

Aboriginal Sport  
Research Symposium  
November 18 - 19, 2005

Final Report and Proceedings

edited by  
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## Introduction

*“We are researching ourselves back to life.”*

*Elder Alex Nelson, Panel Participant*

Historically, Aboriginal people have had few opportunities to participate in university and government generated research. Most often, they are excluded or marginalized in the development and implementation of these studies which have directly and indirectly shaped their lives. In recent years, Aboriginal people throughout the world have begun asserting control over the research process, influencing everything from the development and design of the research project to the dissemination of information for public knowledge; the Aboriginal Sport Forum was planned with this global trend in mind.

Significantly, the Forum also coincided with two historic developments in Canadian sport: (1) the release of [Sport Canada’s Policy on Aboriginal Peoples’ Participation in Sport](#) (2005), and (2) the launch of the Sport Canada Policy Research Program, which provides approximately \$1 million annually to research projects that enhance sport participation in Canada. These events shaped the direction of the Aboriginal Sport Forum in two distinct ways.

First, when the Action Plan for the Aboriginal policy was developed, research in Aboriginal sport was highlighted as a priority. As it became evident that Aboriginal research would require more funds than could possibly be delivered through the Sport Canada Policy Research Program, it was decided that the preferred route for Aboriginal research would be a separately funded program, provided by agencies such as the Social Science and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC). The motivation for Sport Canada’s contribution to the Aboriginal Sport Forum was to obtain concrete recommendations to inform the implementation of an Aboriginal sport research stream that would ideally be funded separately and matched by Councils and/or other organizations.

Second, the team of experts who had been assembled in November 2004 to construct the Sport Canada Policy Research Program included neither Aboriginal people nor university researchers who focus on Aboriginal issues in Canadian sport.<sup>1</sup> As a consequence, Aboriginal needs and perspectives were not taken into account in the development of the research program. When this shortfall was weighed against the new Sport Canada’s Policy on Aboriginal Peoples’ Participation in Sport, which identifies research as an important means to advance Aboriginal sport development in Canada,<sup>2</sup> the need for the Aboriginal Sport Forum became clear.

It was this imbalance—between university and government generated knowledge and knowledge generated by Aboriginal people with lived experience—that needed to be addressed while helping Sport Canada to achieve its goals as outlined in the [Canadian Sport Policy](#) (2002) and [Sport Canada’s Policy on Aboriginal Peoples’ Participation in Sport](#). In doing so, the Aboriginal

Sport Forum also sought to support the goals of the [Aboriginal Sport Circle](#), Canada's national voice for Aboriginal sport, and, on a much broader level, the goals for sport as articulated by Aboriginal people.

## Overview

### Background

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The intent of the Aboriginal Sport Forum was to build on the outcomes of the first research symposium, hosted in conjunction with the 2002 North American Indigenous Games (NAIG) in Winnipeg, Manitoba. The first research symposium brought together a wide range of experts working in different areas of Aboriginal sport, including academics, government officials, and leading representatives of the Aboriginal sport movement in North America to present papers, conduct workshops and host planning sessions relevant to the field of Aboriginal sport and recreation. Topics focused on a wide range of social issues such as access to quality sport and recreation programs, coaching opportunities, traditional games, role modeling, media relations, physical education, and sport and the law. By concentrating on these and other issues important to Aboriginal sport, the first research symposium helped to promote the broad goals of the NAIG, which seeks to encourage Aboriginal participation and excellence in sport and foster cultural self-determination through sport and recreation.<sup>3</sup> Originally, the Aboriginal Sport Forum was to coincide with the 2005 NAIG in Buffalo, New York. Subsequent to the cancellation of the 2005 NAIG, alternative plans for the Aboriginal Sport Forum were sought in order to ensure the continuity of the exchange of views and outcomes generated by the gathering in Winnipeg.

### Summary Description

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The Aboriginal Sport Forum took place on November 18 and 19, 2005, at the Lord Elgin Hotel in Ottawa, Ontario. This meeting brought together twenty-three invited delegates and twelve invited guests to identify research areas that will further the development of Aboriginal sport in Canada. Financial support for the Aboriginal Sport Forum was provided through Sport Canada's Project Stream Application process, while in-kind contributions, including equipment and human resources, were donated by the Aboriginal Sport Circle.

### Purpose and Objectives

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The purpose of hosting the Aboriginal Sport Forum was three-fold:

- Bring together Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal academics and sport practitioners in a supportive environment to identify research gaps and priorities in Aboriginal sport;
- Determine how academics can better assist Aboriginal peoples in working towards an Aboriginal vision for sport development in Canada;

- Identify potential collaborative research opportunities with government officials, university students and researchers, and community groups.

## Participants

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Twenty-three invited delegates and twelve invited guests participated in this two-day event. The delegates were selected based on their research experience in the area of Aboriginal sport, recreation, and physical education, as well as their practical experience and ongoing commitment to Aboriginal sport development in Canada. Delegate representation was divided evenly between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, male and female perspectives, youth and older adults, the different regions of Canada (e.g., north, south, east, west), the different knowledge bases (e.g., athletes, coaches, administrators, researchers), and the various levels of sport (e.g., grassroots to elite levels). All of the participants, including delegates and invited guests, used English as the joint conference language. Appendix A lists the invited delegates, Appendix B the invited guests.

## Lead Organizers

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Dr. Janice Forsyth, University of Manitoba, and Dr. Vicky Paraschak, University of Windsor, worked in conjunction with Rick Brant, Executive Director, Aboriginal Sport Circle, as well as Sandra Roach and Marie-Catherine Laframbrois of Sport Canada to determine the focus areas and final format for the symposium.

## Format

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The Aboriginal Sport Forum consisted of four panel sessions, with two sessions taking place each day. The panel sessions focused on issues related to the four priority areas identified in the Sport Canada's Policy on Aboriginal Peoples' Participation in Sport (2005), including the NAIG, coaching and athlete development, and barriers to participation.

The delegates were assigned to one of the four priority areas based on their practical and/or research experience and were asked to tailor their responses to one of two questions provided by the lead organizers. Specifically, the delegates were asked to identify "what we currently know" from existing research and experiential knowledge, clarify "what we need to know" associated with the four pillars of the *Canadian Sport Policy* (2002), and make recommendations for the kind of research that governments, organizations, individuals and groups can undertake to further support Aboriginal goals in each area. See Appendix C for a detailed overview of the daily schedule and questions. A summary of the evaluations for the Forum follows in Appendix D. The evaluations emphasize the need for more opportunities to gather and discuss key issues in Aboriginal sport.

Each panel session was followed by a large group discussion. All of the delegates had their presentations recorded, transcribed, and edited for better readability. The transcript for each

presentation follows this section. In order to continue developing the leadership strengths already demonstrated by the Aboriginal delegates, Aboriginal students and recent graduates in physical education and kinesiology programs throughout Canada were asked to serve as moderators and facilitators for the various sessions. In this way, the Aboriginal Sport Forum was truly a collaborative effort.

To construct an atmosphere of respect for Aboriginal viewpoints and experiences, two conceptual frameworks were provided to the delegates prior to coming to Ottawa. These concepts – an Aboriginal-Centered Approach and the Strengths Perspective – established the rules for engagement at the Aboriginal Sport Forum. An overview of each concept is provided below:

### *An 'Aboriginal-Centered' Approach*

In order to advance Aboriginal objectives in Canadian sport and recreation, we need to privilege Aboriginal points of view. In cross-cultural gatherings such as this one, where Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people come together to brainstorm and map out a new future together through research, it is essential that Aboriginal issues and perspectives form the basis for our discussions and recommendations. This Aboriginal-centered approach aligns with the “athlete-centered” approach guiding the Canadian mainstream sport system today, but with a focus on Aboriginal participants. It also aligns with a decolonizing approach because it facilitates the development of culturally appropriate programs and policies by placing Aboriginal participants at the centre of decision-making. This will help to ensure that the knowledge that was generated was directly shaped by, and will benefit, Aboriginal participants and their communities.

### *The 'Strengths Perspective'*

Delegates to the Aboriginal Sport Forum were also encouraged to address the issues from a “Strengths Perspective”, which is a “strategy for seeing” what is already working well in Aboriginal communities. Using this approach, we sought to enhance existing programs, services and talents of Aboriginal participants in order to better meet their needs and goals. The strengths already existing were thus identified and built upon. The Strengths Perspective is also sometimes referred to as an “asset-based” approach.

This perspective is fundamentally different from a “problems” approach, which begins by emphasizing what is “wrong” with something and then focuses on trying to “fix” it. The Strengths Perspective is a positive way to frame discussions and construct activities because it facilitates the development of culturally supportive activities. This approach extends traditional mainstream models that ask Aboriginal participants how they can better “fit” into the mainstream approach towards sport and recreation.

## Panel Presentations

### NAIG Panel

#### Alex Nelson

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First of all it's really hard to read these notes I made on the flight. And, I didn't read the question clear enough so I answered both; it was hard not to because it was such a great flight and because it became a great journey. It brought me right back to 1990 where I heard about a set of games in Edmonton [the NAIG]. So I said to my wife, why don't we go out there and check it out? And no matter where I go I bring my soccer boots, eh? And so I happened to get two games in! Just getting there, it spoke to the sport end of matters, the organizational aspects. It was that informal. It was an event that we just turned up at.

But I remember driving away from Edmonton thinking there's something magical about these Games. It was very clear to me that the cultural component was always strong. It was always strong and it didn't surprise me. So the next set of Games comes around in 1993 and I go there as an athlete and as a Chef de Mission. I didn't know what a Chef de Mission was, but I was one, and it was awesome [lots of laughter]!

At that time we became responsible for bringing Team BC to Prince Albert. We did that successfully. I think there were 150 of us. We started to look at this magnificent balloon that needs to get grounded and so we said as organizers, how can we do that? So enters the old notion of constitution and bylaws. How do you move this wonderful balloon and get it grounded? So I started becoming involved with the NAIG Council. I was part of the two movements, one as the athlete/coach/Chef de Mission, and eventually in 1997 I was honored to be part of delivering the Games as an organizer. And so it was hard for me to separate the athlete role from the organizer role. For the 1997 Games [in British Columbia] – Desiree [Streit] said she slept on foamies – which is right. And, for the Games in 2002 they slept on bunk beds. What a great movement of positive change! [lots of laughter] So I guess if there are standards and improvements, the bedding was improved. In 1995 I was a Chef de Mission for Team BC going to the Canada Winter Games in Grand Prairie where we slept in beds. I thought “wow” that was awesome! And then I go to their powwow and I said “geez” we're sleeping in tents. So, really, it doesn't matter where we sleep and how we sleep. I see those as characteristics that become interesting to put into perspective when we host events.

I have also picked up the movement of NAIG, and it's a wonderful package. But how do we package the Games, place a value on it and sell it back to our people and to the mainstream? How do you promote and market these Games in a way that it deserves to be marketed? However, and I have said this so many times, fun and participation are the keys to the success of the Indigenous Games movement. The kids just want to play. When we cancelled the Games in 1999 in North

Dakota, we forgot to go and asked the kids what they wanted to do. They said, "Why? We just wanted to go there and play." They didn't care about accommodations and the standard of the fields and facility conditions. They were fundraising to get to the Games. They wanted to just play. But from an organizer point of view, we stepped back and we said: "No. We've got to ensure safety and enjoyment for the athletes when they get to the Games." So that's the other side of the coin of course. And in this you try to put these back into perspective and say, "OK. What is this movement all about? Where is this improvement?"

Another strength is the attendance at these Games. Scope and magnitude I guess are the terms that we use. How do we get a handle on the scope and magnitude? It's so successful that we had to put parameters around it. So enters this notion of the five hundred cap. What is the five hundred cap about? It's an arbitrary number, but we did our arithmetic. Potentially, thirteen thousand athletes can come into a territory and have a set of games. That's the potential of these Games. Of course it's unrealistic. I have used Atlanta [1996 Olympics] as a great example of bringing ten thousand athletes in, and they had money galore. But when you talked to the athletes and some of the organizers, they are saying that it didn't work out. So we say focus on the quality of the Games and delivery. That is a big question to us right now, to the NAIG Council. And you know, we need studies on how to establish a realistic number for the Games. We need to analyze that and the number of sports. We've got the sixteen sports that were chosen in 1990. I don't know how they were chosen, but the fact remains that we have followed those sixteen sports from 1990 and we are still following them today and we are going to follow them for 2008. There's been no study to say what should be pulled and what should be filled in. Is sixteen sports an appropriate number of sports for an event? Then what summer sports? What winter sports? All I know is that basketball season is played in the winter time. But does that classify that as a winter sport? Those are the questions that start to arise and that need to be researched, analyzed.

We need to continue to do the economic impact, how the Games are packaged, and, you know, their value. Team participation and travel – that's never been analyzed. We've talked about it. How much does it cost for teams to prepare themselves to get to these Games? All we are talking about right now is game delivery, and we've analyzed that and we've got some numbers to work with there. And this is a real big one for me – I come back to fun and participation – and this is a philosophical question regarding the field of sport. You've got fun and participation on the one hand, and you've got standards on the other hand. And once you start to introduce standards, what does that mean? It tells me that there is a system that's already available to us – a mainstream sports system. It has ways of introducing standards and of using those standards to help them identify athletes to get to a set of games. The question to us as a people is, what do we want to do? You start implementing standards and you start shutting doors. Is it too early to start closing the doors on our people? We are only six Games old. That's very, very young. So those are the types of questions



that our leadership is posed with right now, and they are big questions. I think that's all I can say for now. I'm looking forward to the next Games; I'm looking forward to enjoying them as an athlete.

## Glynis Peters

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I am going to speak from a government perspective about my involvement in the NAIG and about what elements need to be enhanced. I am coming at this from my experience as a program officer for the North American Indigenous Games in 2002 and my involvement in the Aboriginal Sport Circle since 1999. I was also the secretary for the Federal-Provincial-Territorial work group that developed the NAIG funding framework. And, looking at these elements, Sport Canada considers the NAIG to be a strategic focus event with the key elements being athlete development, hosting expertise, partnership development, leadership, technically sound and safe sport, and volunteers.

One of the greatest successes of the 2002 NAIG was the partnership of all three levels of government – federal, provincial, and municipal – and the Manitoba Aboriginal Sport and Recreation Council. It was a financially successful event; the NAIG left a legacy of approximately 1.5 million dollars, going into aboriginal sport development with the [Winnipeg Aboriginal Sport Achievement Centre](#) [WASAC], the Aboriginal Sport Circle and the NAIG Council as recipients. There was a mentorship program as a legacy from the Pam American Games that were held in Winnipeg in 1999. Many of those individuals who were mentored at the Pam-Am Games now contribute to leadership and capacity building with Aboriginal sports in Canada. There was an evaluation carried out by Sport Canada which I think has given us some baseline data that may prove valuable in the future. There was a project by the Canadian Heritage Information Network, a website on the [History of the North American Indigenous Games](#) that remains part of the Virtual Museum of Canada. We completed a third technical evaluation on the sport programming of NAIG. There was a debriefing session after the NAIG with the organizing committee and members of the NAIG Council on “lessons learned”. And there was a NAIG liaison position supported by the Aboriginal Sport Circle to assist the NAIG Council in ongoing work.

There are several elements that I think need to be enhanced from the Government of Canada perspective. Certainly there are many great successes so far. The NAIG is relatively young in the games movement and shares many of the same elements with those games. What needs to be enhanced is the relationship building between the NAIG Council and the franchise holders in Canada, the Aboriginal Sport Circle, and in the U.S., the Indigenous Sport Council. The overall event success comes from the strengths of the organizing committee and your franchise holders. As you determine the vision and mission for the NAIG, both internationally and domestically, you need to transmit that learning to the organizing committee who then delivers the Games. Another area that can be enhanced is the bid process, because where you hold the Games and the selection of the organizing committee will ensure the success of the Games. There has been tremendous work in the area of the bid process for the NAIG, but I think that more can be done. Athlete selection process is another

important area. The quality of the selection process and subsequent training leads to a quality games experience for all participants, which is obviously what the NAIG is really all about.

The athlete's village, the whole area of accommodations, travel, and team experience in Winnipeg was excellent. I think we should always be vigilant in that we make sure that the athletes do have the care and comfort that they deserve. A lot of work is being done in Canada on the long-term athlete development model which should be applied to NAIG. I think fundamentally it's the coordination, collaboration and communication between all stakeholders that we really need to continue working on.

From my perspective in working with the 2002 NAIG, the areas that I felt we could have used or benefited from greater research were in the areas of statistical data on the NAIG. The Games started in 1990, and we have almost no data. It's a great opportunity now to look at how we can start building those statistics, like the number of coaches, the number of athletes, who they all are, where they come from, what levels they are at. And that helps you to make critical decisions in your technical areas and your sport selection and age categories, and all of those things that are important for the integrity of the Games. Where do the athletes go after they compete at the NAIG? What are the benefits of NAIG? What is the effect on the athletes? Do they continue in sport? I think that we should continue to work in the area of technical evaluation to assist in bridging the gaps to mainstream sport and other major games. There was an evaluation done in 2002 and I encourage the NAIG movement to continue building upon that. And if it is about fitting into the mainstream sport system or about integration then that's the kind of research that needs to go on. I would encourage organizers to debrief on the "lessons learned" because this will help with the hosting expertise and transfer of knowledge from games to games both from NAIG to NAIG and also other major games – because the NAIG is certainly a player on the scene. Any statistical data that would assist in showcasing the athletes in their success is beneficial. The [Canadian Heritage Information Network](#) [CHIN] project would be one of those avenues for information that will help us market and promote Aboriginal athletes and Aboriginal sport. I also think that some research into the benefits of sport by the larger Aboriginal community is needed. I know that next year everybody is sold on it; but my experience from 2002 is that it was often not clear where the NAIG and benefits for sport were in the priorities for the larger Aboriginal community and other Aboriginal organizations. So some research in that area would probably be beneficial to the NAIG movement in the future.

