woman specifically acknowledged how "you don't

just learn them sitting in a classroom right?!” [Tami]. Marianne, a soccer player from the North Vancouver Island region shares:

I find soccer motivates me to stay active and fit, like we do a *lot* of training in order to play and I think that’s a huge part of feeling good about yourself, but I also think psychologically you are so challenged by different situations on and off the field that I think that even socially, you have to kind of practice a lot of discipline and kind of self-reflection...it challenges you in so many ways good and bad, but I think that...I don’t know, it’s like a microcosm of life what goes on. It helps you exercise, ‘How do you best work though those kind of things?’ And then you take those skills and translate them into life?!

The internalization of these valuable lessons about problem solving, self-discipline, and self-reflection are further explored by Rayne who has experience playing post-secondary level basketball:

I think traveling (with the team) was a huge part of being able to grow and I mentioned before for me being with people who don’t look like me was really hard at first, but now like I am more comfortable being able to engage and try and figure out a common ground because before I’d be very internalized and not really converse with my teammates and feel nervous all the time. And so I think sports can teach you so much more than just loving the sport and enjoying playing. You have so many life lessons within basketball and for me it was learning to be super-disciplined with the time that I had. Time was so precious to me.

Most of the women reflected, at some point, on the value of time. Growing up playing sports we learn early about time management because we have to fit in practice, training, games, and tournament travel, around our family time, school work, part-time jobs and social time. These become transferable teachings for womanhood, balancing career, education, family, friendships, and sport; there is no wasted time.

All seven women mentioned, at least once, how sport was such an integral part of their world that they could not picture their life, past, present or future, without it. It is not a fleeting hobby, popular fitness regime, or eight-week training program; rather, there is something rooted within us that connects us to sport that keeps us coming back well into womanhood. I feel these are short but powerful statements that show the depth of the value sport brings to our lives:

It's been such a big part of my life for basically my whole life...I just can't really imagine *not* being a part of a team in some capacity. [T.A.]

I can't imagine my life without soccer or being a part of soccer in some way.

[Lynai]

Umm for me, I kinda just feel like it's a way of life right!? [Marianne]

I would ALWAYS say "I'm Tami and I'm a hurdler." And that's who I was. It's just something I'm passionate about that I don't think is ever going to go away.

[Tami]

This passion for sport grows with us and when we graduate from secondary school or post-secondary school there is an unspoken expectation that we "grow up," that our priorities change, thus shifting our lifestyle as well. Yet, when we have spent much of our

youth identifying as an athlete and thriving through sport, why is it assumed we can just let that go? Steph explains her experience stepping away from basketball...

I took the last year off, I was kinda calling it my retirement year and I was almost like done with basketball and done with sports and I don't know why? I just graduated from my program, I was like I can be an adult now, I can go to work ... and I went to my sisters first high school basketball game and it was just...something lit in me! It was inspiring, it was like oh god I missed this! And we started playing again and it's just something I'm passionate about that I don't think is ever going to go away.

*Cgwegwsénk*, shines a light on the experiences of playing team sports as a whole. The experiences and the value sport brings to our lives in adulthood, and reasons we continue to make space for sport in our busy adult lives, are explored further in the next six themes.

### **Ec k yúcwementwecw-ep (Take care of each other)**

*Sport was like the sweater thread woven through my family that when you pull it, the sweater bunches up all tight together. Growing up, sport consistently pulled us together; out of town tournaments were family vacations, dinner table conversations were of coaches and schedules, and we all took turns volunteering at each other's events. Each of us was committed and worked hard, we won together and lost together.*

*Ec k yúcwementwecw-ep* was a grounding theme present throughout each of the seven stories collected. As a collective, the sisterhood repeatedly spoke directly and indirectly of the power of sport to connect and up lift not only self, teammates, friends

and family but community as well. In the first five minutes of introductions, Marianne and Lynai who play soccer together, began describing what soccer is like back home in their communities where they first found their passion for sports:

We started playing native ball really, so like our communities... amongst the [North Vancouver Island] communities it's really big deal to play soccer.

People's identities are really tied into it. [Marianne]

Like when we play soccer and go to tournaments we call it "Our World Cup".

Because it's *so* competitive and everyone's rootin for their home town. It's like really exciting! [Lynai]

It's interesting too because we play league ball together which is like basically the open leagues down here which is different from the native ball! [Laughter] [Marianne].

You don't have as much pride...like it's not that you don't have pride because obviously as an athlete you're competitive and want to win and do well right, but I find with native ball it's just so different, it's more like... closer to your heart. [Lynai]

Rayne, a lifelong basketball player from an Interior Salish community, echoed this positive community connection through all native sport.

...if you've ever been to NAIG [North American Indigenous Games] or junior all native or any all native sport its more uplifting than just a regular spectator sport. When you go and people all hug you and everyone says "HI" to you and all the yummy food and traditional beadings and booths with clothing and it's just all so different from what they suspect it's going to be

like. Again, that's going to build relationships between people it's going to build communities up and opportunities for younger girls!

Already, from these two statements, we can feel how being part of a team sport community is about so much more than just playing the game. Raynne's final words connect us to another aspect of *Ec k yúcwementwecw-ep*; intergenerational responsibility. Even though we are living in the city and managing busy schedules, including jobs, education, kids, sports, to name a few, we all feel a sense of greater purpose behind our actions. All seven women echoed this responsibility in different ways. Raynne explains...

I've been places (playing basketball) where as an Indigenous person and a woman from a small community with two stop lights [Laughter]...I realized ya there's opportunity off the reserve, but always having that intent of 'okay, how am I going to make my community better?'...I do want to play this sport I *love* but I want to gain an education and kinda figure out what my purpose is here. What do I want to accomplish academically I can bring back to my own community or to the communities that I visit to help build them up?

This particular theme of *Ec k yúcwementwecw-ep*, is inclusive of the way we take care of ourselves and all our relations, it is woven into who we are as a people and that it is present in everything we do, including playing sports. Whether it is discussing the benefits we feel, the barriers we overcome, our experiences with role modeling, how we manage our personal wellness, or who we feel needs to join this conversation, we are consistently speaking from a place of kinship, connectedness, and relationality. I will

continually return to *Ec k yúcwementwecw-ep* as it is woven throughout the remaining five themes.

**Ye7éne ren ú7qwi (This is my sister)**

*There is something indefinably special about being on a strong team of women. We have ups and downs and players come and go but we are always there. Winter of 2016 I sustained a serious concussion in a co-ed league game. It was months of healing; physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually. It was my fourth concussion and I was seriously ready to hang up my shoes and not play again. I went almost a year without touching a ball, the only reason I returned this past fall was because of the gentle encouragement from my teammates. Even our most competitive women were incredibly patient and supportive as I sat the whole first game, too scared to take the floor. It took a few weeks to get back in the game and I definitely play a lot safer than I used to, but the important point is I am still playing the game I love! I could never have healed in this way without you ladies.*

Feeling connected to a sisterhood through sport gives us a feeling of kinship when our own families are far away or cannot give the support we need to thrive. The feeling of sisterhood in sport was mentioned directly by four of the seven women and indirectly by the other three. Rayne, with years of competitive basketball experience, summarizes it as follows:

I've always had that support within sports settings and it's helped me a lot especially through a lot of heartache and trauma and being able to go into practice and know there are 11 other girls here who love me and are going to

be there for me and that's so comforting in knowing that...if you have 12 or however many other women who have gone through what you've gone through, understand what's going on in your life, understand the systemic oppression, understand oppression in itself, understand violence...Like then it's *more* comforting cuz I'm understanding that 'hey I'm not alone at all in this.'

The support she describes is invaluable; learning to maneuver the city alone after moving away from family is daunting and finding a safe space to connect is often overwhelming. Her story continues:

I came from really a wonderful home, great parents, but also there's addictions, there's violence, there's all these other things that when you come to post-secondary you are really challenged to take it on your own and I feel like if I had girls from my nation, or from other nations who are from other reserves, or an urban setting who understand and live that, it's just...I don't know... it's like an unspoken language. I think we all understand each other in some way. Like 'ya, I get you!' You can be like 'ya I'm from this nation' and I'm like 'ya we're going to be great'. Not to disclude my friends who I'm close to or anything like that but it's such a silent sisterhood. You just feel comfort. [Rayne]

Lynai reflects on a teammate's experience to express her thoughts on sport sisterhood and this unspoken language:

I think being there and part of the team and just you know, she didn't talk about it but knowing that people were there for her and to support her, that's

just it. I don't necessarily need to talk about what's going on for me just knowing that there are people there in my life that are there to support me and we're there to support each other right. We probably have like a core of us that have stuck together, especially with our league soccer team, that have stuck together, that have seen each other through some really tough time and some really wonderful times. [Laughter.] Weddings. Lots of weddings!

This final statement acknowledges the challenging times but ends by shining light on the wonderful times shared with teammates. For myself and the women in this study, "it's a sense of community...It's like a family, you build bonds with these people" [Steph]. That is what sisterhood represents: it is having a reliable, relatable support system, it is having shared knowledge and experiences; it is the good and bad, and everything in between. You always feel it but rarely have to put it in words, as eloquently stated by Rayne "it's an unspoken language."

### ***Cnéwelc (Follow the trail)***

*I had many role models growing up, and still do today. The thing is, none of them are famous athletes, or celebrities, they are the women present in my everyday life, the women waking up every morning with intention, the brave women of the past, present and future who are embracing their power, overcoming adversity, and changing our world for the better. Acknowledging this holds me accountable to ensure my own intentions and actions are presented as such for the generations behind me.*

This theme reflects on those whose footsteps we follow and how we perceive our roles and responsibilities to those following us. The women revealed relationships with

parents, siblings, teammates and community members. Five of the seven women spoke of female familial role models, either mothers and or sisters, who influenced their sport participation. For T.A.,

A role model for me has been my mom because she was active in sport as much as she could while she was growing up... I think it just really kept her going through those really tough and dark years that she went through... she is really my role model for passion in sport and she is still active today! She goes and she plays floor hockey in [her home community in BC's interior region], she goes to drop-in badminton nights, she'll get groups of kids together (because she works in school systems as well, she's an aboriginal support worker) and she'll go and gather kids, she'll be like 'Ya, were going to meet at the elementary field tonight if you guys want to come play soccer!' So, like out of school time, out of work time, she'll get the kids of [the community] together to play a random soccer game and things like that because [the community] doesn't have sports teams like that or like little kids soccer leagues or whatever so she'll get the kids going... it's just so cool that she's just been able to be *that person* for so many years in the community.

So, she's just been the biggest role model.

Sibling role models also came up many times. The following statement was echoed almost identically by Marianne, Lynai and Tami: "My older sisters were players so of course you wanna do everything your older sisters are doing."

The second group of role models reported were female community members and or teammates. Many acknowledged the work ethic and competitive drive of the generation

before them: “When I was younger and just starting to play women’s, the older players who were really experienced and trained really hard, really set the bar for me. They trained really, really hard and so you wanted to kind of maintain that” [Marianne]. Lynai offered a specific example of a woman living their definition of role model.

When I moved down here we played with this one woman, she was quite a bit older than us...she’s just phenomenal out on the field, and *so* positive and to me that’s someone who stands out in my mind is a role model. When I think of a role model, I think of how they are on the field and how they are off the field as well. When we would play them and she would be like screaming at her players if they were unsportsmanlike in *any* way and just carried herself in such a beautiful way that I really admired.

Although this work is predominantly female-focused, I cannot leave out the third outstanding group of role models, dads. The influences these dads had on their daughters sport experience were too impactful to leave out. Dawson recalled the way her dad was not only involved in her sport experience but role modeled by playing sport himself.

My dad was definitely one of my influences and role models. He doesn’t play anymore, I wish he did because I liked watching him play when I was younger and that’s what was motivating for me, is because just watching him be out on the field running around playing soccer was just.... I don’t know what it was, it was just so inspiring for me.

Rayne shared how she continues to reflect on the influence her dad had on her decision to stick with competitive basketball at a very challenging time.

Sometimes when I'm being a pessimist or feeling negative and I think about that day and I'm like 'you could not even have gotten your degree, you could not even have done this.' Just being really thankful that I had that moment with my dad and how he sorta guided me, I feel like he knew before I did.

These stories all speak to inspiring, impactful, sport related role models, yet were articulated in very different ways: some were factual, others excited and animated, and a few very emotional.

Turning around on the trail (*Cnéwelic*) we look behind us at the future generations who are following our footsteps; exploring the women's views of being the role models for the next generation. When asked about their feelings of being role models, two women did not think of themselves specifically as role models. Dawson, who grew up playing soccer before switching over to basketball, notes:

I've been told by a few people that our dedication to it was what inspired them to keep playing and just keep going...she was like 'ya I looked up to you and whoever else and you guys are the reason I stayed and got into basketball' that was like woaaah. I don't know, I don't like to take credit you know...I guess that's why I don't think of myself as a role model even though I've been told that. It is nice to hear though because I never thought I had an impact like that on the kids back home.

Majority of the women spoke of youth in their communities, and often their younger siblings, nieces, nephews and cousins:

When I think about being a role model I think of my younger sister ... she looks like me and plays like me and looks up to me a lot. I have like six

younger siblings who all look up to me. I don't think about being anyone else's role model but when I think about it, I think about them. I want to be active for them, and I want... my little sister and brother love basketball to so I like to keep in the game so I can keep up, they are already taller than me so I don't need them beating me a lot! [Steph]

Again, similar with the previous themes, kinship is tightly woven within this theme of *Cnéwelc*. The primary element within this theme is that the foundation of these role model relationships are built on so much more than athletic ability or skill. They all embody the interwoven theme of *Ec k yúcwementwecw-ep*. Whether we are looking up to those ahead of us on the trail or back to those following us, this theme depicts how sport connects us to something greater than ourselves.

***Letwílç (Healthy once again)***

*I am continually re-defining what wellness means to me. It is daily self-check-ins and actively working to balance all aspects of my being. In my youth I struggled severely with my mental health, I was emotionally explosive and spiritually disconnected. The only aspect I felt I had any control over was my physical being, so I would just push my body to its absolute limits, repeatedly. Whether it was in basketball, or long distance endurance sports like triathlon or multi day trail races or lifting weights in the gym. I was in control, and while that made me happy, I was out of balance. Only in the last several years I have let go and began to return energy and attention to my mind, and spirit; in doing so I have finally allowed my physical body to*

*recover. Today, the physical exertion, laughter and connection I get from just one night of basketball re-aligns all aspects of my wellness.*

When addressing the topic of wellness within Indigenous populations the conversation often turns to balance and connectedness. Balance, for Indigenous peoples across Turtle Island, is often seen as the balance of your body, mind and spirit, or the balance of your mental, physical, emotional and spiritual aspects of self. Regardless, if we neglect any one of these our wellness becomes out of balance. In relation to wellness, connectedness speaks to connection and relationship with ourselves internally as well as external connection with all our relations. Marianne, a soccer player from a North Island community agrees:

I think a lot of [wellness] is the relationships. I think it's so valuable to have that comradery and cooperation and even like socializing and it really does help when you're living your life and working and raising kids and you know all the stressful stuff it really pulls you out of it to give that time for your body to just be physically active with a group of people that you're friends with and have relationships with.... That type of thing really pulls you out of "Oh my life" into a different kind of space just for a while.

It also brought up feelings of inward reflection. With the fast pace of life in the city (sport, family, work school...) it is easy to get caught up in barriers and expectations and not always take time to check in with ourselves and how we are managing this pace and our wellness. These inward reflections are necessary not only when we are feeling out of balance but also those times when everything is going right and acknowledging what we are doing that has created this sense of balance and connection. For T.A.,

I think wellness too is... I like to think about it holistically as well, so physical emotional, spiritual, mental...because my background has had such an involvement in sport and physical activity that's such a big part of my own personal wellness. What I also find really interesting too, when life gets really tough that's like the first thing I'll put on the back burner so I'm really trying to work on myself that way, where [physical activity] is not the first thing to go, I need to take those 5, 10, 15 minutes when life is just crazy to make sure I do that, to find that balance between all the aspects of my wholistic health.

Supporting our physical being in turn supports our overall wellness. All seven women revealed in some way that their time, either on the court or field, was their 'me time' or 'stress release', or in some cases both.