## Bruce Miller

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I used to be involved with the North American Indigenous Games movement. I was with the 2002 Games as a Co-Chair of the Sport and Competition Division, but I also had the extreme pleasure and privilege to work as Chair of the [Research Symposium](#). So that's where I'm coming from. I will talk about what we did then, what we are doing now, and what we may need to do. I think most of

us were very pleased with the 2002 [NAIG]. That was, in my opinion, one of the more successful ones. Of course that is a bit biased. But we did do a lot of first-ever events, like having a national broadcast contract [with APTN] to actually generate revenue, which I will get into in a little bit, to creating a wide variety of opportunities like the historic multi-party agreement. So, I think, in laying it out in a research aspect, we can share those learnings to ensure these best practices are shared with other host societies.

But I am going speak mostly about the 2002 NAIG Research Symposium. I think it was the first symposium to be part of the NAIG, so I guess we were very lucky and fortunate to have it. I played a small role in it. I was lucky to work with individuals like Dr. Joannie Halas and Dr. Mike Heine and others who really played a lead role in ensuring it was going. It really got me involved in grad work; just to let you all know I wasn't in school at the time and now I am. But, in a nut shell, the Research Symposium was really the first time people had an opportunity to come together to exchange ideas in the areas that were important to them. I think we need to build on that, understanding it as a modern tradition. I am hoping that in 2006 we will be able to talk about the opportunity for an educational symposium.

Since 2002, I have also been involved the Native American sport and academic training institute, which links sport and academics [a program led by the [Native American Sports Council](#) [NASC]]. I think the relationship between sports and academics is an important one because there are many Native American athletes who have a lot of talent but have not necessarily made the transition successfully from high school to university. We were able to set it up at the University of New Mexico and we were also able to work on what is called the Native American Sport Warrior Challenge Program, an opportunity made available through the United States Department of Education. Those two programs got me doing some work in the [Faculty of Physical Education & Recreation Studies](#) (at the University of Manitoba) where I sit as an advisory board member. Through the Faculty we were able to recruit and retain not only Aboriginal students but Aboriginal faculty as well. So, at the University of Manitoba we are looking at this relationship between sports and academics, as well as issues of equity, and trying to develop what is called the [Access Program](#). For example, we currently have a program that graduates medical doctors; we have almost thirty practicing doctors in Manitoba. We also graduate annually one-third of all Aboriginal engineers in Canada. I ask, why aren't we doing this in the Faculty of Physical Education and Recreation Studies where we know there is a demonstrated need for physical education teachers and recreation directors? We also started a program called the Winnipeg Aboriginal Sport Achievement Centre [WASAC], which is modeled on the idea of providing barrier-free opportunities for Aboriginal and inner-city youth. It is one of the largest Aboriginal sport organizations in Canada in an inner-city area. It has a budget of \$1.3 million dollars, has 71 sport leaders in the summer, and serves over 2,000 kids annually.

But with that said, a number of us were trying to get a 2005 Research Symposium going through the Buffalo Sports Society for the 2005 NAIG in Buffalo. The Seneca Nation and the Buffalo Sports Society were really encouraged. Unfortunately, the timing and resources did not work for the Buffalo contingent so that the next NAIG are taking place in Denver in 2006. But the good news is that the Denver group is looking at holding an educational symposium alongside the Games. I think through research you can do a lot of good things. We can extend the current funding arrangements to incorporate this symposium as an important part of the NAIG. It's not a lot of money and it's a great investment.

There have also been a couple of legacies as a result of the 2002 NAIG. We have been able to give some money to the Indigenous Games movement; we have been able to give some money to our national Aboriginal voice, the Aboriginal Sport Circle. For me, however, one of the prouder moments is that we were able to set up an equity fund for undergraduate scholarships and bursaries. This money is important because it helps Aboriginal students to get a good education. I would also like to recommend the development and support of financial awards for Aboriginal graduate students in the area of physical education, sport, and recreation. Creating fellowships and space for academic positions will go a long way as well. So, there are some real strengths already there and some capacity building initiatives that are being developed.

Based on my research experience, the relationship between sport and academics needs to be explored in more detail. Another idea is to examine the educational opportunities that currently exist in physical education and recreation programs in Canada, and outline the barriers for Aboriginal students. I think that those are two things to be looked at and because if you really want to build enhanced capacity, you have to look at the education system as a supporting framework for sport because for most our experience as athletes is gained through the education system. I want to thank for everyone for having me here. I am trying to keep it within ten minutes here [lots of laughter]. So thank you again.

## Jason Loutitt

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My name is Jason Loutitt and I will let you in on a little secret. I have been running for about six years and sometimes people think you look pretty smooth out there, like you're not trying hard. But just remember this metaphor about the duck floating on water. On the surface, it looks so peaceful, but underneath the duck is paddling like crazy! That's the secret, duck on water. [lots of laughter]

My experience with the NAIG was that it was kind of a sling shot for me. It brought me back into my identity with my culture. It threw me into various roles, as an athlete, a coach, and a manager. That was a unique experience, to dive into Aboriginal sport, not just as an athlete but all three. My steps to get there began in 1990. I was lost. I didn't know where I was going with my life. And I think I was hitchhiking to Edmonton from Fort McMurray. The ride that I was with said, "Why don't you come with us?" I said, "No. I will just get off at the first intersection and go to

my mom's place." They said, "No, come! We're going to these games!" But I got off and went my way. Not the next Games in Prince Albert [1993] but in Victoria [1997] – I was living in Victoria when the Games were there – and I was asked again by someone to go and watch the opening ceremonies. My uncle was volunteering in it and I was "no, no, no." But it's funny how life has unfolded for me.

The 2002 Games were that catalyst for getting me started as an athlete, moving from a recreational level to a provincial, national, and now an international level. And as a coach and a manager, I was able to see some of the things that maybe some people don't get to see from their one perspective. I really enjoyed seeing the people come from the communities and bond. But more so, I enjoyed seeing people emerge as leaders and want to assume responsibility, whether it was looking after the athletes, or whether it was an athlete wanting to teach their fellow athlete a few skills or drills or what to do before you start the race.

Now, if I was to think about what barriers need to be removed, I would go along with what Glynis [Peters] said. She mentioned the qualifications for the Games, and this leads into Alex [Nelson's] comment. I can see how it's delicate. We want to have it fun and enjoyable, but at the same time we want to bring it up to par with national and international sport. In the policy statement on enhanced participation, the only place that I found the NAIG mentioned was the acceleration from the community to the national level. It wasn't just talked about as participation, it was all the way to the national level, and that's important. My experience of going around Manitoba and speaking to the eight thousand youth was great because I would occasionally see the provincial jackets, the Team Manitoba jackets. The kids were wearing these jackets and I thought, "Wow, that's incredible." They got to go because they met the standards and qualified. There is a certain prestige that goes along with that. Now they can say they made it to the NAIG, and that it's just as hard to make the other teams.

Alex mentioned the fun aspect, because that is definitely the most important. But I am sure that the duck on water, even though he might be anxiety prone and sweating as his legs are moving a hundred miles a minute, is having fun. The other barrier I think is culture shock. Many small communities come with kids and all of a sudden they are in this big environment and they haven't been reminded of coming to the big city, the distractions, what sort of things they can use to keep their focus on their competition, on enjoying it, on seeing the other cultures that are there. So I think that could be something that could be examined.

In terms of the insights, from my experience as an athlete, coach, and manager, and then moving into a role model capacity, looking at the limitations of that role combination is important because as soon as athletes are good enough, we are like, "Okay, you need to show them what you are doing." So that athlete, all of a sudden, is a coach. And as soon as that coach is doing a good job, we see that we have no one managing this team, so we need a manager. And meanwhile, if

we would have left that athlete as an athlete and gave them the tools they needed, we would have an Olympic athlete right now. Maybe, if we have that coach, and we gave him the tools we would have coaches for those national teams. So we need to look at the role combination. The other part is recruitment. I think that the recruitment of athletes, coaches, and managers is something that could be looked at in terms of research. Age is another thing. According to Athletics Canada, I'm a master. At thirty I could have went to the World Master's Games, but at the same time I am one year too old to qualify for the youth category for the national role model program. So I think there is some sort of alignment that needs to be done because of access to scholarships for school. This information can be put on a website.

I also think if we do some research into looking at our culture, about who we are and maybe some of the issues we need to deal with, whether they be family or addiction, we will start to find the common thread. I think we'll find that the one thing we have in common is spirit, and that spirit is found by using our weaknesses as our strengths. If we lose our spirit, we lose a big part of our identity, that thing that makes us stronger and a little bit better. The last one is leadership. I think that a common thread of the spirit can be looked at in the terms of the inspirational possibilities within Aboriginal leaders nationally and internationally. At times, say, it's cool to be Native, or as they say in the States, it's cool to be Indian. There is a lot of power that we have right now. If we start to research that leadership nationally and internationally and make those alliances, we will be ahead of the game. Thank you.

### Christine O'Bonsawin

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I was fortunate to have the opportunity to present at the NAIG Research Symposium in Winnipeg in 2002. I have never been an athlete or involved in the organizing of the NAIG, so basically I am here because of my research experience. My primary area of research focuses on sport history, specifically Aboriginal sport history. My master's thesis was on the experiences of the Firth sisters, who competed in Canada's mainstream sport system. My Ph.D. work currently focuses the history of the modern Olympic Games and the appropriation of First Nations peoples and their respective cultural identities within this framework. So, I come to this forum from a bit of a different perspective.

At this point, the primary strength I have to offer to this panel is the voices of the students that I have recently been in touch with. I have been teaching an Introduction to First Nations course at the University of Western Ontario. This course has a large agenda and there are a lot of things to tackle. I have a lot of students come up to me and talk to me about the sporting world and Aboriginal sport. I often get a lot of questions about the water polo player, the Mohawk woman [Waneek Horn-Miller], and they want to learn about issues related to Aboriginal sport. However, one of the most interesting conversations I have had to this point took place a couple of weeks ago with one of my students. He is highly involved in the Chippewa community in southern Ontario. He is aware of my interest and involvement in Aboriginal sport and has talked to me about this topic on

a number of occasions, specifically questioning the purpose and hosting of the NAIG. He didn't know much about them, but he's highly active in sport. One thing he said to me – and this refers specifically to the barriers within in the NAIG formation that need be removed – he spoke about the organizational structure of the NAIG and how this factor limits him from participating in it. He said the problem he had in becoming involved with the NAIG movement is that he is Chippewa and he doesn't identify as being a citizen of Ontario or a Canadian citizen. He is from the Chippewa territory, and this has limited him from wanting to be involved in this sporting movement, which is primarily based on provincial distinction. He communicated to me that until he can send his son to be part of a Chippewa team in order to compete with his brothers and sisters, and be identified as such, he is quite concerned about attending the games. So what I wanted to do was bring this voice and talk about the organizational structure of the Games, and what some of the concerns are with organizing the Games, and the geopolitical structure of the NAIG that exists today under provincial and national identities.

While solutions are hard to come up with, I think that it's important to question why these athletes can't go and be proud to affiliate themselves with their respective nationhood and identities. In the first section of the Aboriginal Sport Policy it states, "a renewed relationship with Aboriginals can only be built upon a realization of the uniqueness of Aboriginal culture." I think that is one of the most important, if not the most important issue in addressing Aboriginal issues in general and sport in specific. In some respects, the Aboriginal identities of many athletes are hidden under the political organization of the movement. Much of my research focuses on the history of the modern Olympic Games, and as some of you may know, the geopolitical organization of this sporting movement was not the intention of early organizers. In the formative years, the IOC officials determined that this movement should be under national affiliations. The geopolitical organization of this movement has been more of a matter of convenience and has remained the organizational method of the Games since the early days. I cannot help but think that the organization of sporting movements is all too often based on necessities for structural administration. As a result, the original intentions and reasoning for the establishment of certain sporting movements may, at times, become blurred and distorted due to an emphasis placed on orderliness and success of the event. As Alex [Nelson] mentioned, the NAIG is still in its formative years. Perhaps we should think more about this troubling issue and question the organizational structure of the Games as it presently exists. Brenda Germain and I are roommates, and in the past two days we have discussed this matter in more than one conversation. I know she comes from an athlete perspective and has a lot to say on her experiences in the NAIG. So, I would like to conclude with this point and let her speak of her experiences and feelings on this matter.

## Brenda Germain

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I am going to tell you a story about how I got to the NAIG, and it fits with one of my recommendations for the selection process. I was in a basketball tournament for my high school in the Ottawa

area and one of the score keepers came up to me and said, "Are you Native?" I said, "Yeah," and he was like, "Why don't you come to NAIG?" This was in June [2002]. I said, "I don't know what NAIG is. What are you talking about?" So he filled me in on the details. I went back to Windsor and, just by word of mouth, sixteen people ended up medaling from Windsor. So it just goes to show you the kind of networking that is available by word of mouth through urban Aboriginals. I didn't even know there were sixteen Aboriginals in Windsor [lots of laughter]! And then they ended up medaling! That's pretty awesome.

The main reason people go to the NAIG is not to play, it's to identify with your nation and your culture. I know this because I went through the mainstream basketball system and I have always just wanted to play. I didn't care who was on my team, I just wanted to get recognition for it. During NAIG I dislocated my shoulder, so I couldn't play for my last game. However, I felt that I would be missing out on more than just playing if I didn't stay for the rest of the game. There are so many people, so many positive outlooks. Being in the stands cheering, even with my shoulder, it really was an awesome experience. And I would like to commemorate NAIG for just emphasizing the opening ceremonies. I don't know if anyone had a chance to be there but it was dynamite! It made you feel like, finally, you're getting recognized for doing something so positive but within your culture.

Another positive point about the NAIG was the media coverage. I never had so many cameras in my face and it was kind of nice. I had a call from my mother who said, "I just saw you on TV at the opening ceremonies!" So it was nice being recognized as an athlete, but more recognized as a Native woman in my sport doing something positive.

Another aspect that I would like to discuss is the selection process from the urban Aboriginal perspective compared to Native communities. I grew up in Windsor but I am from a Native community, Listuguj, on the New Brunswick and Quebec border. I feel that growing up in Windsor I lost connections with my community, and it was just by chance that I got to go to the NAIG. Traveling back to my community, where everybody knows about it, and there are connections within the band, people everywhere are organizing teams. I felt I got lost in the woodwork a little bit because I was living in the city and I didn't know about it. So I had a dilemma. Do I go representing the Mi'Kmac Nation, or do I go as a member of Team Ontario – where I wouldn't say that I don't fit in, but everyone on my team was Ojibway, and me and my sister were the only Mi'Kmacs. And, you know, it was awesome because I think that all Native people have a common goal, a common experience, but it was interesting to see people from my community and play against them. They would say, "How come you're not playing for us?" I hated to say it, but I said, "This is where I am getting funding. This is what gave me the opportunity to go." That stuck in my mind. I didn't know if I was representing Mi'Kmac, or if I was representing Team Ontario, or if I was just going, but all in all it was a very positive experience. I was never more proud, ever. And it was great because we



had a little bit of a write up, all of the athletes from Windsor. It really opened up peoples eyes to see these positive things that the Native community is doing.

In order to enhance the participation I feel we need to know where we are coming from. We need to know the history about the athletes because that will give the children and the youth a sense of pride and a sense of knowing they are carrying on this tradition. They are carrying on what their ancestors or the people before them have been so proud to do. And this ties in with the cultural aspect of NAIG. Just knowing you're there for a purpose. Sure, you're there to play your sport, but you're there representing your culture, you're there representing your people as a whole and you should be proud of this. It's a legacy. But in order to create a legacy, you have to know your history. So, from a research perspective, I would really love to see some history articles about athletes that got shoved under the mat, athletes that we don't really know about. They don't have to be spectacular athletes but they have to be athletes that have made a difference, have opened doors for us to be able to participate in NAIG. APTN did highlight some histories that really got me motivated, that really made me think that I am here for a purpose.

As far as the selection process goes, I think that we need to have a tiered system. You need to select the coaches first. You just can't say I am going to start looking for players. You need to get the coaches first, like assistant coaches who are responsible. It has to be a hierarchy or else you are just going to get lost or you are going to lose a lot of players. So if there's one thing that you got from me talking is that if you are trying to recruit Aboriginal players you need to emphasize the fact that you're there to play, but that you are also there representing your culture and your nation and you should be proud doing it.

## Coaching Panel

### Rob Meckling

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Today we're going to talk about the approach to coaching in Canada today. We will give you the lay of the land with the [National Coaching Certification Program](#) [NCCP] and how it may effect and influence coaching and education for Aboriginal people in this country. As you all know, in April 2004 the NCCP began the change from a vertical education program of levels 1 through 5, which implemented a knowledge development methodology, to a context specific program to develop the abilities and competency in coaches, which is referred to as CBET [Competency-Based Education and Training]. Developing competencies or abilities is really a key component to this new coaching paradigm. This big switch of how we teach and educate our coaches in Canada has some exciting times ahead, and we have already started to see the fruits of our labor.

The NCCP has developed into three major streams to be delivered in Canada including: 1) community sport, with initiation and ongoing contexts that focus on helping coaches work with

participants experiencing a sport for the first time and working with participants who want a recreational experience with primary goals for socialization and fitness, 2) competition stream, with three contexts, including introduction, development and high performance, which is focused on helping coaches develop abilities that will help them meet the needs of athletes being introduced to, developing in, or performing to world class standards in a competitive environment and helping them achieve true “performance oriented” goals, and 3) the instruction stream, which includes the beginner, intermediate and advanced contexts, which focus on highly specialize coaching to develop advanced skill technique. The NCCP is structured according to context, which means that coaches enter into a context that represents the type of athlete they are working with.