It's like putting yourself first right. With sports and activities, taking care of yourself and like how, I don't know why I always call it 'me time', but like that's just what it is, like rather than talking about watching Netflix [Laughter], I call like the sports and stuff my 'me time' and it just keeps me balanced and keeps the good vibes flowing. [Dawson]

We are all aunties, but as the one mom in the group, Lynai concurs:

I feel like it's kinda like a stress relief if you're having a rough day or something like that and it's *so* nice to just go out and run as hard as you can or you know kick the ball, and the social aspect of it! It's *so* amazing for me to go and talk to other moms or just tell a funny story about my kid or vent or rant about my kid but I feel like it's an outlet you don't necessarily have all the time.

This theme of wellness is intricately interwoven with the earlier theme *Ec k yúcwementwecw-ep* (Take care of each other) in the way the women recognize that they must take care of themselves and manage personal wellness before they can fully give themselves to supporting and caring for others. Outwardly, we may each fill many roles and positions, but inwardly we are only one person, of one body mind and spirit. This means we cannot separate our athlete self from our career, family, or academic self. I feel this is one of the reasons why we can leave our office, kids, partners, and or re-search behind and take a few hours a week to spend on the court (or field) running and laughing until our cheeks hurt. All the while talking about our kids, school, or the work we just escaped. When we take care of one aspect of our being we are in fact taking care of all aspects of our whole self.

### ***Cíxele* – (Swim up-stream)**

*Graduating from high school I could not fathom life without basketball, so I turned to college ball for three extra years of play. When that ended I was still not ready to stop playing, but I did not have a choice, there were no rec women's teams, only co-ed and men's leagues. When I moved to Abbotsford to finish my degree, I had a major surgery that prevented me from playing contact sports for an extended period of time, so I turned to community running groups for connection. Moving to Victoria for work in 2012, I was ready to play again! The first thing I did was look for a basketball team. It took a while and a few pick-up games with guys at the park before I met some ladies at co-ed drop-in. Together we made it to a few out of town tournaments, signed up for co-ed league every semester, we*

*even drove to Duncan for a Tuesday night women's drop in. We've budgeted for gym rentals on and off over the years and even fought off the guys taking over our scheduled gym times at UVic. I turn 32 this year, so it has been over a decade of actively seeking out spaces and connections to play women's sport. As frustrating as it is playing with guys, booking expensive gym time in old middle schools, or always having to leave town to play against other women's teams, we will continue this active pursuit until there is a women's program to join.*

This theme addresses the women's resilience in their continued commitment to playing team sport. Through community and family, all seven women were involved in sport as youth and some even as children, and all seven intend to continue pursuing sport in the future. The difference is now, through womanhood, we are overcoming substantially more barriers to accessing and committing to a team.

There's definitely not anywhere to transition to after youth sport or college sport. It's almost like you are forced into something you didn't even get to choose. You don't get to choose! You're forced into not being able to play or having to really work hard to find opportunities. [Rayne]

Her statement articulates the frustration many feel with patriarchal sport systems; there are always plenty of men's basketball leagues in the city but rarely one for women. Especially when, "you can see how popular Indigenous women's sport is with things like the All Native basketball tournament or the big soccer tournament that's here at Easter so you can see how many ladies teams enter these!" [T.A.]

Our current society's value of the word 'busy' came up in one conversation and the challenge to find time as parents, students, workers, athletes etc., to always make it to practice, workouts or game day. As exemplified by Lynai:

I think probably now my lifestyle, just being a parent it's really hard to keep up to my son's activities and stay on top of my own health and wellness and I have resorted to getting out for runs and workouts on my lunch break because I just don't have time when I get home. Like it's so challenging to maintain a healthy lifestyle.

The women all expressed the value of being physical active and its positive effect on their overall wellness, despite the challenges experienced to maintain our physical wellbeing. For example, when discussing living in a city, five of seven women spoke of positive sport experiences playing on teams in other cities. Six reflected specifically on their time joining successful women's only programs.

Just because, having been here (Victoria) for the last couple years and always playing coed, I've never played league for just women. So, going from coed to just women was AMAZING like just being able to play every night with women and only women was like OH MY GOD this is *sooo* uplifting for me. Just because you get the chance to actually play and get the ball and stuff like that. I just never ever felt that difference before, other than like when we went to tournaments and stuff...so like ya it's been a big thing though for me being here (only playing co-ed). [Dawson]

This view was eye opening for me, as my experience was opposite. In high school and college, I had only played women's ball so the switch to co-ed was a hard

transition. The seven women all agreed co-ed is not their first choice, but when it is the only choice they take it:

I had so much more fun doing that (women's ball) than being at co-ed because at the wellness center it gets frustrating when it's like majority guys you're playing with and you don't get the chance to get the ball all the time, you just kinda run back and forth up the court. [Laughter] like *heyyy!* I'm just like decoration, [Laughter] so like that has become frustrating for me.

[Dawson]

Sometimes these frustrations become too much, and we just need a break, so we will go to great lengths to avoid playing co-ed basketball and find women's only drop in or league play.

I play better with a woman's team! It's really hard with like a male dominated court. Me and the girls even drove out to Duncan a few times to play with the woman's drop in there...it's like I haven't played that well in well over a year.

[Steph]

Rather than focusing on the hurdles as barriers to sport, this theme captures that, in spite of the barriers, (e.g. time, accessibility, co-ed leagues, travel, finances, etc.) we still find a way to play, and we continue to *Citéléc*.

### ***Cítixwtsnem* (Raise one's voice loudly)**

*I love the respect that *cítixwtsnem* commands. It is about so much more than increasing your volume, it is about the impact of your words. Writing and defending this thesis is *cítixwtsnem* for me. In the act of sharing their stories, each woman I met with was "raising their voice". Together our voices can*

*be heard over mountains; no one needs to empower Indigenous women for we are powerful beings.*

In this final theme, when asked who needs to hear these stories, and about the intention of these conversations, and the outcomes of this work, there were two distinct responses echoed in different ways by all seven women. They want the youth to know the value of joining and continuing to play team sport, and the other Indigenous women out there to know they are not alone, and to not abandon pursuing their sport.

This first statement by Marianne, one of the older, more experienced players, reflects the sense of responsibility these women have to the next generation, as mentioned in *Cnéwelc*:

I think it is important for the young people to a) participate but b) kind of a lot of the discipline that comes with it is really important for them to engage with, rather than the ego part. And I think if, you know, the young players coming up could focus on that or maybe even... sometimes people get discouraged from playing because of that ego element and winning. But certainly, the skill development and the health and wellness that comes with playing a sport, and I do think that in this day in age how computers and tablets and cell phones and all the electronics for young people that getting out and running and being physical in the world is even more important you know.

Tami, a younger Cree Metis track team athlete, reflects similar ideas of getting youth involved early:

I think the young kids. Obviously everyone has their own interests but just showing the potential that sport brings to people who maybe, you know school can be hard and kids can be mean, we've talked about when you join sport you automatically have a team and your talking together and hanging out you're meeting people you might not have met in your classes and stuff so I think for kids who aren't feeling super welcomed in school or are worried or suffering from like not being able to concentrate or having low confidence or something, getting them into sport can help them so much. Mental health or feeling good about yourself and meeting people...and you don't have to be *great* at it, just play and meet people.

The second response to *C'ixwtsnem* is summarized by T.A., one of the experienced basketball players: "The Indigenous women themselves, wanting to know their options and what is available to participate in. And knowing that maybe they can be part of team sports or things like that." Another basketball player supports the importance of opening the conversation about Indigenous women's need for sport opportunity in the city.

And you know, other Indigenous athletes because I think sometimes we do have these conversations and some people don't hear about these conversations because they are important! Maybe because they aren't in academia or maybe they are isolated or maybe they are that one person that is trying to make it ya know.

[Rayne]

The following statement summarizes the views of all seven women and presents a question brought up in five of the seven stories shared.

So, it is [important], I think, when we talk about you know, urban Indigenous women's sports or like opportunities, I think it's huge because it's not just about the sports. It's about having that support going through it and ya maybe you had a hard day or kids causing trouble but you're going to be able to go to this group and engage and build trust amongst each other. That's huge. You see it all the time! You see it in women's drum groups, or dance groups in a lot of different spaces but then again why is sports so excluded from the talk when it's so huge? [Raynne]

When asked who need to hear about these conversations and this work, not one woman responded with herself in mind. No one suggested organizations who may support a woman's league or sponsors who may fund a team. They were thinking of our people, those who may need a connection to sport in the city more than anyone else, our youth and our women. That these women were not thinking of themselves exemplifies the way *Ec k yúcwementwecw-ep* (Take care of each other) is deeply entrenched in who we are as a people. In the next chapter, this theme and the previous six, are discussed further in relation to the literature. Strengths, limitations, reflections and recommendations for future work conclude the thesis.