Multi-sport modules for the Competition – Introduction context were launched on April 1, 2004. A comprehensive evaluation of those modules was lead by Ian Reade from the University of Alberta in conjunction with the [Coaching Association of Canada](#) [CAC] and NCCP partners. At the Sport Leadership Conference held in November 2005 in Quebec City, each of the jurisdictions had one of their MLFs [Master Learner Facilitators] participate in a review of the research compiled by Ian Reade. There were over 800 coaches and over 140 MLFs from across the country who responded to the survey. The Task Force, comprised of the MLFs, got together to analyze this survey and its results. Currently, sixty-five NSOs [National Sport Organizations] are in the NCCP. Approximately thirty of the thirty-five total Community Sport – Initiation programs, twenty of the sixty-five total Competition – Introduction context programs and eighteen of the thirty-six total Instruction – Beginners programs will have been completed and approved by the spring or early summer of 2006. So the system is starting to experience many of the new programs and is gradually moving closer to the completion of the transition.

One of the benefits for Aboriginal coaching is that the work on the [Aboriginal Coaching Manual](#) [ACM] began after the NCCP transition had begun and were developed with the support of the CAC. As the NCCP system gains a greater understanding of how to most effectively design and implement a program that develops abilities in coaches, some of these learnings can play a role in the ongoing enhancement of the Aboriginal Coaching Manual. My role as it relates to this project has been to oversee the implementation of pilots of the training modules associated with the Aboriginal Coaching Manual and determine the fit with our own contextual reality in the Northwest Territories [NWT] and hopefully share those learnings with other jurisdictions. We are taking our time when we look at this material to see how it will be integrated or not integrated into the systems. In the NWT we have taken this information along with the new NCCP and run with it. We feel we have a lot to offer to other provinces and territories to advance coaching in Aboriginal communities. We have had several discussions with the Aboriginal Sport Circle. Gina [Doxtator] knows that every time we have a chance to get together, usually in Ottawa, we spend a significant amount of time discussing how the material and delivery should align with the new NCCP. How best to deliver the ACM – whether as separate modules or integrated into the Competition – Introduction

Part A package of multi-sport modules – is certainly the challenge at this time, but it's certainly not insurmountable. What the MLFs have decided, as recently as last week, is that we want to make sure that we create options for this program and generate as many ideas as possible, and reframe all problems into opportunities and challenge all the assumptions that are out there. Second, we need to listen, understand and gather information from many different sources as possible and not judge the information. Third, we want to make sure we decide wisely and get to the crux of the issue. Ask tough practical questions about the system and rely on and value experience to make those decisions. Fourth, in the NCCP we want to ensure that within all coaching contexts in this country, including Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, is that we make a difference. We want you to be sure that you know what is going on inside you as a coach and be very positive about what you do and what to say to athletes and other coaches. Take the initiative and be committed to the process.

One of the strengths that the system and the materials offeres is that it has the advantage, at this stage in the game, to go through many different evaluations so that modifications can be made quickly to ensure we have the best product. We have great resources and great assets and great people involved in the process. We have a lot of experience and knowledge. The material is very innovative and world leading we feel. It is cultural based. We have human resource development opportunities and succession planning.

Some of the barriers we see and need to address are gaps in the systems between the old education and certification system and the new program. There is also the issue about who will get this information. The financial impact on jurisdictions, which always has an impact in any program change, is another. Also, there are vulnerabilities in the coaching system, the challenge of balancing short-term strategies with long-term results. Currently, we have no basis of information for any of the outcomes with the material. This is now changing with the CAC being able to accurately review the current programs now out there. Another thing is leadership. Who are our future leaders? How do we get the youth in Aboriginal communities involved and engaged after competing? We are not really committed as a nation or by jurisdiction to ensure the process is delivered equitably and fairly. We have many different levels of how this material is being delivered in each province and territory, and that's a big problem. Lastly, one very important thing is that of creating opportunities for women, especially increasing the number of Aboriginal women in coaching. This is seen as a high priority for this system. We all look forward to these advancements in coaching here in Canada.

## Chris Szabo

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What I want to do is relate aspects of the *Canadian Sport Policy* (2002) to *Sport Canada's Policy on Aboriginal Peoples' Participation in Sport* (2005), and highlight some of the efforts that have been made, even prior to those policies coming in existence. I am going to use some examples from the North, and then I am going to use more general examples that are around nationally. We know

that for about thirty years now there have been efforts to document the Inuit and Dene games programs and to research and record the history of those games. This work started in the 1970s and is actually continuing to this day. Part of this effort is linked to the fact that traditional games programs like the Northern Games contribute to the ongoing vitality of those cultural traditions in northern communities and regions. There is also a link that has been made with the Arctic Winter Games which involves the three Territories, Northern Alberta, Alaska, and two Russian Provinces and Greenland. So, it is more of a circumpolar event. And the Arctic Winter Games have taken to include some of those traditional games in the sport program. Since 1996, collectively, the Territories and Northern Alberta have been making more focused efforts to develop coaching resources to support increased involvement in all the Arctic Winter Games jurisdictions in some of those traditional games. We are also seeing more school based cultural programs that are providing another channel for exposure to the games and another entry point for coaching education. So that is some of the specifics that have been taking place in the North.

Across Canada we have known since the 1960s that there have been a number of different initiatives related to Aboriginal sport development, and a lot of those are documented in the Aboriginal sport policy. We know that as the Aboriginal Sport Circle [ASC] is involved as a national organization they have taken on the co-ordination of the development of the Aboriginal Coaching Manual and they have worked in collaboration with the NCCP and the Coaching Association of Canada [CAC] and the various partners involved. That process has been going on for about ten years, even as the NCCP undergoes transition. We also saw the outcomes from the [National Recreation Roundtable on Aboriginal Peoples](#) which was hosted in Hobbema, Alberta in 2000, and resulted in the Maskwachees Declaration. And the ASC has continued to make presentations to the First Ministers Conferences over a past number of years. In relation to the panel session which was held on the NAIG, we also know that there is a need for coaching development initiatives and standards related to events like the NAIG and Arctic Winter Games. In regard to the *Canadian Sport Policy* (2002), we are seeing a number of multi-year bilateral agreements that Sport Canada is signing with the Provinces and Territories and these include a number of coaching related initiatives. In the case of the three Territories and Northern Alberta, this includes the development of formal coaching programs for Arctic Sports and Dene Games linked with the Arctic Winter Games. We know National Sport Organizations and Provincial Sport Organizations are also undertaking sport participation initiatives. We know there is more support for coaching development and implementation with things like the Aboriginal Coaching Manual through partnerships with the provincial and territorial organizations and the coaching delivery structure. This will enhance the work the ASC is already trying to do through their networks in terms of getting that material out to coaches and to coaching education programs. In regard to the new Aboriginal sport policy, this will encourage further linkages since we know that there needs to be further action nationally, provincially, and territorially. There also needs to be more integrated approaches as

to how we take on this work. We need to link with other initiatives that are already going on, in particular, with the health sector in relation to the Pan-Canadian Healthy Living Strategy and things like the diabetes strategy. There are opportunities where there can be a fit in terms of the things we are trying to do in relation to sport and coaching development. We need to continue to take advantage of forums that are available to us, whether those forums are local, provincial or national coaching symposiums, coaching clinics, teaching conferences, etc.

It's interesting that the bilateral projects that are being funded by Sport Canada with the provinces and territories, support for research projects is not a high priority. In fact, the guidelines indicate that you can't apply for research projects. I think this is an area that needs to be looked at. In regard to the need for further research, we need to look at the monitoring and surveillance of various initiatives to improve access and remove barriers, and evaluate the impact of the current initiatives that we are doing through bilateral agreements and coaching education programs. We need further documentation of traditional knowledge and traditional games across Canada and from other jurisdictions. I think another one is the sharing of promising practices so that we can learn from each other and have the opportunity to build our knowledge base. We can get testimonials from people that participate in the NAIG or other games and share some of the things that are going well to help build the system. Using a holistic perspective and taking a population health approach to help us understand that there are a lot of determinants of health involved in developing people, not only in sport but also having a good life. The last thing, there was a national recreation round table on research held in Edmonton in 2003, and I am not sure if that document has been looked at but I would recommend that that document be looked at in relation to this forum and see if there are some learnings that can be applied to what we are trying to do here.

## Michael Heine

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My presentation ties in with Chris Szabo's overview of the traditional coaching resource development. An overview of the Resources can be found on the [Arctic Winter Games](#) website. The title originally selected for the resources in this series reads, '[Traditional Aboriginal Sport Coaching Resources](#),' but we have come to use the term coaching less and less frequently. The focus of the series has shifted more towards an emphasis on 'instruction' rather than 'coaching.' This small shift is representative of the challenges we face in the development of these resources.

The focus of the resource development is determined by their link to the Arctic Winter Games. The organizational structure of traditional Indigenous games at this event is informed by the sports performance model with its emphasis on competitive outcomes. The focus of the coaching instructional materials reflects this orientation while at the same time attempting to emphasize the indigenous cultural significance of these games. Specifically, we decided to follow the NCCP competency based program developed by the CAC, as explained by Rob Meckling.

Adoption of this model requires certain formal procedures, and that is what we have been doing over the last two years.

The Coaching Association of Canada [CAC] protocol for acceptance under the NCCP CBET program requires completion of specifically defined resource documents as well as consultation procedures. Basic resource document development has been completed for three traditional events, Arctic Sports, Dene Games, and Inuit-style Wrestling. Procedurally, the 'participant development model' [PDM] developed by the CAC involves consultation with the relevant sporting community and experts to determine the dominant participant profiles in your sport or physical activity discipline. You are then in a position to develop instructional and coaching materials that reflect the needs, expectations and population characteristic of the average participant in the sport. As a community-based process, this approach definitely represents one of the strengths of the participant development model. So far we have organized four of the workshops required under the PDM approach: Two for Inuit games, or, Arctic Sports, (Inuvik, NT, Rankin Inlet, NU), and two for Dene Games, (Whitehorse, YT, Fort Providence, NT).

A significant difficulty we encountered is the necessity to negotiate a meaningful coexistence of sports instruction and traditional knowledge – traditional knowledge about Indigenous games disseminated within the context of sports coaching and instruction can make it difficult to synchronize culturally specific motivations for participation in traditional games with those characteristic of participation in mainstream sport.

Gendered participation in traditional games, in certain regards is more restrictive for female participants than participation in mainstream sports, is, as a case in point, the most difficult to resolve. On this issue, I tend to defer to the political, and/or, cultural assumptions of the Indigenous activists and experts I work with. Thus a disagreement over the definition of 'appropriate' female participation in – that is, exclusion from – certain traditional Dene games at the Arctic Winter Games brought the PDM workshop in Fort Providence to a halt. Finding a resolution proved to be impossible. But if we hadn't followed a community-based development model, even reaching such a stalemate would not have been possible. If it had simply been, say, Chris, Rob, and I negotiating the issue, we would likely have just moved ahead and resolved the problem in accordance with our own political assumptions.

By contrast, participants at the Whitehorse workshop resolved the issue in an interesting way: Female participation was acceptable as long as it was not understood to be an expression of the traditional stipulations regarding gendered participation, but rather as a way of playing the games specifically adjusted to the assumptions of gendered participation embodied in the mainstream sports model. It is one of the key instructions given us that this has to be clearly expressed in the instructional resources to be developed.

The related question, secondly, of how a traditional perspective on games participation can be taught and explained by an instructor who may not be Dene him- or herself, was also brought up at the Dene Games workshops; at the Arctic Sports workshops, this turned out to be of little concern. The underlying problem concerns issues of control over, and brokering of, traditional knowledge, within a structure of dissemination over which Indigenous organizations and experts do not have control.

The Aboriginal participants at the Dene Games workshops resolved this issue in the same way the previously mentioned issue was resolved: The instructional resources need to indicate very clearly that the representation of Dene culture in the resources specifically relates to the Arctic Winter Games context; they are not to be understood as an appropriate representation of significant local or regional traditions. The cultural representation of Dene Games at the Arctic Winter Games is of course rather circumpolar in nature, whereas the meaningful traditions are always local, or at most, regional. The resources thus can provide learning experience about Dene culture for non-Aboriginal participants in the sport system without claiming to provide a representation of local traditions that are best, or possibly only, taught by local elders and/or experts.

To us, the mutually acceptable resolution of such issues indicates the strength of community-based models such as the PDM approach advocated by the CAC. The approach can facilitate a transfer of information between Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants (and instructors) while taking into account cultural and political issues of concern to Indigenous experts participating in this process.

## Sabrina Broadhead

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I got involved in coaching at a really young age. I have always coached teams with a high percentage of Aboriginal athletes. When I was younger I coached a number of different sports, in particular, fastball, and the athletes were mostly all Aboriginal girls, and we didn't have a lot of barriers at that time.

What I want to talk about is what works well now as a coach because things have changed over the years. I think what works well is having keen athletes, and in the Northwest Territories [NWT] their biggest incentive is travel. The opportunity to get out of your small community and go to other parts of the country is what makes the athletes interested and participate in sport. It doesn't matter what sport. A lot of times people will come to you with different skill sets and can play three or four different sports, and depending on the season they choose what sport they will participate in. There are other jurisdictions that have the same scenario, and I know the Yukon is the same way, and perhaps the northern parts of the provinces.

The other thing that works well for us is having a supportive school administration. I think in a lot of jurisdictions, one of the challenges we have is access to facilities and equipment. If you don't have some kind of link with the school administration, not just the district boards, but with

the actual administration at the school, such as the principal – the guy with the key – if you don't have a good relationship it's really difficult to build your program.

The other part that is important and works well in my situation now is a supportive town or community administration. That means access to facilities for sport at reasonable rates. Sport, for the most part, is expensive. You need to have a community that believes in subsidizing the sport and recreation system so that it is affordable for marginalized children. In my situation we have an administration that subsidizes recreation programs. As well, you need a supportive business community. This is important if you have athletes who do not have the financial resources in their families and have to take after-school jobs. It takes some work on the part of the coach and perhaps the management of the team to advocate for the athletes to have the opportunity to maintain their part-time employment and participate in sport.

Another thing that works well in my situation is [KidSport](#). In our community of Hay River, which has 2,500 to 3,500 people depending on the season, we have a President's Advisory Committee and what we do is work with different agencies in the community to ensure that any child that wants to play hockey gets involved. We identify kids who want to participate and work with social services and other groups to ensure that they have an opportunity. We are working with the NHL Player's Association to provide us with a whole bunch of free equipment that we are sharing, not just within our community, but with some of the communities around us.

Another thing that works well for us, especially when we look specifically at the Aboriginal sport scene, is we share athletes between communities. We don't have enough kids in our small communities to be able to put a team together, so we work hard to build relationships and networks so that we know where the athletes are and can bring them together on a regular basis.

In terms of barriers, I think the barriers to the situation that I am in, and that a lot of coaches are in, is a lack of administrative training. I think we are doing a pretty good job of training the athletes, coaches and officials, but the link we are missing is the training of administrators and team managers – the people who write the proposals for funding. We miss out on opportunities because somebody didn't read the advertisement in the paper, or the right people don't get the information. I think that is an area that we need to look at in terms of building capacity, that administrative training.

I also know that I have been very fortunate in coaching to have athletes who came in really well-rounded. They had the fundamentals of sport through their physical activity. They weren't watching TV, or they weren't playing Game Boy, or whatever. They played outside. They were climbing trees, and when they came to the court they were in pretty good shape. But that's changing. One of the challenges we have is the lack of daily quality physical activity. I think it's a real challenge for all of us. The kids are coming to the sport field unprepared. It is rare to see a child that comes in really good physical shape. So you have to spend a lot of time on physical condi-



tioning. I am finding that physical education programs are really impacting on their basic skills, the run-jump-throw kind of stuff. They don't come with that skill set because they haven't had that experience. And I think that is a big challenge for all of us. I praised Ralph Klein and what happen in Alberta with physical activity in the schools because, in the NWT, I just learned of a little girl in grade one who gets two, fifteen minute periods of physical education a week! In grade one! I just think that's shameful. There needs to be something we can do about that in terms of research ideas. Linkages with organizations like CAHPERD [Canadian Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance], I think we need to get on that a bit.

A short term problem that needs to be addressed is the lack of orientation for Territorial/Provincial Sport Organizations as to what the Aboriginal sport organizations are and what their events are about. With the NAIG, for example, there are challenges with how the athletes are selected. Also, I just had an experience with the NAHC [National Aboriginal Hockey Championships]. We had an off-ice incident and the athletes signed a code of conduct. We were dealing with it as an organization but there was a misunderstanding between the NWT hockey association and our group as to who had jurisdiction over what happens to those athletes. It was a very tough situation for everybody involved. There needs to be more orientation for the sport organizations at the national, territorial, and provincial level as to what these Aboriginal events are about.

In terms research, I think we need to gather some of the statistics around physical education and intramural programs and make a case for improvement in those areas, particularly in the small northern and Aboriginal communities. Also research on leadership development opportunities is needed. One of things we are getting ready for is the NAHC 2006; perhaps one of the things that could be asked of the kids is what brought them there? You have a really good forum of kids that are between fifteen and twenty years old, and you could get some really good information there.

## Tara Hedican

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I have a little bit of a confession to make. I'm not really a coach. I do coach a high school level team, but I'm not a really a coach in that respect. But maybe I can give some insight on some of my experiences as an athlete. In terms of athletics, I have been on the Senior National Wrestling Team for the past seven years. I compete at the world level, but I know what it is like to go through the program from the grassroots level. I have my Level 2 NCCP for coaching and I am hoping to upgrade that with some support. I am in teacher's college right now and one thing I learned is that "less is more," so I will try to condense my presentation.