## Chapter 5

### Discussion

*I have learned, the importance of having a strong support system entering into a grad studies program. Throughout this re-search journey I felt very academically isolated, this feeling motivated me to continually step out of my comfort zone to connect with relevant resources, supports. Through this searching process I have been fortunate to meet some incredible people both on campus and in community. That said, my greatest support comes from my partner Chris, he is also currently completing an Indigenous re-search project in the same program as I. Many people thought going through grad school together would be tense and stressful, but in fact it was the opposite we became a team, supporting and celebrating all the ups and downs of our re-search experience. The two of us spent many days and nights talking through our re-search topics, methodological choices, sharing references, and day to day re-search experiences, taking it all one step at a time. I cannot stress the importance of connecting and growing a support system while in the academy, you are not alone.*

The previous chapter focused individually on each of the seven themes from the seven stories collected. This chapter will further explore the three dominant concepts from the seven themes, the occurrence of laughter within the circles, the strengths and limitations of this work, and finally, summarize with my hopes for the future of this work.

Before delving into this chapter, I want to reflect on sentiments expressed by Shawn Wilson in his book *Research is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods*. When speaking to relationships and discourse in an Indigenous re-search paradigm as reflecting “epistemological egalitarianism” he poses, if everyone is thought of as equally valid then there is no need to be critical of or judge other’s ideas or theories. Wilson poses, “one person cannot judge someone else’s conclusions, or even attempt to make conclusions for someone else but only make new connections to ideas” (Wilson, 2008, p. 94). I was mindful of this sentiment throughout the analysis stage and remain so as I go forward in this discussion.

The sequence in which the seven themes are portrayed is important. As shown in a petal flower visual in Appendix D, these themes are all incredibly interconnected; so it took a few attempts to get the order right. Intuitively two themes emerged as connecting and integral links: *Cgwesgwsénk* (Sunny side of the mountain) and *Ec k yúcwementwecwep* (Take care of each other) as their narratives were woven throughout every theme in chapter 4. *Cgwesgwsénk* (Sunny side of the mountain) was presented first because readers need to understand the passion and commitment that many feel towards sport, which is such a major part of our lives, and a part of who we are. It was a powerful experience to read, and re-read, the transcripts and recognize the positive lens that everyone spoke from. This is not to say we did not discuss adversity, but these moments were brief and not the focus. Leading into story collection, I was hopeful for strength-based conversations but recognized the challenges of pursuing sport in the city and was equally prepared for a more barrier focused conversation. This strength-based lens is advocated by Vicky Paraschak and Kristi Thompson (2014) in their review of

government practices, policies, and statistical databases related to Aboriginal peoples' physical cultural practices. They revealed that such "depiction of Aboriginal health in Canada aligns with a 'deficit perspective' because it focuses first on existing problems, then supports the engagement of outside experts to resolve such problems" (p. 1047).

In their exploration of the data from a strengths perspective they found four key strengths; "being wholistically balanced, family and community oriented, able to draw on cultural and mainstream approaches and committed to developing their own, preferred approach towards enhancing their lives through physical activity" (p. 1055). For Paraschak and Thompson (2015), the merit of a strength-based perspective is its empowering outlook for those disenfranchised through unequal power relations. Further, adopting a strength based perspective "recognizes the need to critically analyze and rethink the assumptions and the consequences of the use of 'expert' knowledge" (p. 1048). This statement can be connected to both the colonial sport systems in Canada as well as the often imbalanced power relations present in research with Indigenous peoples. The strength-based perspective in no way denies the existing problems, but rather reframes them to focus on what is going well and how those actions can be used to enhance future situations and/or programs (Paraschak & Thompson, 2014). Wilson also supports this view when he writes that "focusing on the positive in Indigenous research focuses on harmony. It forms a relationship that pulls things together... making a connection in this way allows for growth and positive change to take place" (Wilson, 2008, p. 109). In my preparation re-search for this work, I came across many articles from each perspective, and could not predict what would come up in my own story collection process. Had the women arrived and shared a great release, venting about the

barriers and adversity they face pursuing sport in the city, I would have embraced those stories just the same, respecting their truth and courage. All that was under my control was that I carried out this work in a good way, grounded in my teachings and methodologies each step of the way.

The theme of *Ec k yúcwementwecw-ep* (Take care of each other) presented second so as to bridge the opening theme with the remaining themes. The significance of connectedness both with ourselves and with all our relations through sport is demonstrated in this second theme, and further explored in relation to the preceding themes.

Before we can take care of each other we need to first take care of ourselves. This was expressed in the theme *Letwílç* (Healthy once again) which showed us that our experiences and definitions of wellness require internal reflection. In Lavalley's (2007) work connecting physical activity and healing through the medicine wheel, she uses sharing circles, and Anishnaabe symbol-based- reflection to capture participants' stories. Through grounding her work in Indigenous ways of knowing and being, she too looks beyond just the physical or psychological impacts of physical activity or sport, to address the wholistic benefits and experience of participation. She concludes, "rather than focusing on specific variables or making blanket statements about psychological, physical, or social impacts of physical activity, this research suggests that each person gains different things from their involvement" (p. 149). Though each woman in this study presented somewhat similar experiences of wellness each one's experience and definition is a little bit different, showing that sport fills a different need in each person's life. Being aware of our personal wellness needs and giving time and energy to

addressing those needs, allows us to find balance within, because only then can we take care of others in a good way.

This sense of *Ec k yúcwementwecw-ep* is presented further in the theme of *Cnéwelc* (Follow the trail). The stories shared reflect back to the gap in literature presented in chapter two. There is re-search addressing historical positions of women, in community and in games, as well as research of male Indigenous athlete role models, mainstream female role models though physical activity, and Indigenous youth expressing their need for strong Indigenous role models, but there is no re-search acknowledging the powerful position of Indigenous women as role models though sport. I feel the women participating in this study and their stories directly address this gap and open the floor for this conversation to continue.

This interwoven theme of, *Ec k yúcwementwecw-ep* (Take care of each other) truly captures the essence of this work: from the way we manage our own wellness to kinship and community sport, to tightknit sport sisterhoods, we are taking care of ourselves and others. This theme presents the greater value of sport in our lives beyond physical exertion, skill and entertainment. Cree scholar Tracey Lindberg (2004) supports, “the English language cannot fully encompass the intricate web of relations in Indigenous families with the terms “kinship” “extended family” and “sisters” (p. 343). Lindberg’s sentiments were echoed in this re-search with voices of how sport cultivates relationships and sisterhood. As one of the women noted in the final theme of *Cít’xwtsnem* (Raise one’s voice loudly), “You see it all the time! You see it in women’s drum groups, or dance groups in a lot of different spaces but then again why is sports so excluded from

the talk when it's so huge?" This question leads us to *C'íxwtsnem* (Raise one's voice loudly).

The theme *C'íxwtsnem* (Raise one's voice loudly) was chosen for the final theme because the way it presented itself embodies all of the previous six themes. This theme demonstrates *C'íxelc* (Swim up-stream) in the awareness of supporting others to overcome their barriers to joining sport or this conversation. It illustrates *Cgwesgwsénk* (Sunny side of the mountain), *Cnéwelc* (Follow the trail), and *Letwíl c* (Healthy once again) by how forcefully the group spoke of sport's influence on the wellness of our youth, specifically those who are struggling or not yet involved. Finally, *Ec k yúcwementwecw-ep* (Take care of each other) and *Ye 7éne ren ú 7qwi* (This is my sister) are embedded through the affirmations that women need to know they are not alone in their search for sport in the city, and that all Indigenous women who seek to find a place in urban sport need to be included in this conversation about sisterhood in sport.