I am hoping to do some research in sport or education. Hopefully, some of things I learn here will translate into of some sort of research. I competed at the 2002 NAIG and I also won the Tom Longboat Award. That was a huge thing for me. For the first time I really felt pride in who I was and about my cultural heritage. For the first time I got a chance to go up north to my home reserve,

which I never visited before. It is a remote community and there are absolutely no roads that go up there except for a winter road, which is open for two weeks. We had a lot of issues there that I saw like suicide. The youth felt really down and they thought they would bring me in to talk to the kids. One thing that one of the kids told me was “please don’t ever forget us” and that really touched my heart when I heard that. When I went to the World Championships I put the flag of my community on my Team Canada jacket just to tell everyone in the world this is who I am and this is who my people are. Everyone thinks that you’re a Canadian. When I went to Japan in the summer, as soon as I got off the plane they lined us up in the wrestling room and they wanted us to introduce ourselves, our weight class, everything, and to say something that is significant about ourselves. As everyone went along, I said that I am one of the First Peoples of Canada and these people are Canadian, but I am one the First Peoples of Canada. They were all pretty amazed about that.

Some of my involvement in coaching is through the Ontario Amateur Wrestling Association and through my own initiatives. I have worked with coaches from Nunavut and a lot of remote communities in Alberta, British Columbia, and Ontario, and other places. One of my experiences I will share with you about the NAIG is that it was the first time that I actually felt like that I had fun at a tournament. As a high performance athlete I always feel pressure to perform and to come home with the gold medal. This was the first time where I actually got a chance to share my sport with my family and show them what I do. A lot of my family is from Manitoba and Winnipeg and they got to come and watch me. I brought my mother and brother along and it was kind of a family reunion. There was only one wrestler in my weight class and she had three kids and it was her first wrestling match ever. It just goes to show that the NAIG isn’t always about medals and winning the gold, but about sharing our culture and sharing the love of sport.

We need more coaches. We need to provide more services and development in the area of coaching. I was very fortunate to grow up in Guelph, Ontario and since the age of fifteen I was coached by an Olympian. I can’t tell you how important it is to have good coaching. Because of this I have been able to rise above a lot of the competition in Canada and the world. If we get more coaches and invest in people that are enthusiastic about teaching sport to kids it is really going to pay off in the end. Another thing that we need to work on is funding. Everyone always talks about the economic side of things. We need to provide more money for coaches to go to training camps so they can learn about the sport. We need to give more grants to athletes. I have talked to a lot of athletes who find this a big barrier in their development. I talked to a coach at the 2002 NAIG from Nunavut and this was the first time they were in the Games. I think they had three wrestlers at the Games. He told me that there are a lot of opportunities for funding for them. It’s so great to have these opportunities. I know a lot of us don’t really have the opportunity to access that kind of support.

In terms of creating a cross-cultural environment, I think we need to create awareness, acceptance, and what I called “with-it-ness,” or working together. I work with kids from Pikangikum, Ontario, which is another remote community. I worked with them in the summer time. We had a

conference in Guelph where we had all kinds of kids come all over from Ontario, and these kids from Pikangikum faced a lot of racism at this conference. I kind of see why – some of the kids who were in grade nine and ten were twenty-two, some of the young kids had tattoos and smoked, some of them had long hair and accents. It's going to be hard but we need to shift these barriers by creating awareness and understanding.

And, some people are not going to like this, but there is too much focus on hockey. I talked to the Aboriginal Sport Circle about this and there is a reason for this, but all of our money and resources are put into hockey while there are other sports out there that need to be reached. Some of the research questions I have are: Why do Aboriginal athletes stop playing and competing after high school? Why don't they continue? What kind of support structures do they need to continue? How can we reach remote communities and encourage them to participate in the NAIG? Remember, the pride and cultural heritage you show is a great strength. Thank you.

## Ian Bird

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I am fascinated by our interest in time this morning, our ten minutes [time limit for talking], given that it is also a human construct. Those who have participated in the Olympic Games, for instance, would appreciate that because the whole two week experience is timed to the minute. Although I have not been, I understand that the experience of attending the opening ceremonies at an Arctic Winter Games is something in which time is not constructed in the same way, and it will take as long as it needs—which is not to say that I will take as long—although it was tempting.

This morning I dropped off my four year old daughter at nursery school. She asked me what I was doing today, and I said that I am going to the Aboriginal Sport Forum. She asked, "What is that?" I described it as best as I could. She said, "You will tell me about it at the end and what you learned" because she is at a point in her life where learning is something she is fascinated by. And it was apropos that in 2002 I was an observer, at the back of the room, at the NAIG Research Symposium when Sheldon Baikie gave a presentation on his work in Nain, Labrador. I think it was that, at that time, I didn't have language for this concept of the strengths perspective, but have been thinking quite a lot about. So when I was asked if I would come to this Forum, it was just sort of an automatic despite the fact that I didn't give a presentation in 2002, and I am certainly not engaged in the research realm, and wasn't working in policy at the time, but I was very much a programmer. The impact of that experience [learning about the strengths perspective] was fundamental to my own approach for how I work in sport, which is a small example of how what is happening in this community, and the broader community of Aboriginal sport, is such a beacon. It provides an opportunity and a contribution to the broader sport fabric in such a way that I think we should be raising its profile and giving it prominence, not just on its own merits, although that is important, but because of what it can do globally in helping to make connections with other populations. It's a significant contribution. So that is more of an observation that is built on my own experience.

When I think about it now, given my work with [Sport Matters](#), I give it more serious consideration because of what we know about what sport is offering throughout Canada. I think of this as an untold story; that there is no other form of participation in civil society in our community that is as widespread, as large, robust and diversified as sport. The data from the volunteer sector survey in 2004 shows that there are some 34,000 organizations involved in making sport happen in Canada, 75% or 25,000 organizations that are local. And it is distinctly a Canadian thing I can tell you. It's a remarkable thing because it means that sport is a place where people participate in society, whether it happens in faith-based participation, or spiritual-based participation, at a mosque or a church or whatever it might be. As it happens, it is larger than the participation in political institutions, or the environmental movement, or arts and culture, or other places where people volunteer. Volunteering is, and this is quite amazing, in every place where sport is. It could be argued that if we eliminated all of those 34,000 organizations that people in Canada would create it all over again. They would go about and organize themselves and, figuratively or metaphorically, like Alex [Nelson] did, head off to Edmonton and participate. They would just be there, and show up and play and get involved at some point, and take the steps to draft a constitution and bi-laws to organize themselves. This, then, gives me pause for what we are doing here.

If you thought about a gathering of leaders involved in research, involved in policy, involved in programming – let's talk about it terms of the environment – and you bring people together at the forefront of research on the environment from the Aboriginal sphere, and you said that they were all coming together in a room to forge the research agenda, to shape the way policy was to be put together, to identify what the priorities were, to help inform decisions that government officials make, this would be fundamentally a critical part of the public discourse, period. Think about it. When we start talking about the sacred places of our country and the interest we have in the earth and the natural environments, bringing people together to talk about and shape these things – that is quite something I think. If we do it in sport collectively this way, it really does bubble up. It bubbles right up from that local softball game, what Sabrina [Broadhead] spoke about, carrying around that KidSport application in her back pocket to make sure people can be involved. It is this set of observations that points to what I think is a sizeable opportunity, given the scope and value and contribution that sport and leaders like yourself in this room make.

I am aware of the concept of an Aboriginal-centered approach to these discussions because I feel like this remains the challenge. As someone who has been involved in the athlete-centered approach and the mainstream sport system, I know what years of challenge that is. In reading the Aboriginal sport policy, and preparing to come here today, I am encouraged that some of this is showing up. But I think there is a vigilance required from all of us, and a challenge from someone like me, to understand what that is. I guess I will continue to seek guidance about how it is that I can be Aboriginal-centered in my comments. I have yet to sort that out, even as I am here today. Mike [Heine] is someone I think I can learn from as he negotiates these choices.

My last comment will arrive at a research question and I hope will link to the topic I was supposed to talk about, coaching. I spent a year and half working with, and for, coaches. When I took the job I thought I would be working with people who are really interested in how to make someone faster, or have a better couple of moves on the mat in order to be a better competitor, or to create an environment where participation in sport was more amicable. The coaches themselves would be sport informed and sport driven. I kept waiting for that to happen. Actually what happened was that they spent all their time talking about the same thing that is at the front end of the Aboriginal Coaching Manual – this whole holistic approach – they don't use the same language – but they talk about the whole development of the person! And these are guys like Alex Gardner and Andy Higgins, and these are track coaches whose jobs are to help someone be faster, but they would never go there. Yeah, they would get around to talking about performance, but fundamentally it was about what they were involved in as a career.

At the end of the day, what really mattered was the development of people, and I became fascinated with that. What a selfless group of people. When you say, "What can I do to help you?" – they would tell you to find something to contribute to their athletes' development and never say what they needed for themselves – which is also a weakness as they needed certain supports. I was trying to find language to express this because there are not many people like this in our world, who are so selfless. What they were about was this whole development of the person. So we ended up talking about it like public leadership, being in a public role, a social, interactive role where you can't do it on your own. If I was to return to university or to whatever place where you do research and I had a question to pose it would be this: How is it that sport, and in particular coaches, have cultivated this notion of "public leadership"? And what are the major contributions that it makes, not just as it relates to sport, but as it relates to Canadian society and Aboriginal communities and a little town in Chelsea where my little daughter goes to school?

## Athlete Development Panel

### Desiree Streit

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Hi, my name is Desiree Streit. I am from northern Manitoba and I study at the University of Manitoba. I jotted down just a few things that helped me in northern Manitoba. I am from a community of six thousand people; that jumps up to ten with the reserve across the river. The things I thought of were, number one, was family support and exposure at a young age, not to sports but gymnastics, dance and just skating programs. Having that skill set right away so that when I did get into grade seven and eight and started playing basketball, I had the ability, not great basketball ability, but I had the athleticism.

So I guess that brings in grassroots programming. My parents aren't rich. They are middle class parents like most people. A lot of the programs were very cheap, so I got to do them all. When I mean parent support, I meant when I was young my parents took me everywhere. Then, when I got into high school, my family support was financial, I didn't have to work. I had that financial support. I didn't get a lot of money from them, but I knew I didn't have to work. And so I was able to do all of the sports that I needed to do to become an athlete.

Basketball is my main sport, but I started boy's hockey when I was nine. So another family support that I am talking about was that I was never limited. My parents never said, "I can't do this." I had two older brothers who played hockey and I got all of their hand-me-down equipment, which I wasn't happy with, but I had to use it. I had a role model, my cousin Marni. She started playing boy's hockey as well; there weren't any girl's programs. She is five years older than me. So I saw her playing with the boys; so I had one person to look up to. I also had another fellow who encouraged me. He said, "You should really play. You should really play." When I was nine, I agreed to try it for him – it wasn't for myself. So I had role models, and I had encouragement from an outside source other than my parents.

Then, when I got into basketball, I had really good coaching. In a small town like the Pas, it was incredible. I didn't think of it at the time, but now that I look back at it they were amazing and they were certified and that was really important. I didn't know they were certified then, but I know that now. So I think somehow having certified coaching programs for people in remote communities, like I am six hours north of Winnipeg, is very important.

I definitely used sport as a stepping stone to get out of the Pas. I saw a lot of girls who weren't in sports and who were getting into the bad things you find in small towns. Because of sport, I wasn't exposed as much to those negative influences. I could get out of the town on weekends through sport. And then it was the social factor that really encouraged me to become an athlete. I played university basketball. I took a year off after high school and went to the city. And coming from a rural to an urban setting, it's hard for some people, even with a very strong support system. Coming to a university that has twenty-five thousand people, my town can fit in that three or four times, you feel really lost when you come into a university or even just the city. I had lots of friends though, I had a really good support system, is what I am trying to say. This touches on the barriers coming from a rural to an urban setting.

I think of all the things that lead up to coming into the urban setting, it developed an intrinsic motivation in me. I did take a year off of school and when I went to university, I went on my own motivation. I decided that I would try out for the basketball team. I was at Brandon University at this time. It didn't work out, and that's fine, but I came to Winnipeg and I wanted to be a phys-ed teacher. So I came to the University of Manitoba, and once again, I felt this is very overwhelming feeling, like I'm not used to this, it's too big. But I had a mentor. What I am saying is that mentorship

is huge and I can see the value in it. I refereed women's and men's ice hockey. I don't referee anymore, but I am a high level referee in hockey. I hold my Level 4 NCCP, and for people who don't know what that is, it's a pretty high level, especially for females. I had somebody take me under their wing. I didn't realize until about two years into refereeing in Winnipeg that I had a mentor. He helped me; he called me on his own. So having somebody in the refereeing area to just show me around and take me to places, like to arenas, really helped. Like, there's only one arena in the Pas, so I know where to go. But in Winnipeg, there are hundreds; they're everywhere, and the city is big. So, I had somebody.

That leads me to the work we are doing with Children of the Earth [an all-Aboriginal elementary school in Winnipeg], which is the research program I'm working on with Janice [Forsyth] and Joannie [Halas] and Mike [Heine] at the University of Manitoba. I see that a major thing is mentorship, even at this school. I don't really know the kids that well yet, but I know that even from one experience that it is important for kids to see that there are people who are going to university athletics or people at an elite level. And there is interest! I was at their volleyball game and I was just sitting next to a girl that I recognized from the year before. We did this program last year, and she was in grade nine. So she wasn't even in that school anymore, but she struck up a conversation with me and she just said, "You go to university?" I said, "Yeah." She said, "Oh, it must be really hard." I said, "Well, yeah. I'm not a great student but I got a degree." And she started laughing. I said, "Are you interested?" And she said, "Yeah, I am." And it really was surprising because I wasn't the one going out and being this leader. She found me and she struck up the conversation with me; so it was just having somebody there. I see this program that we are doing [at Children of the Earth] as being really helpful to strike up a dialogue with young people.

I see development as an athlete is important. But creating forums like this, just for dialogue, is important. Sorry, I'm getting off track. I mean athlete development is different from having a kid being physically active. But from where I am going in my career, I'm not an athlete anymore, I see that sport is really important, but it's not the most important thing, especially with urban kids right now. I'm just going to wrap it up by saying that having role models is essential; mentorship programs are key; accessibility and opportunity without question are important; willingness and just the support structure are things that I see that an athlete will develop if they have all those things under them. Kids want to be active, and I also see it as a platform to go to university and for kids to be motivated.

## Jared Fletcher

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Just to give you a little background info, my name is Jared Fletcher. I am a former University of Manitoba athlete. Now I'm working on my Master's soon to become a Ph.D. in kinesiology [at the University of Calgary]. Well, there are a lot of qualitative researchers here. The perspective that I bring is of being a quantitative researcher, just looking at things from the quantitative side.

As well, I worked with Joannie [Halas] doing qualitative stuff at Children of the Earth school, and stuff like that. So I was having a hard time looking at this question, you know, “What does it mean to be a ‘successful’ athlete?” Being a quantitative researcher, I always try to put a number to it. So I looked at it from my own experience, with my research in my Master’s. I looked at world class speed skaters at the [Calgary Olympic] oval who are just about to break world records, and eighty year old cancer patients who are struggling to get up the stairs. Now I look at those as both being success stories, and, being an athlete, I tend to be really focused on the high performance athletes and breaking the world records, but at the same time there is a part of me that says you have to look back and look at everyone else’s success stories. So I’ll try not to get too caught up on the high performance side of things.

So, where I’m going with that is that it ties into the need for daily physical activity. For some people, that means walking thirty minutes a day, twenty minutes a day, even five minutes a day – that’s success. And I think this gets into the stepping stone idea for high performance sport. Using myself as an example, I have always been physically active. It started in fifth grade soccer, building the fundamental skills to become a successful athlete at the collegiate level. One thing that Jason [Loutitt] and I were talking about on our run yesterday, we were talking about the need to set goals, not just setting attainable and challenging goals, but to get them out there and tell people about them. From my experience, to have people in my life not only hear my goals but encourage the attainment of my goals is a big thing. So I would say taking the steps required to get to that goal is important. It’s not just, “Mom, I’m going to the Olympics in 2020.” It’s the steps needed to get there and bring that support system around you to support you, to encourage your goals, and then also just to hear them, because if you don’t have enough courage to say them out loud to someone, even if they are far out and you think they’re crazy, you’re not going to have the courage to get out the door twice a day to go on a run, to take the steps required to reach those goals.

Another thing Jason and I mentioned on the run, we were talking about the need to surround ourselves with positive people. This is a real big thing for me because I’ve been fortunate enough, throughout my sporting career, to have really positive family, friends, coaches, training partners, so that if there is ever a thought that I don’t want to get out the door today and run, or maybe I will stay out a little bit too late, there is always that support system to keep you on track. And, you know, I hate to go back to the run because it wasn’t that long – it makes it sound like we were out there for two hours – but I just found it amazing that after our run, we both said, “It’s a good thing you were there. I wouldn’t have gone so hard.” Jason said that to me, and I looked at him and said, “Well if you weren’t there I wouldn’t have gone so hard.” So, there is just that being together that brings that support out more than if you were by yourself. So, I think that being surrounded by really positive people brings out the success in me and all of the athletes.

Along those same lines, this is sort of getting into my recommendations, but the need to set up a high performance training center and a high performance training camp. I see this with my



work with the disabled swim team, where they are scattered all over the country. We bring them together for three, four, five days and they train together, they get some valuable information from coaches, physiologists, psychologists and they take that information back to their communities. I think that this would be a really great idea for Aboriginal athletes, for the high performance athletes to come together in training, to get training advice and support. That way they can take it back to their communities and they can pass it on to the people they know. So it's this hierarchy of support that we can create through these training centers.

I think it's really important for the young athletes to recognize the success stories, like using the NAIG as a stepping stone to showcase the successes of NAIG athletes. I'd really like to see, now that the 2002 NAIG is over, what happened to these athletes. And mention it in the newspaper. It could really be this symbol of pride to have, you know, in lane five, the North American Indigenous Games champion. Where as I find now, there is the Canada Games champion, the Western Canada Games champion, the provincial champion, but NAIG is lost in there. We're looking at it from not only that participation view, but also that high performance side of NAIG and using it as a stepping stone for the Canada Games, Western Canada Games, and of all these other competitions. But when someone wins at the NAIG, we just sort of forget about it once it's over. So being in touch with the NAIG success stories is important, as well as on a higher level, like the success stories of the Tom Longboats, the Billy Mills, the Angela Chalmers, the Waneeck Horn-Millers, the young athletes who really need to see these stories so they have a ray of hope. Look at Billy Mills, he's from one of the poorest parts of the US, with poverty, crime, and everything, but yet he managed to win the Olympic gold medal in 1964. So if we can get those stories out, I think it would really encourage athletes to reach that next level and continue with their participation in sport. And again, we need to avoid getting lost in this system.

Also, there needs to be that stepping stone for post-collegiate athletes and for athletes like Jason [Loutitt] who didn't start running until he was twenty-four or twenty-five. I'm twenty-four right now, thinking, okay, my career is over. It's done and there is nothing else to do. If you are not on the national team, it's over. But we are obviously not at the peak of our potential as Jason is showing us. So we need to get that support system out there so that after these competitions we can have something to train for. Hopefully, NAIG will be one of those competitions.

As far as I know, and Desiree [Streit] mentioned getting lost in the university system, I see that a lot with people coming from rural areas. Again, this goes back to the support system – that is a big theme here – but to have that support when you come into university, be it through mentors or someone on the team who has the experience to guide you down the path and say, "You know, you need to go to school. You need to go to class. You need to study." I really think that'll guide you down the right path. I notice a lot of athletes, seeing them in high school or even junior high, they don't realize some of the benefits of sport, not just being physically active and healthy, but you know, you can travel and you can get a scholarship to the US to train full time. What an experience!

I've always known it because I've had people tell me to train hard, get a scholarship, go to school so you don't have to pay for it. But when I talk to high school athletes, it's like, "I can't do that." It's unbelievable! So, one of my recommendations is to just get the word out to the Aboriginal athletes, especially in the rural areas, about the benefits of continuing in sports throughout your life.

Some of the research questions that I would like to see is a balance of this quantitative and qualitative approach to Aboriginal sport; you know, getting the qualitative researchers to talk to the athletes, but also using quantitative researchers, like myself, who have access to high performance centers and to testing equipment and really getting stats and numbers on what's going on. And, also speaking to the NAIG athletes, I think that's really important. Find out what got them to participate. Was it advice from a school teacher, from a gym teacher, or a guidance counselor? Or, find out how long they have been working at being an athlete, like four, five, or six years. How did they get to the NAIG? How did they know about it? And, what are they doing now? It's one thing to say, "I won a gold medal at the 2002 NAIG," and another to continue with that, and if not, what are some of the barriers that kept you from participating after the NAIG? Thanks.

### Waneek Horn-Miller

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My experience is as an Olympic athlete, a varsity athlete, and a NAIG athlete, and from coming from my community and going through a lot of the things that I went through. My post-athletic career, I remember I got this great bit of advice when I got home from the 2002 Olympics from Alwyn [Morris] – I am lucky enough to have an Olympic athlete right in my home community, right around the corner from my house – so, I remember talking to him when I was going through the post-Olympic blues or post-competition blues and I was like, "What am I going to do with my life?" I had achieved the one goal I ever had, and maybe I didn't win a medal, but I achieved my destination. And he said to me, "You know, there is a lot of really good athletes out there, amazing athletes, Olympic gold medalists, small time medalists, and the difference between a good athlete and a great athlete is what they do with that and how we share it." That's one distinct value that Aboriginal people have, is that we have to share that experience. I know that my being on the Olympic team was a unique thing, but I don't think that's a good thing; I think it's a bad thing that it's so unique. I'm hoping that one day it's like you don't get noticed so much, like you don't see people like me on the cover of every magazine because they think, "Wow, what a unique story!" I know how the media works.

I've always done public and motivational speaking, since I was about fifteen years old due to my experience with Oka and stuff like that. I've gotten a lot of opportunities to speak in communities across North America and, you know, you'd sit there and all these kids looking at me like they're saying, "Inspire me!" When I go into these settings with kids it's like I have to open myself up, I have to make myself vulnerable, and I really just have to pour my heart out and that's the way I am – I speak from a very personal and very secret place within myself. I have to be able to

reach out to the kids because they don't get that high affluent talk, you know, that academic talk. These kids don't get that, they don't identify with it. They want to know the guts and the blood, how you really felt, and why you did the sport, and what did it mean to you. Of course, in my own career, the least stressful time in my life was my athletic career, the actual competition. I use to say to people that playing water polo is not stressful, that it was everything else. And you often find with a lot of athletes, that these kids are making that step, and you know what they are thinking of? They're thinking, "How's my little brother or sister? Is any one feeding them? Is there anyone getting them off to school? Or, is anyone picking on them? How's my Grandmother? I missed another funeral, you know. I missed another wedding. I missed another birth." There's all those interconnectedness that we have with our communities. The interconnectedness that we have with our communities is so important. It makes us who we are. It makes us distinct, that knowing your people. Who are your people? People always ask that. In the [United] States, it's a big thing. Who are your people? And you tell them, "These are my people." And then you've got to explain your entire family tree until they know who your people are. But you know, I come from a traditional upbringing, a longhouse upbringing. I missed so many festivals. I missed a lot of Hooduee ceremonies. I missed fall harvest ceremonies, all these things that are a big part of who I am. And, so, those were the stresses, those were the things I was thinking of. And, you know, I used to say to some of my teammates – a lot of them would be eighteen years old and their families are like, "Okay, get out of the house." And then they don't have responsibilities to their families anymore, and they don't have to be there for every birthday party. I'm the one in my family who does this. I make the birthday parties for my nieces. I'm the aunt that can do that. I am the aunt that picks up the tab when the kids need money for hockey and all that stuff. So, the psychological stress of being cut off from your community is really hard.

I remember being sent to so many sports psychologists. And they're sitting there, getting you to visualize that you're in your house, and telling you to put that stress in the closet, and I am just going "AAAARGH!" [lots of laughter]. I'm just sitting there, saying like, "You don't get it! You know ,you really don't get it!" And, to be a successful athlete I had to make my sport almost spiritual. I had to go back to my spiritual, ceremonial background. And I found my sport psychology within my cultural ceremonies. Like, before the Olympic Games, I went to see an Elder and I was, like, "I'm going to something I have never been before." I've been to a lot of competitions and Pan Am Games, but nothing can compare to the Olympic Games because that's all you dream about, you know, twenty-four/seven, since I was a little kid, since I'd seen Alwyn Morris win his gold medal and saw *Running Brave*, which is the best movie ever. The Olympics, for me, were more than just a social accomplishment, they were a form of suicide prevention; they were drug and alcohol prevention; they were the reason why I got rid of the bad boyfriends and knew to surround myself with good people, with understanding the difference between the ones that weren't going to help and the ones that were going to help you. Those were the Olympics for me. And, for a lot of young

kids, it's an obsession. You need that obsession. It's that one ray of light in your future because for Native people there aren't a lot of them.

When I was heading off to the Olympics, I was so scared I didn't know what to do. So I went to see an Elder because my sport psychologist wasn't helping me, and the Elder said, "You know what I am going to do? I am going to prepare you for battle, teach you the traditional way of getting ready for battle." And I said, "What do you mean?" And he said, "You're going into a different type of battle, you're going to war, it's what you do. You're going to somewhere you have never been. It's a battle where you are going to have to fight for your team mates and fight in the water," and all that type of thing. At that time, I was just being ripped apart in the media and it was really hard, so I was really scattered and he taught me the ceremonial way of getting ready for battle. So, I took my medicine pouch, and it was the first time in my life I was able to link my spiritual upbringing with actual reality. I was able to make my culture relevant. I think that it's really important, whether you have a traditional upbringing, or Christian upbringing, or whatever. You need to have that, and that's something. We're brought up to have that balance. You know, you're spiritual life isn't once a week, like every Sunday. It's everything, it's who you are. And I think that making it relevant in our everyday life is important. So, we're going to the Olympics, and we're in Sydney [Australia] in our little house where there is this little courtyard in the back, and there are all these different houses, and, you know, getting ready for the first game against Russia I got out my medicines and all my teammates started poking their heads out of the windows and one of them yells down, "Does that work?" I'm like, "Well, it's been working for a couple of thousand years!" [lots of laughter]. And the next thing you know, they're down there and a lot of them said to me that it put them into a good frame of mind; that's what it is, putting yourself into a good frame of mind, getting them ready for battle. So, making our cultures relevant, not only to ourselves, but making it relevant to the entire sports world is important.

One of the things that I am hoping to see is more research done on that [incorporating traditional cultural practices into the mainstream sports model]. Teaching that to our young people, and utilizing the Elders in our high performance sport, which is important. We always develop things in a segregated way, especially for Aboriginal people. It's like, you know, you are this special group of people, and they say let's go over here and do your special little thing, and do whatever you got to do and come back here [into the mainstream]. I learned through my career, coming from the Rez [reservation] kind of fighting, defending my cousins in high school, that it was easy to defend my teammates, it was easy to get into the bench clearing brawls that I did in Italy and stuff like that because someone broke my teammates nose, like these things are a reality among athletes! You've got to get in there and you've got to be just totally kickass! That is something that these kids are brought up with! Then making my way up the sport world, becoming the captain, the co-captain of the Olympic team, you know, I think that we have a lot of things that are just incredibly relevant that a lot of non-Native athletes can really learn from. Native leader-

ship styles are very incorporative, inclusive, not hierarchical, which does not work in sports. It has to be inclusive; you are only as strong as your weakest player; that is why it is important to empower others. So Native leadership is not measured by how many people you control, or have under you; rather, it is how much you empower others to be their best, a sign that you have a lot of personal power.

I was in Sydney and Perth, Australia, for my first championships and we were at this big party and out walks the New Zealand water polo team and they start doing the Haka. First I was like, "What are they doing?" There was actually a Maori guy on the team, and I realized that every national team [from New Zealand] does the Haka. Like the rugby teams, water polo teams, and I said, "Why do you do it?" And he said, "It's a way of preparing for battle, getting your mind set for battle." All the non-Maori athletes knew how to do it, so I think there's a lot we can learn, we can teach the mainstream sports, just like I learned a lot of things about you. I think it will make sport a more inclusive place, so it's not like you're a foreigner. There were a lot of times where, if there was like a crisis in my family, I just felt like I couldn't explain it. I felt like every time I opened my mouth to say something, maybe about something that happened back home, my teammates would look at me as if I was from Mars or something. So then I started inviting them out to my community. And there were a couple of them whom I am best friends with to this day because they came out and started hanging out in my community. They started understating the dynamics of who I was and all these things are like, "Wow. Okay, I finally get why you act the way you do and you react the way you do and why you won't back down from a fight." Where I come from the people never back down from anything. Of course, that's why I don't know how to back down from a fight – you know what I mean – we just don't fight half-assed, we fight to the end. We will see a battle right on through. Even if you are the loser, you will fight. If you've got one breath left you will fight. I mean that's who the Mohawk people are, right? I had to learn to narrow it down a little bit, but just a little. I was just talking to Tara [Hedican] about this. And she said, "You know, you were going through a lot of trouble with your sport." And I was, like, "Yeah, I know. It's just that's the way I am. It's just the way my people are, and how my experiences shaped me." You know it's totally normal to be like that back home. But I like learning. I learned a lot from mainstream sports. But I would like to see someone identify and develop a unique brand of sport psychology, utilizing our [Aboriginal] psychology.

I really love the idea of using quantitative and qualitative research. I think it's the most important thing because one of the things I realized traveling through Indian country is that we'll throw a program at a community but we don't know whether they have the infrastructure, the people, everything to support that. So, I also think doing really good grassroots-based research is important. I was a big fan of the Canada fitness plan—how many of you got those big patches? Remember the Awards of Excellence? I think that's what we need to do for those kids who don't have the parents, that don't have the friends, that don't have anybody. We need to be able to

create a system where we can database those kids. We need to go into a community and spend the money to database them and track them, and be able to say, “Hey, we’re having a camp for cross-country skiing,” and you can just utilize that technology and say, “Okay, we’ve got two hundred kids in northern Saskatchewan, let’s have one there.” Just being able to take a long-term, more scientific approach, and utilizing our younger people who are getting up there and who are actually developing the skills to do that.

## Mike Robidoux

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The question today regarding what can be done to enhance sporting experiences for Aboriginal athletes is one that I have not thought about much prior to this event.<sup>4</sup> The research I have been conducting on First Nations hockey for the past four years has been more about finding out how hockey can potentially express notions of cultural identity despite the Euro-Canadian framework from which the sport derived. I was not overly interested in whether or not the sporting experiences were positive, but rather, focused more on the potential of hockey [played by First Nations peoples] to subvert dominant Euro-Canadian [sporting] values as opposed to simply reproducing them, as some have argued. Thinking about this more from an athlete sporting perspective has wonderfully problematized my initial lines of thinking, which I will offer to you today in hope that ensuing discussions may shed light on the initial query we were asked to discuss. But first, let me start with some brief contextual details to allow you to consider some of the points I intend to raise later on.

The research I have been doing initially involved visiting and participating in First Nations hockey tournaments across the country. After getting to know many hockey participants and fans, people began inviting me into their communities to pursue my research at a more community level. I ended up working with two communities, participating in and observing hockey, whether by way of hockey clinics or in games with community members. In each setting, the people wanted to make it clear that hockey was of great importance to their communities and that it is impossible to get an appreciation for the tournaments without gaining an appreciation of hockey at the community level. Therefore, in addition to attending approximately four tournaments per year for the past four years, I made four trips to two reserve communities over the past two years—the Esketemc First Nation in interior British Columbia, and Sandy Lake First Nation in Northern Ontario. Each visit ran between ten days and two weeks. I also spent time speaking with local community members about hockey in their community; this was done by way of formal interviewing and informal conversations.

In the limited amount of time I have here it is not possible to relate to you much of what I experienced over this time, but do wish to stress that hockey was a highly valued sporting practice in both communities. For Esketemc community members, they have a renowned hockey history that dates back to the famous Alkali Lake team of the 1930s, nicely documented by Hillary Place in *A*

*Place in the Cariboo* (1999). The community, however, is more famous for its tremendous battle with alcohol and subsequent physical/sexual abuse that ravaged the community from the 1950s to the mid 80s. In their inspiring tale of recovery, however, hockey has resurfaced and has been rearticulated as an expression of local pride and worth. Currently men, women boys and girls play the game, and many people I spent time with rarely missed Junior and Senior hockey games in the town of Williams Lake, a mere 50 kms away down a hazardous dirt road which is often impassable due to weather conditions throughout the winter.

The other community I spent time in is the Sandy Lake First Nation, a remote fly-in community in Northern Ontario. Here hockey is primarily a male activity, but passionately pursued as well. In addition to hockey played at the local arena, boys and girls and parents can be found playing pick up pond hockey games on the endless waterways surrounding the community. When we met with the Chief and Council in the Council Chambers, I was taken by the amazing local artwork and artefacts stylishly set about throughout the room; but at the head of the room was a Montreal Canadians Hockey jersey set in a glass case, with one of the more prominent community names, Meekis, written across the back.

As difficult as it is for me not to romanticize the place of hockey in these communities, especially in Sandy Lake where its very location in the winter is the quintessential backdrop for Canadian hockey stereotypes and myth-making, there are many meanings associated with the game. Without doubt there is this notion of an honest love-of-the-game sensibility which spills out in conversations, which is aired during community saunas, and celebrated in the many vernacular forms of play witnessed throughout the community. But hockey is also understood as a highly masculinist pursuit, which is hyper competitive and deliberately aligned to a professional hockey model. It is the notion of hockey in and of itself, where performance is the central tenet, and success is absolutely strived for. From what I have encountered in both communities, these are not dichotomous constructs—one good, one bad—nor are they irreconcilable as is often presented in more popular sport discourse. I would argue that these two perspectives have informed one another and instil the passion in the game which was remarkably evident throughout my fieldwork. With this said, are there consequences to the latter perspective predominating how one understands the essence of hockey? While most of my academic colleagues would likely assume the answer to be obvious, that of course the competitive, performance driven perspective will ruin the essence of sport, my research findings have not made this such an easy conclusion. While I too share this notion in general, the hockey developments I have witnessed, most noticeably by way of First Nations hockey tournaments, challenges an overdeterministic reading of the situation, which I will now discuss by way of First Nation hockey tournaments and the radical developments of First Nations players.

First, there are basically two types of tournaments (I'm oversimplifying this for sake of time): the first is the more community-based tournament that either due to geographic restrictions or rule re-

restrictions, players play for their own band. For the most part these tournaments are smaller in scale and lower quality in terms of play. They are closer to the original First Nations hockey tournament format as they encourage participation and community involvement by way of team support and sponsorship. The other format has essentially grown out of the community model. The events are restricted to Aboriginal players, meaning First Nation, Inuit and Métis but, there are no restrictions on team membership. The teams are made up of highly skilled players whose services are bought to play on a specific team. Therefore a team from Sandy Lake Ontario can have players who live all across the country, depending on who they can recruit and/or how much they are willing to pay for players. It has become a kind of circuit where a network of players is regularly hired and appears in tournaments throughout the year. One of my contacts from Prince George, BC, who has been involved in the organization of one such tournament in Prince George, explained that top players have opportunities to play in about 20 tournaments per year; their expenses are paid for and they can earn up to \$1000 per event. The top teams are made up of current and former professional players, Major Junior and University and College players. While the Prince George tournament is broken up into categories where weaker, more community-based teams can participate, most of these tournaments such as Brandon and Kenora have only one top male category, meaning weaker teams and players are not able to participate. In both forms of the tournaments, however, huge cash prizes are often available, where winning teams can make upwards of \$20,000.