The interconnectedness of the seven themes demonstrates the profound strength and resilience of Indigenous women in sport, supporting Anderson's (2000) observation that "with the foundations for resistance in place, Native women may strengthen their sense of identity through various acts of resistance. With each act of resistance women can further define and confirm positive identity and challenge the oppression of Native people in general" (p. 137). These acts of resistance, through sport began as early as 1897, when the Indigenous girls from Fort Shaw Indian School seized the opportunity to learn the sport of basketball, became renowned for their teamwork, and earned the title of 1904 St Louis World Fair champions (Peavy & Smith p. 243). Together, the seven themes highlighted in this study support that acts of resistance are alive today, as

Indigenous women continue to pursue team sport in Victoria, and thus challenge the ongoing oppression of Indigenous peoples. Through their resistance in sport, these women further define and confirm positive identities for themselves as well and for the future generations.

This re-search project brought with it my first experience with transcribing voices captured in circle, and it was an oddly confusing process. How do you fully express the hand gestures, expressions and emotions that came with each story? I tried including capitals, and bold font in places I felt expressed extra energy, but that merely captured my experience of hearing someone else's story. Before sending copies of the transcripts back to their owners for approval, I needed to make sure I got this part right. One way of doing so was by noting each time there was a pause for thought or laughter. Later in the analysis process, using the NVivo software, I created a word cloud that represented the most frequently used words, as well as my notes of nonverbal language and emotions. The outcome was initially unexpected but in hindsight not surprising. In big bold letters across the middle of my screen was the word 'Laughter' (Appendix E). I was not anticipating this at first because I was focused on the content of the conversations, but after stepping back, it was not surprising. Indigenous laughter is unlike any other. Revered scholar, the late Vine Deloria Jr. (Sioux), wrote the chapter 'Indian Humor' in his seminal book, *Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto* (1969). He described teaching through teasing, unifying tribes with jokes of the past, and healing and understanding through humour: "One of the best ways to understand a people is to know what makes them laugh" (p. 39). Writing in *Very Good Medicine: Indigenous Humor & Laughter*, Cynthia Lindquist (2016) from the Spirit Lake Nation notes that "Indian

humor is unique and as such, is the heart of our resilience and survivability” (p. 28). This connection through laughter and humour is known and felt across Turtle Island, yet sparsely noted in the literature. The presence of laughter in their stories is further evidence not only the value of this work but the resiliency of these women.

### **Strengths and Limitations**

As in most re-search journeys, this project had its ups and downs, exposing all possible human emotions. For this experience, I am grateful. Before identifying the limitations of this study I want to return to the originally stated importance of this work. Firstly, it has been over two decades since Victoria Paraschak (1995), laid down her first call to action, which was echoed again by Janice Forsyth (2007) and Paraschak and Forsyth (2010). The challenge for Indigenous sportswomen to talk more extensively about their experiences and their many roles in relation to sport and recreation. The methodological process of this project allowed for just that, as the women’s experiences as athletes were presented in their own words and organized in the aforementioned thematic categories. Secondly, these stories and this work can be used to help shape future sport programming, particularly policy re-search that is currently lacking for this population in the city of Victoria. The women present direct calls to action for the inclusivity of women’s sport in the city, and the need to continue encouraging youth (specifically girls) engagement in sport. Finally, this work further speaks to the wider conversation about Indigenous women’s resilience and wellness. “What we do know is that Native women are finding their way home in more ways than one, and that there is a growing recognition of...personal inner strength and resiliency” (Wesley-Esquimax, 2009, p. 25).

All of these outcomes were possible because of the strong methodological base this study was built upon. Working from an Indigenous re-search paradigm allowed me to fully connect with, and feel confident in, this re-search process. Choosing open talking circles for story collection was a strength of this study, as was the opportunity for the women to review transcripts and provide feedback. Grounded in the 4R's and self-location, the circles were a safe, comfortable space for the women to explore their experiences from a strength based perspective. Further the story telling methodology and petal flower framework supported me in staying true to my own ways of knowing and being during the analysis process.

The key limitation for this work was the lack of literature in this field. From the beginning, I knew the search for 'academic' re-search on this topic was going to be challenging. With such little discourse inclusive of Indigenous women who play sport in general, the selection of work related to Indigenous women's team sport in cities was limited. Further, filtering out the historical and present-day work of researchers who exemplified colonial research practices of institutionally driven purposes and 'data collection' processes, required creativity in assembling and crafting the literature review. As a result, I intentionally wrote the literature review to address the distinct pieces of the puzzle (Indigenous women in communities, identity in the city, Indigenous women as role models, culture health and wellness and Indigenous women in sport), with the intention of using the findings to bridge the pieces together.

Minor limitations for this study include only recruiting athletes from the city of Victoria, excluding other urban cities, being inclusive of women playing and living in the city and not rural communities. Further, of all the Indigenous women pursuing sport in

the city only seven were available in the story collection the time line. As well, this work focused on team sport, the perspective of individual sport athletes were not included.

Though there were many detours on my re-search journey, I am grateful for the lessons that each challenge taught me.

### **Looking Forward**

My decision to return to the institution of academia was full of anticipation and excitement; I had a clear vision of the direction I wanted to go, and I was ready to go. However, I was naïve in my hasty excitement. Being out of school for five years, I was nervous about being accepted into graduate school. With no family or friends with graduate studies experiences I only applied to the department of my undergraduate studies and did not explore other departments that may have suited my re-search interests. It is a well recorded experience that Indigenous students in programs and institutions that lack Indigenous faculty, face more significant challenges. Indigenous historians and writers Devon Mihesuah (Choctaw) and Waziyatawin-Angela Wilson (Wahpetunwan Dakota), as editors of *Indigenizing the Academy* (2004), give voice to Indigenous scholars' experiences with and in the institution and the movement toward 'Indigenizing' the academy. As Indigenous re-searchers, working from different epistemological lenses, frameworks and worldviews, we face more barriers in the western dominant institution (Mihesuah, 1998; 2005; Mihesuah & Wilson, 2004; Simpson & Smith, 2014). This body of work is not only inclusive of Indigenous scholars, but of all Indigenous peoples feeling isolated within the academy, from undergraduate students through to post-doctoral fellows, and faculty. For myself, I stepped into a program not well practiced in supporting Indigenous students. However, reflecting back to a strength-based

perspective, the body of work on Indigenizing the academy reminds us that we are not alone in this experience.

I now return one last time to the interconnected foundations of *Ec k yucwementwecw-ep*. This theme demonstrates how the 4R's do not just support research methodologies, rather the principles and teachings embedded in each are, in fact, a way of being and knowing. The presence of relationality throughout all seven themes could not have existed without a base of respect, responsibility, reciprocity and relevance shared, and expressed by all members of the group. In particular, I wish to address the sense of responsibility each woman demonstrated. Every woman, at some point, expressed the need and importance of our young people having opportunities to be involved in sport in some way. As detailed in Chapter 2, this deep-rooted responsibility is connected to the role of Indigenous women in community, how Indigenous women create space in the city, Indigenous women as role models, and how we use sport as an act of resistance at both recreation and elite levels. Lindberg (2004) supports that "a fundamental part of our strength as nation members is our commitment to the health of the whole" (p. 350). As articulated by the women in this re-search, it is now my responsibility to not only the next generation of Indigenous women in sport but future Indigenous women interested in pursuing sport re-search, to share some guidance for future work.

Using open talking circles work addressing topics of team sport, kinship and sisterhood, further fosters the exact sense of relationship we are writing about. Also, had scheduling allowed, we would have gathered over a meal, prior to story collection, to witness the determination of women from different team sport circles in the city. Having

a longer time period between this initial gathering and the first circle may allow for greater accommodation of participants' schedules.

Throughout this re-search journey I continually turned to the works of female scholars doing Indigenous re-search for guidance and direction, many of whom posed a challenge to those following their path. While this work answers the calls to action presented by Paraschak and Forsyth (2010), I extend these calls to action to the future Indigenous women with sport stories to tell. The stories shared here represent a moment and place in time, we now need to continue exploring and telling our stories of sport. It is time to gather the voices of our women across the nation who are actively pursuing sport - in rural areas, within communities, playing individual or team sport, and of all ages. In doing so, we must continue exploring our histories and our wellness, and speak from our place of strength and power. Claim your space in all departments of the academy, and engage your sisterhood in expanding this conversation. Reach further, invite more women, host larger circles, and create more space for the voices of our women. Then, make our voices heard beyond the pages. Together, develop a sport program that best meets the needs of your sisterhood, apply for funding, implement appropriate programming, and spread the word. As numbers increase create a board of committed players to plan fundraisers, organize coaching clinics for youth programs, and anything else the women voice important; witness what happens when Indigenous women take control of their sport experience. Though my academic journey is ending, as a life-long learner I look forward to reading the brilliant work of the next Indigenous woman, to carry on this conversation.