The professionalization of these events is the concern that I am attempting to raise here, which is often depicted, at least by academics, as the bane of the sporting experience. For most people I have met who are involved in First Nations hockey, these developments are inevitable. Whether this is the case is debatable, but what I find worthy of exploration is, first, the consequences of these developments, and, second, how people respond to them. For many, the elite tournaments serve as an opportunity to showcase Aboriginal sport. It is an expression of pride and the people filling the stands are celebrating excellence. For others it is an opportunity to break stereotypes about First Nations hockey being unskilled and violent affairs. In fact I was told by a Sandy Lake community member that players who have learned to play hockey in more formal settings respect the game and the rules more, making for a desirable participatory experience. He explained that he did not entirely enjoy local hockey in Sandy Lake because of the following example: "The past couple of years we've been getting refs from Sioux Lookout to come in, to kind of control the game. Before that they used to use the local people here and everything used to get out of hand ... One time there was a guy came up from behind the net and passed me the puck. The opposing team came around the player and full speed nailed him with his elbow. So I think he fractured his skull and stuff" (31 Oct. 2005). Another individual supports this by describing these higher skilled tournaments as being more friendly events with players respecting one another. When asked about the different playing styles Sheldon explained: "The 'A' division is so much about talent and skill. The guys have their own clique where they don't want to go hurt their buddy; they might be play-



ing with them next weekend. So they play a kind of style where there's not a lot of body contact or intimidation. But in the lower divisions where it's community involvement, like when its Soda First Nation vs. MacLeod Lake, well you know those communities have been going at each other for you know, 500 or 1000 years; it's winner take all kind of thing... you got to arena II, where Big Guy Lake is playing, like three years ago, we had 17 fights in four games" (26 Oct. 2005).

While it is difficult to refute the improved levels of play in these events and that there has been a general decline in on-ice violence, the move from localized community events to these larger tournament spectacles does pose concern for some. It restricts participation at a variety of levels, subsequently sending the message that it is not so much about participation but about standards of participants. The fan dynamic is also changed in that fans at high level tournaments are generic fans going out to watch hockey, whereas community events are made up of actual community members who have come oftentimes enormous distances to cheer their communities on. While neither form of event is merely about the hockey, as people use these opportunities to visit people they get to see maybe once a year, and the parties and socializing is of equal, if not greater importance to many in attendance, the hockey events themselves have altered. The passion evident at the community event is tremendous, whereas fans at higher calibre events often have little to no connection with the teams or the players. The games are more like standard Junior or semi-professional hockey events, wherein lies the danger—if any is to be found—that the performance based hockey model is slowly becoming understood as the only legitimate form of hockey. Others are aberrations played by antiquated, backward, or less developed communities. Are there fundamental values expressed through First Nations hockey? Can these still be expressed as styles of play and the events themselves become more professionalized and elite based? Perhaps these are some of the points to be taken up as our discussion ensues.

## Victoria Edwards

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*Aboriginal Athlete Development in Sport and Recreation – Lessons Learned from Aboriginal Cadets and Junior Rangers Programs.* I would like to talk about Aboriginal athlete development in sport and recreation in the context of the lessons learned from a case study of the [Aboriginal Cadet](#) and [Junior Rangers](#) programs. Both the Cadet and Junior Ranger programs are federally-sponsored sport and recreation programs, provided by the Department of National Defence. There are currently more than 3000 Junior Canadian Rangers in 104 remote and isolated communities across Canada, mostly north of 60° and on the coasts. By March 2008, the number of Junior Canadian Rangers is expected to more than double to 3,900 members. Cadets choose to belong to one of the three programs: Royal Canadian Sea Cadets (commonly known as Sea Cadets); Royal Canadian Army Cadets (commonly known as Army Cadets); and Royal Canadian Air Cadets (commonly known as Air Cadets). The Cadet program is also divided according to its training period. There is a total of 28-cadet summer training centers (CSTC) located across Canada. Approximately 21,000 course

cadets receive training and 2,500 staff cadets are employed each summer in the 28 CSTCs and abroad on cultural and training exchanges.

<b>Comparison between Aboriginal Cadets and Junior Rangers Programs</b>		
<b>Best Practice</b>	<b>Aboriginal Cadets</b>	<b>Junior Rangers</b>
Located in relatively accessible urban communities	•	
Located in relatively remote / isolated communities		•
Federally-sponsored sport and recreation program	•	•
For young Canadians ages 12 to 18	•	•
No registration fees, dues or cost for the uniforms	•	•
Participants learn about the Canadian Forces	•	•
No expectations for participants to join the military	•	•
Become active, responsible community members	•	•
Participate in challenging and rewarding activities	•	•
Develop teamwork, leadership and citizenship	•	•
Learn to take initiative, and how to make decisions	•	•
Environmental, citizenship and community activities	•	•
Increase self-confidence and physical fitness	•	•
Activities: Biathlon, bush craft, marksmanship, music, leadership, physical fitness, public speaking	•	•
Optional activities: Native customs, knowledge, language, music, spirituality and traditions, orienteering, hunting, fishing, living off the land, using small boats	•	•
Training (Sep - June) one night a week	•	•
Optional weekend training	•	•
Formal summer camps	•	•
Ten-day summer training sessions		•
Extensive domestic and international exchanges	•	•
Occasional domestic exchanges	•	•
St. John's Ambulance First Aid, Canadian Safety Council boating licenses, high school credits	•	•
Access to military-owned equipment (planes, gliders, helicopters, ships)	•	
Access to small boats, all-terrain vehicles		•
Opportunities for hunting, fishing, short camps		•

The chart shown above compares and contrasts the Cadet and Junior Ranger programs. Two main differences between the programs are location and scale: the Cadet programs are located in relatively accessible urban communities while the Junior Rangers are located in relatively remote/isolated communities and this program is similar to but scaled down in comparison to the Cadet program.

Junior Rangers and Aboriginal Cadets have participated as athletes and volunteers in the North American Indigenous Games, Dene, Northern and Arctic Games and regional events. There is a North American Indigenous Games (NAIG) link, for example, to the Junior Rangers and Aboriginal Cadets. Sergeant Shane Morrissette, an Aboriginal cadet with 553 (Sgt Tommy Prince) Army Cadet Corps in Winnipeg won a silver medal at the 2002 NAIG in Winnipeg; three cadets from 553 took part in the 2002 NAIG competition, and four officers and six cadets from 553 participated in the opening and closing ceremonies. Throughout the 2002 NAIG, cadets acted as flag bearers at medal presentations and the Chairman of the 553 sponsoring committee made presentations at the competition events. Indeed, one of the justifications I used in participating in the NAIG 2002 panel was that I was going to check on the participation of the Tommy Prince Cadets in the NAIG.

The best practices coming out of these programs could serve as a model for other sport and recreation programs seeking to increase Indigenous participation. A key factor in the success of the Junior Ranger sport and recreation program is the recognition of the need for culturally and linguistically sensitive sport and recreation programming. The leaders in both programs encourage the participants to maintain their cultural identity within the setting and to utilize the expertise, knowledge and wisdom of community Elders. In terms of Aboriginal athlete development in sport and recreation, I recommend building on what works from Aboriginal Cadets and Junior Rangers Programs. The following recommendations may be of assistance in achieving an increased participation rate of Aboriginal peoples in sport and recreation:

- Develop a long-term strategy for Aboriginal sport and recreation
- Prioritize Aboriginal sport and recreation
- Produce action plans with measurable indicators
- Report to Canadians the results achieved
- Account for Aboriginal differences in designing policies and programs
- Establish an expert committee to examine the progress made
- Think of Aboriginal sport and recreation programming as a specific legal requirement or treaty right as presented by S. Haslip and V. Edwards in the *North American Indigenous Games Conference Proceedings, 2002*
- Support knowledge-building on Aboriginal sport and recreation issues
- Increase funding for organizations working for Aboriginal sport and recreation
- Bring the concerns of Aboriginal athletes to the attention of policy makers
- Ensure Aboriginal athletes have a say on policies that affect them
- Consult with the organizations working on Aboriginal sport and recreation
- Set priorities, and discuss the policies being reviewed

- Incorporate an Aboriginal values approach in which the program encourages communities to set priorities and to be role models for youth
- Seek out federal-provincial partnerships to cover program costs
- Combine volunteer experience and opportunities to certify job skills
- Promote life skills, e.g. to develop and deliver safety program
- Increase the numbers of certified Aboriginal instructors and coaches
- Provide increased numbers of funded opportunities for Aboriginal youth to attend and participate in events such as: North American Indigenous Games, Northern Games, Arctic Winter Games, Dene Games, and the Tatoo

In conclusion, not all of us will be gifted athletes or go on to notable athletic careers. To be involved in regular physical activity, exercise and community participation, however, are important values to which we can all aspire. The Aboriginal Cadet and Junior Rangers programs have enjoyed success not only in providing increased participation opportunities but also facilitated participation in sport and recreation events such as the North American Indigenous Games. The success of these programs holds lessons learned for other organizations and governments seeking to increase Aboriginal participation in sport and recreation.

## Barriers to Aboriginal Sport Development Panel

### Sandra Roach

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First of all, I would like to add to my strengths list from yesterday by acknowledging the champions that have supported my career in Aboriginal sport. There are many Aboriginal leaders like Alwyn Morris who persistently knocked on doors in the early 1990s and expressed to the Canadian sport community that Aboriginal people needed to be included in discussions regarding sport. The fire that was lit in 1990 at the North American Indigenous Games enabled many Aboriginal sport leaders to emerge who were working in sport throughout the country. That is when the creation of the Aboriginal Sport Circle movement began. It is also important to recognize that Aboriginal leaders identified sport as a priority back in the 1970s. Alwyn Morris and Aboriginal sport leaders across the country picked up that ember to create the Aboriginal Sport Circle, which continues to this day. Other champions include Glynis Peters and David McCrindle from Sport Canada who spent many years working on the development and approval of *Sport Canada's Policy on Aboriginal Peoples' Participation in Sport* (2005). I would also like to acknowledge Alex Nelson who continues to work on the front lines supporting the advancement of Aboriginal sport leaders and Dr. Janice Forsyth and Dr. Vicky Paraschak who are working in the area of Aboriginal sport research. There are many national sport organizations such as the Coaching Association of Canada who have been instru-

mental in supporting Aboriginal sport development projects. I think that is a strength to recognize the number of partners and champions who support Aboriginal sport across the country.

It is refreshing to see all the young people, the athletes and academics in the same room today who all share a passion for Aboriginal sport, like Gina Doxtator who has emerged as an Aboriginal leader in her capacity as the Acting Executive Director of the Aboriginal Sport Circle. It is important for Aboriginal leaders to recognize they are not alone in the ongoing work that needs to be done. Champions and leaders remind us to continue to be passionate about providing opportunities for Aboriginal children and youth in sport.

I would like to say a few words regarding the *Canadian Sport Policy* (2002) and *Sport Canada's Policy on Aboriginal Peoples Participation in Sport*. It is significant to recognize that Aboriginal sport leaders were engaged in those policy discussions. As a result of those discussions, the *Canadian Sport Policy* acknowledged the need to address barriers to participation of Aboriginal people in sport. This provided the opportunity for the Aboriginal Sport Circle to work with Sport Canada to develop the Aboriginal sport policy. The policy clarifies Sport Canada's intentions and commitment to Aboriginal sport development in Canada.

It is significant to recognize that Sport Canada is only one partner, and that it will take many partners to advance and implement the policy. Partnerships need to be strengthened within the Aboriginal community and with government departments such as Health and Justice.

The Aboriginal sport policy has also created more funding opportunities to advance Aboriginal sport and I want to highlight a few of them. The North American Indigenous Games Funding Framework was developed by the Federal-Provincial/Territorial Aboriginal Sport Working Group, which included representatives from the Aboriginal Sport Circle, and federal, provincial and territorial governments. This funding framework will be implemented in 2008. Sport Canada also provides funding through the Sport Participation Development Program to national sport organizations and multi-sport organizations to support Aboriginal sport development projects. Sport Canada also provides core funding to the Aboriginal Sport Circle for administration, staffing, programs and projects including the Aboriginal Coaching Manual. Our priority is to continue to advance the Aboriginal sport policy. We have developed a policy which requires action.

However, it is important to recognize that Sport Canada cannot implement the policy alone. We need to continue to reach out to other federal departments, provincial and territorial governments, and the Aboriginal community for support to build upon what already exists.

Regarding barriers, I believe that one of the greatest barriers in advancing Aboriginal sport is the lack of qualified leaders. When the National Aboriginal Recreation Roundtable took place in 2001, I was one of two Aboriginal people working within the territorial government sport system. Today, I know that Charly Kelly works for the Yukon Government; I'm not sure how many other Aboriginal people are actually working in government advancing the Aboriginal sport agenda. I

know that at the federal level I am one of the few Aboriginal people working in sport. There need to be more Aboriginal leaders working in the sport system so that when leaders like Alex Nelson, Alwyn Morris and I move on, the leadership will be in place to carry on the work. I think it is very important to encourage Aboriginal people to continue to work on the frontline in sport and to be involved in decision-making to advance Aboriginal sport.

As a result of the discussions in the past two days, I continue to recognize the need to follow-up with action on the research and recommendations. Together, we can build Aboriginal sport programs which contribute to community development. This may take another ten years, however, it is worth the effort. Today, federal, provincial and territorial governments have identified Aboriginal sport priorities and continue to invest in Aboriginal sport. Through collective investments, sport can improve the health of Aboriginal communities. Lastly, an evaluation of these investments is important. We need to be able to develop a report card, which identified the benefits of investing in Aboriginal sport.

## Sheldon Baikie

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Thank you very much. I appreciate being here and participating in all of these wonderful discussions. It's absolutely marvelous to see that the strengths perspective is being used.

One thing I certainly found about the way we often deal with social issues is that they are dealt with in very a prescriptive medical fashion, medical style work. I don't know if that seems quite right for the social sphere. There are so many more factors in the social aspect. With that being said, we certainly cannot discount the realities that our people are going through. There is a balance here, and we have to acknowledge all aspects – the barriers and the strengths – but the focus has to be on the strengths, not on the barriers.

One of the things that I picked up this morning and wrote a few notes on is that we are not our problems. You know, as individuals and as a group of people, we are not our problems. I think the point that you [Sandra Roach] made, that we are our strengths, is a good one, but those are not just our strengths. People see somebody, like some of the successful people here, and see that as a great strength. But people tend to say that is all who you are. I think we are everything. We all have strengths and we all have weaknesses and we have to focus on our strengths.

I have three basic recommendations. One is that we need to study successful people and programs and find out what makes them successful. I also think we need to find out how we can better communicate the idea of research to the communities. We need to find a better way to do research with them. The last thing that I am struck with, especially after this morning, is how the academic community needs to learn to incorporate other methodologies of research and value how our Aboriginal groups have done research in the past. We need to figure out how various

Aboriginal groups learn, and value how that learning and research is being done. Those are my three recommendations, and I thank you very much.

## Audrey Giles

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What I am going to talk to you about today is two different programs. One is the Dene games, and the other is the NWT Aquatic Program, because the Dene Games is my research area and the NWT Aquatics Program has been a passion of mine for a long time.

So, very briefly, my doctoral research took place in the Dehcho region of the NWT – in Trout Lake, which has sixty-five people, and Jean Marie River, which has fifty-two, and Fort Simpson, which has twelve hundred. While I was there, I was told that girls don't play Dene games in Trout Lake. But on National Aboriginal Day, there is the stick pull and pole push, and there are girls doing both! I was also told that girls don't swim in Trout Lake, but then I saw some girls swimming in Trout Lake. So I was beginning to wonder what is going on here? What I am hearing from other people is not what I am seeing. What are the discrepancies? Is it because it was a small community? Or is it because something else is going on? Is it because the loudest people are the ones who are being listened to?

Just to go back to the Dene games. Dene games have been played since time immemorial and a lot of the oral traditions don't involve women playing. I was told it happened a couple of times, though mostly they seem to happen under circumstances where the men in one community lost everything and the women of the community said, "We're going win everything back," and they typically did. So these are some of the stories I kept hearing, even though other people were telling me that women don't play Dene games.

In talking to people in the community, it seems to be linked to menstrual traditions and menstrual practices and ideas that menstrual cycles create a notion of pollution – or one of power – so that women's power would conflict with men's power. So I became very interested in that. Also while I was doing my research, it was decided for the first time ever there was going to be a category for junior girls at the Arctic Winter Games. And in 2004 that was the first time that it happened, even though there had been a category for men since 1990. Again there were people who were upset about this. But other people, specifically in the Yukon, said women have been playing for a long time and this needed to happen.

So my doctoral research looked at menstrual practices and how they play a role in limiting women's participation. I was trying to relate it to Foucault – the work that I use which sees constraints as both enabling and inhibiting. I feel that we pay too much attention to the inhibiting factors. So, yes, some people might look at women's menstrual cycles for Dene women in the Dehcho and see that this inhibits their participation in Dene games, but I also think we have to start asking questions about what that enables. It enables the women's understanding of their own

power. I think that is really important and deeply paradoxical to say that we are going to attempt to empower women by putting them into typically male sports and not look at some of the reasons why Dene female elders are saying that women shouldn't be playing and that is taking away from a woman's sense of power.

At the same time, there's the NWT Aquatic Program which has been there since 1967. It is arguably one of the most successful recreation programs in the country per capita. Tons of children line up around the swimming pool. For the most part, these are shallow water pools that are only 21/2 to 3 feet deep, and, yet, you have a ton of kids who want to participate. However, even though the program has been going on since 1967, you have very few local people who have worked at those pools. Also, the NWT has a drowning rate that is six times the national average. So although it is a very successful program in a lot of ways, it still has a lot of shortcomings. In fact, a recent study out of health and social services in the NWT mentions that the NWT is a risky place to maintain a physically active lifestyle. I think this is really compelling, and research needs to be done into that.

My current proposal for research is to look at some of the local practices that inform water safety. So, when I would go into schools in the north and I would say to kids, "What do you need to bring on a boating trip?" All of their hands would go up. Then I would say, "If you are going to say a gun, put your hand down," and everyone's hands would go down - that is not on the coast guard's check list. So you start to think that you need to put a gun on the list. Then I would ask, "What sort of pre-boating float plan do you need?" and the kids would say, "Say a prayer" or "make an offering to water," which, again, is not in the coast guard's check list.

So these are some of the things that I want to examine. I want to look at Indigenous forms of knowledge that could inform water safety, instead of just trying to take a Euro-Canadian centred approach from the South and bring it up to the North. I think instead of looking at Indigenous knowledge as inhibiting water safety, instead we need to look at the ways it can inform and enable water safety; this might not get the immediate approval of the Canadian Red Cross or the Canadian Coast Guard.

What does this knowledge enable? Well, the things I think it can enable are things like the girls at the Arctic Winter Games who won the gold in the pole push, or these two who are from Jean Marie River who were swimming at the local pool [shows a photo]. I think this picture is worth a thousand words. How did they get there? I think we need to understand some of the processes behind it, but I think - look at these smiling faces - that there is something good going on there. What I am interested in is the processes in the cultural practices that are working for these people.

## Charly Kelly

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When I first got asked to come here, I had about a hundred things going on in my head. I was desperately seeking the agenda from Janice Forsyth. Once I received it I was shocked that I had to talk about something. So I ran to my Dad and to Sam Johnson who was in town, and to my friend



who grew up in the sport system, without even thinking about myself. I guess I should explain my background in sport, and how and where I grew up.

I was born and raised in a small town of three to four hundred people. My father is Northern Tutchone and my mother is a Mohawk from Ontario. I grew up with a very large family. Growing up in the Yukon, I didn't know much about the NAIG. I went through the mainstream sporting system. I played volleyball, everything possible just to get out of Mayo, to go to Whitehorse, just to go somewhere else. When I finally got into Whitehorse – that was in 1993 – I was working at the swimming pool. I worked as a lifeguard for years when Sandra Roach approached me and said, "Have you heard of the NAIG? We need a coach for swimming." That sounded like fun a trip out. We got a team going, my partner at the time and I. We traveled and selected kids from all of the smaller communities. We had a bit of a trial process, and away we went! It was tons of fun! It was the most fun I had ever had on a trip! In 1995 we started coaching again, and life got in the way, so we didn't end up going [to the NAIG] in 1995 and 1997. I have two kids now and started school. Later, I saw Sandra on the street and she encouraged me to apply for her job. I'm sure glad that I put in my resume and got into sport. I absolutely love my job and I thank you Sandra.

I have participated in many of the Arctic Winter Games, but in 1993 I participated in my first NAIG. I asked my friend James, who is also Northern Tutchone, "What do you think the barriers were in sport when we were growing up?" Together we came up with the largest barrier being 'support'. Support was a huge thing. His Mom was great. She did everything for him. Whatever money she had she would put James in stuff. James' family didn't have a vehicle growing up. He said, "You know, I never really thought about it but your dad used to pick me up for everything we had to do." In Mayo you could walk everywhere; it's a small place. But anytime we had to leave Mayo, there was definitely community support. There were tons of people around that would pick James up and take him wherever the sporting events were. There was also continual support for the building of self confidence in us younger kids of the community. James said that he didn't really notice that he was an Indian – neither did I – we were just part of the community. We were from Mayo; that defined us. The big thing is community support. Our Indian Band in Mayo gave us money and anything we needed. There were buses and there was always a recreation director or somebody in the community who helped out.

The next person I went to was my Dad, as he is an elder now. I bug him a lot about that. We got carried away talking about the residential schools. He remembers being a little kid watching the children getting on the buses and the parents being broken. He said that's when the parental support got lost, that it was definitely a break in the system in learning how to parent. The kids got taken away and the parents turned to alcohol to try and ease their pain. The kids who were taken away grew up in a system where they didn't see parents and they didn't get to see how to parent. Parenting is something you learn from your parents, about what you do right or wrong. There are always things that you say, like, "I am not going to be like my Dad," but I am glad I am

very similar to him. Those kids that went to the residential schools came back with a lot of other problems, and when they had kids, they didn't know how to parent because they didn't see it, they didn't experience it. This is through my father's eyes and this is when I opened up mine. If you look at some of the other communities in the Yukon you definitely see there is a connection between the parents and the school system. They send their kids to school without breakfasts or lunches because they think the schools will provide that. They just let their kids run around until it is time for bed because somebody else is going to help out. My Dad felt that there is definitely parental support missing as well. For many sports, parents have to register their kids and they have to get them there – how is that going to happen? In Mayo, again, it wasn't so bad because the rest of the community was there to help. But once you hit the bigger places, like Whitehorse, where there are about 23,000 people, it's a little bit different. There are transportation issues. You have to get to the sporting event, and it is more than just a walk on a cold winter day. You definitely need a vehicle and support of some sort.

There are also definitely money issues. We have addressed some money issues with lower income families. We've got KidSport in Yellowknife, a kid's recreation fund in Whitehorse and it gets depleted quickly; but there is definitely not enough money being put into getting the kids involved. There is a lack of volunteers and qualified coaches. Lack of confidence, that's another one. Aboriginal people have very low self confidence, especially coming from a smaller community. We see that a lot, when these small communities come into Whitehorse; it's a huge city for them. A lot of the smaller communities don't have a school that goes to grade twelve, so they come into Whitehorse where they stay in a residence. From their small communities to a larger city they find it hard to try and fit in with the other students who have grown up through the Whitehorse system, and who have a defined group of friends. Some of these students in Whitehorse have been playing on teams with the same group since grade seven. Now they are in grade ten and, for the basketball tryouts, the kids from the communities come in and they are too scared to go because they don't know any of the kids and they are not confident enough to go out. They are little bit different, so racism comes in a little as well.

One of the strengths that I wanted to mention was something that happened at one of our high schools in the Yukon two years ago. One of the teachers said he didn't believe there were any barriers. He was a white teacher. He said he wanted to try something. He had basketball tryouts, and it was all the same kids that always come for basketball, and they all made the team. Then, he had a free basketball lunch hour and anyone could come. Several First Nation kids came and were shooting hoops and playing basketball. He went up to them and asked why they didn't try out for the basketball team. He said, "I don't get it. You guys are great!" They said they didn't know anyone and so they were not going to come. The teacher thought about that, and he went back to the kids and said, "You know what? We're starting a First Nations basketball team. Let's try it and see how many people try out." Well, twenty-five kids came out for the team and he was shocked. He

couldn't believe it. He had cleared the smoking pit, cleared everything, and everyone came for the basketball tryouts! They had an open team and they didn't cut anyone. Everybody made the team. They found gym space and time for the Aboriginal basketball team and it made quite an impression on these kids. Pretty soon they talked about smoking and why they should quit and several of them did quit. They ended up playing on the school team and traveling a bit. They went to the BC First Nation basketball tournament. They did an amazing job. And when they went back to school this year, several of those Aboriginal kids tried out on the other team because they played them and they made friends. They actually broke into that circle, which is really hard to do when you are coming in from a smaller community or switching schools. It is the self confidence that is lacking, and it is easier to stay with a group of kids who are not doing much than it is to get into a new school and be brave enough to say "hi". It just made a difference and that is my one positive. – Thank you.

## Joannie Halas

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Yesterday Alex [Nelson] mentioned the square and the circle and the coming together of two cultures and that middle point - I see it as "building relationships." I see so much of what we have been doing yesterday and today as building cross-cultural relationships. I want to talk about these cross-cultural relationships in relation to "barriers."

When you take a look at the barriers that are identified in *Sport Canada's Policy on Aboriginal People's Participation in Sport*, you can translate them to the context of how they are played out in public schools. Here, I am talking about schools in Manitoba, where our research team has completed focus group research on the experiences of Aboriginal youth in physical education. We asked students to reflect on being a child in elementary school all the way to high school and into university and at the NAIG. We have a whole variety of contexts described by Aboriginal students. And a lot of what we are hearing really gives concrete examples of the barriers that are listed [in the Aboriginal sport policy].

One of the first barriers that we have found, and I have heard reinforced in our research results, concerns what it is that is keeping kids from doing well in physical education – the change rooms. It is interesting that the impact of the change room has been reinforced by young people, teachers and principals. I have received phone calls from educators who have asked, "Why is it that Aboriginal youth don't want to change for phys ed?" We've found that the change room reinforces and accentuates hierarchies, for example, in terms of [socio-economic] class. What clothes do kids have to change into? You know how embarrassing that can be for a young person not to have the brand name or the right pair of running shoes.

In the second year of our research, we did an ethnographic study in four different schools. I spent five weeks at a cross-cultural suburban school in Winnipeg where a lot of Aboriginal youth are moving to because, in the migration of peoples from rural or remote communities to urban

centers, that's where they go to continue their high school experience. We now see more students moving from the inner city of Winnipeg into the suburban area for a whole variety of reasons. So we have suburban schools and phys-ed programs that provide lots of potential opportunities for young people. But what we are finding is that a lot of young people are not feeling welcome in that gymnasium and, unfortunately, I think the barriers go back to the whole public education system in Canada, of Aboriginal youth not being welcomed in their own schools. They don't feel their identities being affirmed by the teachers, the physical spaces of the schools, and by the practices in phys-ed, for example, getting changed [for class].

I learned a lot of this because when we went to the schools I was going to connect with the Aboriginal youth who were in the gym and ask them about their experiences. Yet, I soon realized that if there are 1200 students at this cross-cultural school, I think there may have only been ten Aboriginal students in physical education, and that was probably the extent of it. So, I backed up and started to hang out with the kids outside of the school. And where did I find them? At the smoking doors, or "Neechi" doors, which is the name that the kids gave to the doors themselves. You learned so much about the culture of the school by speaking with the young people.

I went and I hung out at the smoking doors and found out how much the young people there said that they would rather be in the gym. So I asked would they go to intramurals? And they would say, "What is that?" Young people had come from their school in a rural area moving through, many of them have been to three, four, five, sometimes six different schools. And at this school, they didn't know about the culture of the mainstream physical education program. We know that the quality of our physical education programs and the access to physical education is declining, but programs such as intramurals should be in every public school in Canada. So we have this space that young people are feeling disconnected from.

What I find interesting are the allies that were identified in that school and the people you can connect with. In terms of research, and being reciprocal, what do you do with the knowledge you get from the research? Do you wait and take it and verify it through in-depth data analysis? Do you put it out there and write papers? Do you return it after the analysis? Or do you go immediately and talk to those teachers [as a way of immediately addressing a local barrier] and say there is a student here that you have to work with? You have these tensions in terms of building relationships with these teachers. It is very complicated work. And in this one school we learned that the change room, beyond the class issues, the young people said that, "We don't feel comfortable because we have brown skin in relation to other kids." It wasn't particular to this school but I heard that comment come back from the focus group interviews with a number of people. What is important about the discomfort in the change room is that it documents an issue.

When we mention racism and discrimination as a barrier – when we go to do teacher training in Winnipeg where racism is really denied by so many non-Aboriginal people and it is a really

strong undercurrent – it plays out in very low expectations that many non-Aboriginal physical education teachers have about their Aboriginal students. There is a real cross-cultural disconnect happening. In that example of the circle and the square, the two worlds coming together, the “building relationships” piece needs to be addressed.

In our research with Aboriginal youth, although it is a short bit of time to be spent in the schools, even the little bit of knowledge we’ve gained by speaking with these young people has been helpful. These students were saying what the barriers were and how they want to be in the gym and they’re asking, “How do we get there?”

In the research I see a responsibility for action. But the action must be from a holistic, big picture perspective. For example, we are thrilled to have an Aboriginal Scholar position [at our University], which came together through the relationships of knowing Vicky [Paraschak] and Mike [Heine], and being able to connect with Bruce Miller who is one of our graduates from our faculty, who helped lobby for the position. It’s through creating an ACCESS program connection with Bruce Miller at the University that we try to really support our Aboriginal students. Working together, we help create support systems in the immediate sense within our faculty. What we are learning from our research, we want to translate into better training of our Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students at the university level, and prepare physical education teachers who are better prepared to work with diverse populations and to work within socio-economic class differences because those class differences are so large and are growing. We are also working to change our curriculum and to build programs, to deliver the first two years of our recreation program, for example, in First Nations communities throughout Manitoba. And this program development requires that we build relationships with the Aboriginal Focus Programs at our University.

I want to conclude by saying one of my barriers sometimes is that I get down on my own white culture. Working with teachers in a school three weeks ago I described how some Aboriginal youth have said the phrase, “If it ain’t white, it ain’t right” or “she is very white.” I put it to the teachers in the workshop who are mostly non-Aboriginal and asked, “What do you think those young people are saying when they say ‘she is very white’ or ‘he is very white’?” They brained stormed for twenty minutes and came back with a list of characteristics of white society or white teachers and [their impressions] of what Aboriginal youth are saying. And you know it wasn’t a very positive list. No wonder it is so difficult to get our students to claim their white racial identity. And it is a challenge sometimes because the list was filled with “materialism, individualism, rules, being inflexible” and it just went on and on and on but it was a very interesting exercise to have these teachers thinking about themselves through the eyes of Aboriginal youth.

I will just close by saying that this is where I continue to learn. And we will all continue to work toward learning from what Aboriginal youth are saying to us about our physical education programs and to move forward on some of their suggestions.

*A Consideration of Sport Canada's Policy on Aboriginal Peoples' Participation in Sport.*<sup>5</sup> — In May 2005 Sport Canada, a branch of the Identity Sector of the Department of Canadian Heritage, released its long awaited policy on Aboriginal peoples participation in sport. This presentation considers *Sport Canada's Policy on Aboriginal Peoples' Participation in Sport* (herein Aboriginal sport policy) from a 'strengths perspective' (i.e., focusing on the positive aspects of the policy). The decision to do so reflects the request of conference organizers to build on what exists and can be [better] utilized to assist in realizing increased participation opportunities for Aboriginal peoples in sport, recreation and physical education. I use this perspective as an illustration of how the strengths might be strategically used to help reduce existing barriers in Aboriginal sport. Opportunities for research and intervention are identified.

The Aboriginal sport policy contains a number of strengths. In the spirit of respecting the time constraints set out by conference organizers and in view of strengths already identified by my co-panelists, I will briefly describe six strengths of the policy: 1) the existence of the policy itself, 2) the clear articulation of the federal government's position concerning the increased participation of Aboriginal peoples in sport, recreation and physical education, 3) the interrelationship between this policy and the *Canadian Sport Policy* (2002), 4) the ability of the Aboriginal sport policy to serve as a check on the federal government's intentions concerning increased opportunities for Aboriginal peoples in sport, recreation and physical education, 5) the link between the goal of increased access in sport for Aboriginal peoples identified in these policies and the *Physical Activity and Sport Act*, and 6) the express acknowledgement of barriers to participation experienced by Aboriginal peoples and the recognition that an inclusive sport system in the context of a diverse population includes organizations, programs and events serving those diverse populations.

A key starting point in a consideration of the strengths of the Aboriginal sport policy is the existence of the policy itself. The history behind the policy's existence and the fact that it actually materialized is nothing short of remarkable. One of my co-panelists, Sandra Roach, referenced some of the history informing this policy and identified a number of people involved in the latter stages of its development. I would like to add that a number of additional people were involved in the early stages of the development of the policy that were not identified in Sandra's presentation [persons that worked on the policy prior to Sandra joining Sport Canada]. I mention these additional people because I believe it is important that all parties that had a hand in trying to move the Aboriginal sport policy forward be recognized for their efforts. It is my understanding from Sandra's presentation that Aboriginal peoples took a leadership role in, and were primarily responsible for, steering this policy through various key steps in the approval process. It is also worth noting that the federal government, through interaction with the Aboriginal Sport Circle, sought and obtained input from Aboriginal peoples in the creation of the policy. The existence of the policy is illustrative of the

ability of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples working together to produce a document that confirms and clarifies Sport Canada's – read this as the federal government's – intentions concerning the increased participation of Aboriginal peoples in sport, recreation and physical education.

The interrelationship between the Aboriginal sport policy and the *Canadian Sport Policy* is also an important strength as it illustrates that the Aboriginal sport policy does not exist in a vacuum. The Aboriginal sport policy states that it is guided by the principles in the *Canadian Sport Policy* (Aboriginal sport policy, p. 2). One of these principles describes sport as based on equity and access (*Canadian Sport Policy*, p. 13). The Aboriginal sport policy's focus on increased participation opportunities for Aboriginal peoples in sport, recreation and physical education provides an example of this commitment in process. To this end the Aboriginal sport policy states that it "aims to ensure that the vision of the CSP [*Canadian Sport Policy*] is inclusive; that it has the power to enhance the experience of – and access to – sport for all, including Aboriginal peoples living in Canada" (Aboriginal sport policy, p. 1). In effect, the Aboriginal sport policy can be utilized as an accountability tool and can serve as a check on the federal government's commitment to increase access and equity particularly in relation to increased participation opportunities for Aboriginal peoples in sport, recreation and physical education.