## References

- Aboriginal Sport Recreation and Physical Activity Partners Council. (2009). *Aboriginal sport recreation and physical activity strategy*. Retrieved February 2, 2018 from [http://isparc.ca/pdf/asrpa\\_strategy.pdf](http://isparc.ca/pdf/asrpa_strategy.pdf)
- Absolon, K. (2011). *Kaandossiwin: How we come to know*. Halifax, NS: Fernwood.
- Absolon, K., & Willett, C. (2005). Putting ourselves forward: Location in Aboriginal research methodology. In L. Brown & S. Strega (Eds), *Research as resistance: Critical Indigenous and anti-oppressive research approaches* (pp. 97-127). Toronto Ontario: Canadian Scholars Press.
- Adelson, N. (2005). The embodiment of inequity: Health disparities in Aboriginal Canada. *Canadian Journal of Public Health*, 96(2), S45–S61.
- Anderson, K. (2000). *A recognition of being: Reconstructing Native womanhood*. Toronto, Ontario: Sumach Press. ISBN 987-1-894549-12-7.
- Anderson, K. (2011). *Life stages and native womenhood: Memory, teachings, and story medicine*. Winnipeg, Manitoba: University of Manitoba Press. ISBN: 978-0-88755-726-2.
- Archibald, J. (2008). *Indigenous storywork: Educating the heart, mind, body, and spirit*. Vancouver, B.C: UBC Press.
- Bedard, R. E. (2007). Role models: An Anishinaabe-kwe perspective. *Canadian Women Studies*, 26, 189-192.
- Billy, J. (2015). Exploring the use of traditional Secwepemc stories to teach language (Master's Thesis, University of Victoria). Retrieved from <http://uvic.summon.serialssolutions.com>.

- Brandt-Castellano, M. (2004). Ethics of Aboriginal research. *Journal of Aboriginal Health, 1*(1), 98-114.
- Bruner, B., & Chad, K. (2013). Physical activity attitudes, beliefs, and practices among women in a Woodland Cree community. *Journal of Physical Activity & Health, 10*(8), 1119–27. <http://doi.org/2011-0344> [pii].
- Bull, J. R. (2010). Research with Aboriginal peoples: authentic relationships as a precursor to ethical research. *Journal of Empirical Research on Human Research Ethics: JERHRE, 5*(4), 13–22. <http://doi.org/10.1525/jer.2010.5.4.13>.
- Canada Census. (2011) and (2016) Retrieved February 2018, from:  
<https://www.statcan.gc.ca/eng/subjects/standard/sgc/notice/sgc-06>
- Chandler, M.J. and Lalonde, C.E., 2008. Cultural continuity as a moderator of suicide risk among Canada's First Nations. In: L. Kirmayer and G. Valaskasis, eds. *Healing traditions: the mental health of Aboriginal peoples in Canada*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 221–248.
- Coram, S. (2007). Performative pedagogy and the creation of desire: The Indigenous athlete/role model and implications for learning. *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education, 36*, 56-64. doi: 10.1017/S1326011100004427.
- Crabtree, B.F., & Miller, W.L. (1992). *Doing qualitative research*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Dion Stout, M. D. (2015). Healthy living and Aboriginal women: The tension between hard evidence and soft logic. In P. Armstrong & J. Deadman (Eds.), *Women's health: Intersections of policy, research, and practice* (pp. 101-111). Toronto, Ontario, Canada: Women's Press.

- Edwardson, L. (March 8, 2018) Bridgetty Lacquette, Canada's 1<sup>st</sup> First Nations woman on Canada's Olympic hockey team, on mission to inspire. Retrieved from: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/calgary/brigitte-lacquette-canada-s-1st-first-nation-woman-on-canada-s-olympic-hockey-team-on-mission-to-inspire-1.4568938>
- Findlay, L. C., & Kohen, D. E. (2007). Aboriginal children's sport participation in Canada. *Pimatisiwin: A Journal of Aboriginal and Indigenous Community Health*, 5(1), 185–206.
- Forsyth, J., & Wamsley, K. B. (2006). "Native to native ... we'll recapture our spirits": The world Indigenous nation's games and North American Indigenous games as cultural resistance. *International Journal of the History of Sport*, 3367(March). <http://doi.org/10.1080/09523360500478315>.
- Forsyth, J. (2007). The Indian Act and the (re) shaping of Canadian Aboriginal sport practices. *International Journal of Canadian Studies* 35, 95–111.
- Guthrie Valakakis, G., Dion Stout, M., & Gruimond, E. (Eds.) (2009). *Restoring the balance: First Nations women, community, and culture*. Winnipeg Manitoba: University of Manitoba Press. ISBN 978-0-8875-186-4.
- Hall, A. (2002). *The girl and the game: A history of women's sport in Canada*. University of Toronto Press.
- Hall, A. (2013). Toward a history of Aboriginal women in Canadian sports. In J. Forsyth & A. Giles (Eds.), *Aboriginal Peoples and Sport in Canada* (pp. 64-91). Vancouver BC: UBC Press.

- Hovey, R. B., Delormier, T., & McComber, A. (2016). Social-relational understandings of health and well-being from an Indigenous perspective. *International Journal of Indigenous Health, 10*(1), 35–54.
- Indigenous Wellness Group. (2012). IndigenACTION Phase One: Roundtable Report. [www.afn.ca](http://www.afn.ca)
- Iwama, M., Marshall, M., Marshall, A., & Bartlett, C. (2009). Two eyed seeing and the language of healing in community-based research. *Canadian Journal of Native Education, 32*(2), 3-23.
- Jefferies, T. (1991). Sechelt women and self-government. *BC Studies 89*, 81–88.
- Kovach, M. (2005). Emerging from the margins: Indigenous methodologies. In L. Brown & S. Strega (Eds.), *Research as resistance: Critical Indigenous and anti-oppressive research approaches* (pp. 19-36). Toronto ON: Canadian Scholars Press.
- Kovach, M. (2009). *Indigenous methodologies: Characteristics, conversations, and contexts*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Krieg, B. (2016). Understanding the role of cultural continuity in reclaiming the identity of young Indigenous women. *Girlhood Studies, 9*(2), 28–45.  
<http://doi.org/10.3167/ghs.2016.090204>.
- Lavallée, L. F. (2007). Physical activity and healing through the medicine wheel. *Pimatisiwin: A Journal of Aboriginal and Indigenous Community Health, 5*(1), 127–154.
- Lavallée, L. F. (2009). Practical application of an indigenous research framework and two qualitative Indigenous research methods: Sharing circles and Anishnaabe

- symbol-based reflection. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 8(1), 21-40.
- Lawrence, B. (2003). Gender, race, and the regulation of native identity in Canada and the United States: An overview. *Hyptia*, 18(2), 3-31.
- Lawrence, B. (2004). The “Real” Indians and others: Mixed-blood- urban native peoples and Indigenous nationhood. Lincoln and London, University of Nebraska Press
- Lindberg, T. (2004). Not my sister: What feminists can learn about sisterhood from Indigenous women. *Canadian Journal of Women and the Law*. 16, 342-352.
- Lindquist, C. (2016) Very good medicine: Indigenous humor and laughter. *Tribal college: Journal of American Indian & Higher Education*, 27(4), 28-31.
- Lomawaima, K. T. (2017). Mind, heart, hands: Thinking, feeling, and doing in Indigenous history methodology. In Chris Andersen & Jean M. O’Brien, *Sources and methods in Indigenous studies*. London & New York, Routledge, Taylor Francis Group.
- Loppie, C. (2007). Learning from the grandmothers : Incorporating Indigenous principles into qualitative research, *Qualitative Health Research*, 17(2), 276-284.  
<http://doi.org/10.1177/1049732306297905>.
- Mason, C., & Koehli, J. (2012). Barriers to physical activity for Aboriginal youth: Implications for community health, policy, and culture. *Pimatisiwin: A Journal of Aboriginal and Indigenous Community Health*, 11(1), 97–108.
- Martin-Hill, D. (2003). She no speaks: and other colonial constructs of “The Traditional Woman”. In Kim Anderson & Bonita Lawrence (Eds.), *Strong women stories: Native vision and community survival* (pp. 106-120). Toronto, ON: Sumach Press.

- Martin-Hill, D. (2009). Traditional medicine and restoration of wellness strategies. *Journal of Aboriginal Health*, 5(1) 26-42.
- McIvor, O. (2009). Language and culture as protective factors for at-risk communities. *Journal De la Santé Autochtone*, November, 6-25.
- Mihesuah, D. (Ed.). (1998). *Natives and academics: Researching and writing about American Indians*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- Mihesuah, D., & Wilson A. (Eds.). (2004). *Indigenizing the academy: Transforming scholarship and empowering communities*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- Mihesuah, D. (2005) *So you want to write about American Indians? A guide for writers, students, and scholars*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- Minister of Public Works & Government Services Canada. (2005). Canadian Heritage: Sport Canada's policy on Aboriginal peoples' participation in sport. Catalogue No.: CH24-10/2005 ISBN: 0-662-68748-5
- Moreton-Robinson, A. (2013). Towards an Australian Indigenous women's standpoint theory. *Australian Feminist Studies*, 28(78), 331-347.
- Moreton-Robinson, A. (2017). Relationality: A key presupposition of an Indigenous social research paradigm. In C. Andersen & J. O'Brien (Eds.), *Sources and methods in Indigenous studies* (pp. 69-77). Abingdon, Oxon & New York NY: Routledge.
- Morse, J. (2008). Confusing categories and themes. *Qualitative Health Research*, 18, 727-728.
- National Aboriginal Health Organization. (2007). *Ownership, control, access, and possession (OCAP)*. ISBN:978-0-9780785-8-4.

- National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health. (2012). *The sacred space of womanhood: Mothering across the generations*. Retrieved February 2017  
<http://www.nccah-ccnsa.ca/en/publications.aspx?sortcode=2.8.10&publication=66>.
- O'Bonsawin, C. M. (2000). Failed TEST: Aboriginal Sport Policy and the Olympian First Sisters (Masters Thesis, University of Western Ontario).
- O'Bonsawin, C. M. (2011). Indigenous peoples and Canadian-hosted Olympic games. In J. Forsyth & A. R. Giles (Eds.), *Aboriginal Peoples & Sport in Canada* (pp.35-63). Vancouver BC: UBC Press,
- Oxford English Dictionary. (2018) Oxford University press.
- Paraschak, V. (1995). Invisible but not absent: Aboriginal women in sport and recreation. *Canadian Woman Studies*, 15(4), 71–72.
- Paraschak, V. & Forsyth, J. (2008). *Moving forward: A national roundtable on Aboriginal women in sport*, February 22-24. Final Report. CAAWS Ottawa, Ontario.
- Paraschak, V., & Forsyth, J. (2010). Aboriginal women 'working' at play, Canadian Insights. *Journal Ethnologies*, 32(1), 157-173. DOI: 10.7202/045217ar.
- Paraschak, V., & Thompson, K. (2014). Finding strength(s): insights on Aboriginal physical cultural practices in Canada. *Sport in Society*, 17(8), 1046-1060, DOI: 10.1080/17430437.2013.83835.
- Parlee, B., & O'Neil, J. (2007). The Dene way of life: Perspectives on health from Canada's north. *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 41, 112-133.
- Patton, M.Q. (2002). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods*. CA: Sage

- Peavy, L. & Smith, U. (2008). 'Leav(ing) the White(s)...far behind them': The Girls from Fort Shaw (Montana) Indian school, basketball championships of the 1904 world's fair. In Susan Brownell (Ed.), *The 1904 Anthropology Days and Olympic Games*. Lincoln and London, University of Nebraska Press.
- Péloquin, C., Doering, T., Alley, S., & Rebar, A. (2017). The facilitators and barriers of physical activity among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander regional sport participants. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*, 41(5), 474–479. <http://doi.org/10.1111/1753-6405.12701>
- Reading, C., & Reading, J. (2012). Promising practices in Aboriginal community health promotion interventions. In I. Rootman, S. Dupere, A. Pederson, & M. O'Neill, M. (Eds.), *Health promotion in Canada: Critical perspectives on practice* (3rd ed., pp. 160- 170). Toronto, Ontario, Canada: Canadian Scholars' Press.
- Robidoux, M. A. (2012) *Stickhandling through the margins*. Toronto Buffalo London: University of Toronto Press.
- Settee, P. (2011). *The strength of women: Âhkamêyimowak*. Regina, SASK: Coteau Books.
- Simpson, A. & Smith, A. (Eds.) (2014). *Theorizing native studies*. Durham, NC. Duke University Press.
- Simpson, L. (2011). *Dancing on our turtle's back: Stories of Nishnaabeg re-creation, resurgence and a new emergence*. Winnipeg, Manitoba. Arbeiter Ring Press. ISBN: 978-1-890437-50-1.

- Smethurst, T. (2012). *Well-Being and ethnic identity promotion for Aboriginal youth: A community based mixed methods study of Tribal Journeys* (Master's Thesis, University of Victoria). Retrieved from [uvic.summon.serialssolutions.co](http://uvic.summon.serialssolutions.co)
- Sport for Life Society: Aboriginal Peoples. Retrieved February 2, 2017 from <http://sportforlife.ca/aboriginal-peoples/>.
- Steinhauer, E. (2002). Thoughts on and Indigenous research methodology. *Canadian Journal of Native Education*, 26(2), 69-81.
- Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1990). *Basics of qualitative research, grounded theory procedures and techniques*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Stronach, M., Maxwell, H., & Taylor, T. (2016). Annals of leisure research “sistas” and aunties: sport, physical activity, and Indigenous Australian women. *Annals of Leisure Research*, 5398(October). <http://doi.org/10.1080/11745398.2015.1051067>
- Sunseri, L. (2008). Sky woman lives on: Contemporary examples of mothering the nation. *Canadian Woman Studies*, 26(4) 21-25.
- Tang, K., Jardine, C. (2016). Our way of life: Importance of Indigenous culture and tradition to physical activity practices. *International Journal of Indigenous Health*, 11(1), 211-227. DOI: 10.18357/ijih111201616018
- Ten Fingers, K. (2005). Rejecting, revitalizing, and reclaiming: First Nations work to set the direction of research and policy development. *Canadian Journal of Public Health*, 96(1), S60-SS63.
- Thomas, Q. R. (2005). Honouring the oral traditions of my Ancestors through Storytelling. In Leslie Brown & Susan Strega (Eds.), *Research as resistance:*

*Critical, Indigenous and anti-oppressive approaches to research.* (pp. 237-254).  
Toronto: Canadian Scholars Press.

Thomas, Q. R. (2011) Protecting the sacred cycle: Xwulmuxw Slhunlheni and leadership  
(Doctoral dissertation, University of Victoria). Retrieved from  
uvic.summon.serialssolutions.co.

Turpel, M. (1991). Patriarchy and paternalism: The legacy of the Canadian state for First  
Nations women. *Canadian Journal of Women & the Law*, 6(1), 174-193.

Vine Deloria Jr. (1969). *Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto*. New York:  
University of Oklahoma Press.

Ward, V., Smith, S., House, A., & Hamer, S. (2012). Exploring knowledge exchange: a  
useful framework for practice and policy. *Social Science & Medicine*, 7(3), 297-  
304.

Wesley-Esquimax, C. (2009). Trauma to Resilience: Notes on Decolonization. In Gail  
Guthrie Valaskis, Madeline Dion Stout, & Eric Gruimond (Eds.)  
*Restoring the Balance: First Nations women, community & culture*.  
Winnipeg Manitoba, University of Manitoba Press.

Wilson, K., & Peters, E. (2005). ‘You can make a place for it’: remapping urban First  
Nations spaces of identity. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*,  
23(1), 395–413. <http://doi.org/10.1068/d390>.

Wilson, S. (2001). What is an Indigenous research methodology? *Canadian Journal of  
Native Education*, 25(2), 175-79.

- Wilson, S. (2008). *Research is ceremony: Indigenous research methods*. Halifax, NS: Fernwood Publishing.
- Wilson, W. A. (1996). Grandmother to granddaughter: Generations of oral history in a Dakota family. *American Indian Quarterly*, 20(1), 7-13.
- Young, M. (2003). Anishinabemowin: A way of seeing the world reclaiming my identity. *Canadian Journal of Native Education*, 27(1), 101-107.
- Young, J. A., Symons, C. M., Pain, M. D., Harvey, J. T., & Payne, W. R. (2015). Role models of Australian female adolescents: A longitudinal study to inform programmes designed to increase physical activity and sport participation. *European Physical Education Review*, 21(4), 451–466. DOI: 10.1177/1356336X15579574.
- Ziabakhsh, S., Prodan-bhalla, N., Middagh, D., & Jinkerson-Brass, S. (2016). Women-centered and culturally responsive heart health promotion among Indigenous women in Canada. *Health Promotion Practice*, 17(6) 814 –826 DOI: 10.1177/1524839916633238.

## **Appendix A – #NoDAPL**

The #NoDAPL movement was one of the most nation moving events of the last few decades that I can only briefly describe here. In early 2016, in opposition of the construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline, the water protectors of Standing Rock made a public call to action. That call was answered by women, men, their children, Elders, and veterans. By April of 2016, the protests had evolved into full-time encampment, established by Standing Rock's Historic Preservation Officer, LaDonna Brave Bull Allard. The camp was intended to be a place of spiritual resistance, peaceful protest and cultural preservation. With thousands of individuals coming together at the camp, and the support of hundreds of thousands around the globe, this gathering has been recognized as largest gathering of Indigenous tribes in over a century; gathering not only from Turtle Island but from around the world. It drew international attention, raising awareness of the dangers of pipelines, the need to always protect our water, and the importance of Indigenous sovereignty. Peaceful protests started in early months of 2016, targeting the company behind the pipeline (Energy Transfer Partners, ETP) and anyone supporting/funding the development of the 1,172-mile-long oil pipeline (planning to carry oil across four states and under two major rivers). The water protectors stood strong through the summer and winter months, their peaceful efforts were returned by US Army Corps of Engineers and the police, with water cannons, dog teams, gases, rubber bullets, and destruction of sacred land sites. In the end the camp was given evacuation notice off their own land, forced to clear out by armed law enforcement on Feb 22, 2017. Through continuous efforts on the land, in the courtroom and on social media, the pipeline construction proceeded, and had its first leak in May, 2017.

## Appendix B - Consent Forms



University of Victoria | School of Exercise Science,  
Physical & Health Education

*Participant Consent Form Talking circles*

---

You are invited to participate in a study entitled Exploring Sport in the Lives of Urban Living Indigenous Women that is being conducted Megan McKenna as part of her master's program in the School of Exercise Science, Physical & Health Education at the University of Victoria with the supervision of Dr. Joan Wharf Higgins. You may contact Megan with questions.

Joan Wharf Higgins is a faculty member in the School of Exercise Science, Physical & Health Education at the University of Victoria and you may contact her if you have further questions.

### **Purpose and Objectives**

The purpose of this study is to explore the role of team sport in the lives of urban living/playing Indigenous women. The objectives are to understand: 1) the role sport plays in the lives of urban-living Indigenous women; 2) how Indigenous women define and experience health as it relates to sport; and, 3) why Indigenous women continue to prioritize sport into adulthood.

### **Importance of this Research**

This re-search hopes to help grow the sisterhood of sport in the city and demonstrate the need for increased opportunity to continue playing sport after outgrowing youth programming. As well this re-search hopes to address a void in discourse around the

strength of urban living Indigenous women who play sport and the impact they have as role models for the next generation.

### **Participant Selection**

You are being asked to participate in this study because you are an Indigenous woman, aged 20 years or older, and have played or are playing a team sport in the Greater Victoria area.

### **What is involved**

If you agree to voluntarily participate in this research, your participation will include attending one and/or two talking circles, as well as reviewing transcripts from the talking circles between December 2017 and March, 2018. You may also wish to participate in the dissemination of the findings during the spring and summer of 2018.

### **Inconvenience**

Participation in this study may cause some inconvenience to you, including the time it takes to participate in the talking circles (60 minutes – 2.5 hours) and reviewing the transcripts (30 – 60 minutes). If you wish to participate in the dissemination of the findings, this may take between 30 and 90 minutes of your time.

### **Risks**

There are no known or anticipated risks to you by participating in this research. When speaking of personal lived experience, even on a presumably safe topic such as sport, there is always potential for emotional risk or discomfort. Please know that you may decline to answer any question that may make you feel uncomfortable and/or leave the talking circle at any point. As well, a list of campus and community resources will be made available should you need to seek further assistance/counseling.

**Benefits**

The potential benefits of your participation in this research include reaffirming your commitment to playing sport, meeting like-minded Indigenous women to engage in sport with; and informing future sport programming for Indigenous women and highlight its significance to their health, wellness and culture.

**Voluntary Participation**

Your participation in this research must be completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate, you can decline to answer any question during the talking circles at any time and you may withdraw completely at any time without any consequences or any explanation. If you do withdraw from the study we would like to seek your approval to use the data that you have provided us with up until that point. Please know that staff from the First Peoples' House, Office of Indigenous Academics and Community Engagement, and the Songhees Wellness Centre will have no knowledge of who has accepted or declined to participate in the study. Your decision to participate or not participate will have no effect on your relationship with staff at these organizations.

**Anonymity**

In terms of protecting your anonymity, you may decide to not reveal your name during the talking circles and instead use a code name. If you indicate this, your name will not be used at any time when analyzing the data or in the final written report. You will be given a code name to be used in the transcript. If you do not wish to use a code name, your real name can be used in the analysis and final report. You can indicate at the bottom of this form which option you wish to select. If you change your decision over the course of the research study, you can contact the researcher at any

time to do so.

### **Confidentiality**

Because of the small number of participants involved in the talking circles, you should be aware that information you share may lead to your identification or identification of another talking circle participant. As well, because it is culturally acknowledged that any knowledge or stories shared in a circle stay between those in the circle, to ensure confidentiality I will open the circle with this reminder and it will be included as part of the consent form. Transcripts will be sent to you via an encrypted email message. Your confidentiality and the confidentiality of the data will be protected by storing the transcribed discussion in a password protected computer in locked university office of the researcher to be stored for three years.

### **Compensation**

As a way to compensate you for any inconvenience related to your participation, we will be offering refreshments during the talking circles. As well, each participant receive \$25 for each talking circle attended; parking, bus passes and child care expenses will be reimbursed.

If you want to participate in this study, the honorarium and reimbursements for costs must not influence your decision to be involved. It is unethical to provide undue compensation or inducements to research participants. If you would not participate if the compensation was not offered, then you should decline.

### **Dissemination of Results**

It is anticipated that the results of this study will be shared with others in the following ways: in a written report to a graduate master's thesis examining committee, as well as

study participants and staff at the First Peoples' House, Office of Indigenous Academics and Community Engagement, and the Songhees Wellness Centre.

### **Disposal of Data**

The digital audio recording from the talking circles will be erased once transcribed. The transcribed copy will be stored in password protected computer files in the office and lab of Institute of Physical Activity and Health in the McKinnon building at UVic. The word document of the talking circles and consent forms will be shredded after 3 years (2021).

In addition, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Human Research Ethics Office at the University of Victoria (250-472-4545 or [ethics@uvic.ca](mailto:ethics@uvic.ca)).

Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study, that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researchers, and that you agree to participate in this research project.

---

*Name of Participant*

---

*Signature*

---

*Date*

*Please initial below which option regarding anonymity you prefer:*

*I wish to remain anonymous and use a code name: \_\_\_\_\_*

*I wish to use my real name: \_\_\_\_\_*

*A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be kept by the researcher.*

## Appendix C - Open Talking Circle – Guiding Questions

We will begin with land acknowledgments and personal introductions.

1. Could you start with sharing your personal team sport story?
  - a. how long you have been playing
  - b. skill level
  - c. women's only or co-ed team(s)?
  - d. all native, mainstream
2. What influences in your life have shaped your decision to play team sport?
3. Who are your sport role models? Do you see yourself as a role model?
4. How do you define and experience wellness?
5. What do you feel are the benefits of playing sport in regards to your definition and experience of wellness?
  - a. Physical health
  - b. Emotional health
  - c. Social health
  - d. Connectedness to community/culture
  - e. Contribution to your community/youth
6. In what ways does sport shape your life as an urban-living Indigenous woman, if at all?
7. Why do you think you continue to play sport as an adult?
8. Who do you feel needs to hear these experiences and why?
9. What do you think might be the implications of your ideas for future sport programming?

### Appendix D - Theme Flower