Reference in these policies to increased participation opportunities for Aboriginal peoples is related to the goal of increasing access and equity in sport – a goal confirmed in the *Physical Activity and Sport Act* enacted in 2003. The link between the expressed intention and commitment to increase participation opportunities and the legislated goal of access and equity in sport is important as it is considerably more difficult to repeal legislation than it is to simply replace one policy with another or to cancel a policy. [This being said, however, it is respectfully submitted that any decision by the government to repeal or cancel a policy impacting upon Aboriginal peoples would need to be done in consultation with Aboriginal peoples in light of the federal government's fiduciary obligation and, in particular, its obligation to consult with, Aboriginal peoples.]

Reference in both policies to the barriers faced by Aboriginal peoples in relation to meaningful participation in sport (Aboriginal sport policy, pp. 4-5; *Canadian Sport Policy*, pp. 9-10), including socio-economic barriers [the significance of which is discussed in further detail below], is important since it provides express recognition of these barriers. The fact that this explicit recognition of barriers appears in a policy document [*Canadian Sport Policy*] endorsed by the Federal/Provincial/Territorial Ministers responsible for sport is significant since it provides a baseline from which to move forward rather than revisit whether such barriers exist.

An additional strength of the Aboriginal sport policy is its reference to diversity. This policy provides that while economies of scale dictate the need for having core organizations serving the 'general population', "*an inclusive sport system serving a diverse population will, by necessity, include organizations, programs and events that serve distinct populations*" (Aboriginal sport policy, p. 2,

emphasis mine). The strengths identified in the Aboriginal sport policy can be utilized to assist in dismantling the barriers faced by Aboriginal peoples in relation to participation in sport, recreation and physical education. In light of the time constraints I have opted to explore how one of the policy's strengths might be utilized to this end and then set out opportunities for intervention/research presented by this proposed usage.

As indicated earlier, the Aboriginal sport policy acknowledges the existence of socio-economic barriers faced by Aboriginal peoples in Canada that adversely impact upon meaningful participation in sport – from playground to podium (Aboriginal sport policy, p. 2). The specific wording of the acknowledgment states: “A meaningful and effective policy on Aboriginal peoples’ participation in sport must recognize the socio-economic issues specific to Aboriginal peoples as well as the opportunities for social change through sport” (Aboriginal sport policy, p. 4). As written, this statement would appear to have the potential to address a number of economic-related barriers to meaningful participation in sport facing Aboriginal peoples in Canada – not only economic circumstances but also geographic distances as well as the absence of sport infrastructures and the maintenance of such infrastructures.

While the government’s statement concerning the recognition of economic realities is important and should not be discounted, the effective and meaningful operationalization of that statement is a different matter. A challenge presented by the government’s statement is how the government’s recognition can be effectively leveraged by Aboriginal peoples and their allies to ensure that the federal government “sees, hears and feels”<sup>6</sup> the reality of the socio-economic issues specific to Aboriginal peoples and, in particular, how such realities impact upon Aboriginal peoples in relation to their participation in sport, recreation and physical education – and then does something about this in consultation with Aboriginal peoples to ensure that meaningful participation for Aboriginal peoples is made a reality.<sup>7</sup>

The question of how Aboriginal peoples and their allies can ensure that the federal government ‘sees, hears and feels’ the socio-economic reality described in the Aboriginal sport policy and how this economic reality impacts upon the participation opportunities for Aboriginal peoples presents us with opportunities for intervention/research. Potential areas for intervention/research are outlined below:

- What does the meaningful recognition of the socio-economic issues specific to Aboriginal peoples mean in the context of ‘sport’ in Canada?
- While the Aboriginal sport policy talks about “full & fair participation of all persons in sport” (Aboriginal sport policy, p. 1) – the question remains – what does fair participation look like in light of the considerable socio-economic challenges facing many Aboriginal peoples in Canada?
- What would ‘meaningful participation’ in sport, recreation and physical education look like from an Aboriginal peoples-centered perspective?



- How might Sport Canada's Action Plan for the Policy on Aboriginal Peoples' Participation in Sport [forthcoming by Sport Canada] meaningfully address and monitor these and other commitments identified in the Aboriginal sport policy?

In conclusion, the Aboriginal sport policy contains a number of strengths which can be utilized to assist in dismantling barriers to the effective and meaningful participation of Aboriginal peoples in sport, recreation and physical education. The existence of the Aboriginal sport policy is itself something to be celebrated. The Aboriginal sport policy contains a number of strong statements which hold promise. Statements provided within the policy, such as the statement concerning the importance of recognizing the economic reality of Aboriginal peoples, can be effectively used in an effort to ensure that the government 'sees, hears and feels' the realities of Aboriginal peoples and how these realities impact upon meaningful opportunities for participation in sport, recreation and physical activity.

## Strengths, Challenges, Research and Recommendations

### NAIG Panel

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#### *Strengths that the NAIG provide*

- The informality of the Games makes them enjoyable and fun
- The combination of cultural, athletic & academic areas makes it well-rounded
- A place where Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people can come together, comparable to the NAIG Research Symposium
- Participation creates exposure for, and recognition of, Aboriginal identities
- Interaction with other Aboriginal athletes is good for the soul
- The new funding framework for the NAIG means more resources for sport
- Legacies, in terms of human and financial capital
- Multi-government participation means more funding and opportunities
- Social and cultural connections helps people to learn from each other
- Contribution to non-Aboriginals in the form of cross-cultural learning
- They are a voice for positives (e.g., participation, self-identity, exposure, healing)

#### *Challenges that prevent the NAIG from being all that it can be*

- Organization of the NAIG (e.g., large number of participants and sports)
- Not enough opportunities to network and learn from Games to Games
- Access to opportunities for sport limit participation in the NAIG
- Knowledge transition from one host society to another has been non-existent
- Increasing community participation (e.g., not all communities participate)
- Location of team tryouts are often posted way too late
- Lack of cooperation by funders leaves us scrambling for money

#### *Research Recommendations for enhancing the NAIG*

- Explore ways to protect the NAIG's symbolic identifiers; this has to do with trademark issues and protection of intellectual property
- Examine Aboriginal standards for achievement and success and see if they correspond with the goals of the NAIG
- Learn from what other Aboriginal people in other countries are doing with their Games (e.g., Brazil and Australia)
- Document and share stories from the NAIG (e.g., athlete involvement)

- Identify how the NAIG contributes to economic development for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people and communities
- Study the long-term social impacts of the NAIG (e.g., drop in suicide and drug abuse rates)
- Examine geopolitical issues of attending the NAIG (e.g., as nations as opposed to provinces, territories); see what other groups are doing in Canada and across the world in terms of organization

## Coaching Panel

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### *Strengths that currently exist in coaching*

- Acknowledgement of the need for Aboriginal resources in the mainstream
- Modularization of the mainstream coaching program to make the Aboriginal Coaching Manual more accessible to participants
- Increasing connections are being made within the sport system
- Beginning to utilize the knowledge and experience of elders in coaching
- Women are involved in different capacities
- Broad interpretation of sport allows for buy-in by different groups of people
- More people in university = more people with capacity = more leaders
- Emphasis and commitment to youth
- Have many coaches who are good role models

### *Challenges that constrain Aboriginal coaching development*

- Certification process for the NCCP and CBET programs is problematic
- The mainstream coaching system is not flexible enough to allow for the inclusion of Aboriginal coaching materials
- Creating linkages between organizations to improve coaching opportunities
- Respecting cultural differences in coaching styles and values
- Encouraging athletes to move into coaching positions
- Few travel opportunities limits competitive coaching experience
- Can get the certification, but access to facilities and equipment is still an issue
- Lack of administrative training for coaches; don't know how to do "admin" stuff
- Heavy emphasis on winning detracts many people from becoming coaches
- Too many coaching opportunities being created in a few sports, like hockey
- Not enough respect or recognition for coaches, in particular at the local level
- Lack of networking opportunities, especially with other Aboriginal coaches
- Lack of funding for recreation directors in our communities

### *Research Recommendations*

- Add “research” for coaching as a priority item in the bilateral agreements
- Investigate the kind of supports the youth need to get access to coaching
- Document and share successful coaching practices
- Explore Aboriginal cultural traditions versus mainstream models in coaching
- Research the “holistic” aspect of sport. What is this? What does it look like?
- Look at the experiences of female coaches. What barriers do they face?
- What makes a “good” Aboriginal coach? Document the journey.
- Explore the concept of coaching expertise outside of coaching certification
- Explore and document the role of recreation directors in communities. What successes and challenges do they face?
- Examine how coaches are dealing with racism and document their journey.
- How are coaches creating opportunities for physical activity in communities with little or no infrastructure, facilities, or financial resources for travel and competition?

### **Athlete Development Panel**

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#### *Strengths which contribute to the development of Aboriginal athletes*

- All-Aboriginal schools, like Children of the Earth in Winnipeg, develop innovative programming; much can be learned from these schools
- Connections with universities are being established
- Mentorship is being promoted and encouraged
- Aboriginal people are returning to their traditions and finding strength there
- The dedication of support people, like the elders
- Acceptance and awareness of the Aboriginal Coaching Manual
- Existing services are making room for Aboriginal athletes
- Increasing recognition at Sport Canada of cross-cultural differences
- Commitment to building on our cultural values in sport
- Athletes are stepping forward as leaders and role models in sport

#### *Challenges that limit the development of Aboriginal athletes*

- Lack of mentorship programs to train new generation of coaches
- Connecting with other institutions to develop and introduce sport
- Instilling in our youth an athletic frame of mind to teach determination
- Understanding all of the issues that youth face

- Lack of a support system to encourage overall well being
- The structure of organized sport limits the involvement of elders
- How to include spiritual practices to prepare for athletics
- Dealing with racism in the high performance system
- Lack of culturally appropriate coaching tools for non-Aboriginal coaches
- Almost complete lack of community recreation directors
- No opportunities to track athletes (e.g., what happens after the NAIG)

#### *Research recommendations to enhance athlete development*

- Explore how Aboriginal spiritual and cultural values contribute to the holistic development of Aboriginal athletes
- Investigate the barriers that Aboriginal athletes experience at the high performance level
- Expose how racism works at the national and international levels; this is important because more Aboriginal athletes are gaining access to these environments
- Research how training in the Aboriginal Coaching Manual has influenced the way sport organizations manage their relations with Aboriginal people and Aboriginal organizations
- Link NAIG and post-NAIG athlete development. How does participation in the NAIG contribute to athlete development?
- Research the value of eliminating unnecessary positions in sport and creating new ones (e.g., creating a communications position)

### **Barriers to Sport Development Panel**

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#### *Strengths of the current Aboriginal sport system*

- The new national Aboriginal sport policy provides us with an opportunity to engage in ongoing discussions about Aboriginal sport in Canada
- Recognition of different populations in Canada; not like it was 30 years ago, with talk of outright assimilation back then
- Increasing awareness about the Aboriginal Coaching Manual outside of sport (e.g., in recreation and physical education)
- Awareness of the health issues that Aboriginal people face and a willingness of governments and health organizations to do something about this
- Growing acceptance of a strengths-based perspective creates an opportunity to share what we think is working well in Aboriginal sport and recreation
- The education sector is beginning to foster cultural awareness in the schools

- The national policy can help build relationships with organizations and the government sector, like education and health

*Challenges that limit the development of Aboriginal sport*

- Keeping our focus on the youth; there is too much politics in sport
- Encouraging the use of the Aboriginal Coaching Manual in kinesiology and physical education programs at colleges and universities across Canada
- Understanding the structure of policy and its connection to our everyday life
- Getting access to information
- Finding opportunities to network and share information
- Encouraging teachers to embrace their position as role models for the youth
- Incorporating Aboriginal perspectives into school curricula
- Constantly having to justify investments in Aboriginal sport
- Getting the public to recognize physical activity as a value-added approach
- Lack of opportunities to share our success stories with others
- Talking and communicating about negative issues like racism

*Research recommendations that will help remove existing barriers to sport*

- Need to collect basic quantitative data to track participation rates, such as youth participation in specific sports and membership on national teams
- What do the policies mean? How can we take these policies to our communities? We need to find ways to make the process of policy development more accessible for people who do not “do” policy everyday
- Investigate how cultural awareness programs are working and what can be done to improve cultural awareness, especially as it relates to Aboriginal life in inner city, rural and isolated settings
- Need qualitative evidence of the social benefits of sport and physical activity among Aboriginal people
- Research must be done to document and share “success” stories
- Have a lot of anecdotal evidence about the positive power of sport in Aboriginal lives, but this needs to be documented as “evidence” for policy makers and governments

## Final Recommendations

The broad range of perspectives forwarded by the panelists demonstrates the need for a balance between quantitative and qualitative research in the area of Aboriginal sport and recreation. Furthermore, the panelists identified the need for research that meets the needs of Aboriginal communities as well as government objectives. The need to work towards this balance is reinforced by research conducted in other countries, for example Australia.<sup>8</sup>

In addition to these overarching themes, several clear priority research recommendations were identified. The priority areas were divided into two areas of interest: (1) the research process, and (2) specific research questions. Although separated for the purpose of this report, each area must be viewed as integral to the overall research goal; both must be developed simultaneously as they will each uniquely contribute to the implementation of an Aboriginal policy research stream. Each priority area is explained below:

### The Research Process

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The following recommendations concerning the research process (how to do better research) emphasize an Aboriginal-Centred Approach and the Strengths Perspective:

#### *Identify 'promising practices'*

- Identify and disseminate information about 'promising practices' in Aboriginal sport and recreation. The need for collecting and sharing information on promising practices – as identified by Aboriginal participants – can help further Sport Canada's understanding of 'what works' in terms of Aboriginal participation in sport. Information gleaned from promising practices could be used to develop a set of culturally appropriate indicators with which to measure and assess successful sport and recreation programs in Aboriginal communities.

#### *Identify and implement ethical research strategies for Aboriginal sport*

- As highlighted at the start of this document, it is imperative that Sport Canada develop and implement an ethical research strategy for Aboriginal sport and recreation. Various research councils and organizations have provided guidelines for the development of such a tool, which can be framed around the concept of OCAP (ownership, control, access and possession). OCAP argues for research that is developed and carried out by Aboriginal people for Aboriginal people, with non-Aboriginal allies providing support.<sup>9</sup> The development and implementation of such a tool for research in Aboriginal sport and recreation will contribute to the development of stronger partnerships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people as well help ensure that the findings meet the needs of Aboriginal participants.

- In addition, university-based Research Ethics Boards need to be cognizant of OCAP-informed research design. Collaborative research with Aboriginal communities and universities require ethical clearance that allows for flexibility in the review process. Flexibility may include, for example, enabling Aboriginal communities to have meaningful input into the ethics process so that each community's understanding(s) of ethical practices can be incorporated into the research process. Such flexibility may also require that researchers receive ethics clearance to enter "the field" without fully developed research questions, as pre-developed questions often rule out full consultation with community stakeholders or do not allow for the evolution of the research project once underway in communities.

*Refer proposals to SSHRC, Aboriginal Research Grants Program*

- Refer all grant proposals submitted to the Sport Canada Policy Research Program that either focus on, or are related to, Aboriginal participation in sport and recreation, to the [Social Science and Humanities Research Council](#) [SSHRC], Aboriginal Research Grants. The Aboriginal Research Grants program was developed to help address the research needs of Aboriginal peoples by making clear and meaningful partnerships with Aboriginal peoples a prerequisite for funding. The benefits of Aboriginal involvement in the research process are two-fold: (1) it will result in more reliable information for government purposes and more relevant data for Aboriginal communities, and (2) it is a positive step towards Sport Canada achieving its goal to "enhance the sport experience for Aboriginal people"<sup>10</sup> and bring about "significant, long-term social change"<sup>11</sup> in Aboriginal communities.

*Website as a global communications tool*

- Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people are looking for ways to enhance Aboriginal participation in sport and recreation. The development of a website which includes research that is accessible online (e.g., 'promising practices') would help to provide researchers, governments, and Aboriginal community members with direction and promote the sharing of information and new learnings. Funding for face-to-face meetings is extremely limited, especially for people who work at the community level. While the global communications tool should not replace personal meetings, it can facilitate communication between people, which is often identified as a barrier to sport participation. Significantly, the development of a website was first identified by the delegates at the NAIG Research Symposium held in Winnipeg, Manitoba in 2002,<sup>12</sup> and was also identified at the [Sport in the Aboriginal Community Symposium](#) hosted in Edmonton, Alberta, in October 2005.<sup>13</sup>

*Research mentorship*

- Focus on mentorship and collaboration in the research process. Particular emphasis should be placed on identifying and supporting Aboriginal students in annual Aboriginal sport research



symposiums and conferences as their involvement helps ensure that younger generations of Aboriginal people have the skills and experience to lead Aboriginal sport in Canada in the twenty-first century. Developing the capacity of Aboriginal youth in sport and recreation, including the research sector, will strengthen Sport Canada's goal of enhanced capacity. The importance of mentorship and collaboration in the research process was identified as a priority item at the NAIG Research Symposium held in Winnipeg, Manitoba in 2002.<sup>14</sup>

## Specific Research Questions

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In addition to the following research questions identified below, a number of potential research questions and ideas can be found in the list of 'Strengths, Challenges, and Research Recommendations' section. The following questions are a summary of the most common themes identified in that section, and have been organized to correspond to the four pillars of the *Canadian Sport Policy* (2002) and *Sport Canada's Policy on Aboriginal People's Participation in Sport* (2005).

### *Interaction*

- Research needs to inform the management, monitoring and related program implementation in relation to the *Sport Canada's Policy on Aboriginal People's Participation in Sport*. There is a clear need for evidence to support various aspects of the Policy and to demonstrate impact, performance, results and accountability for the investments that will be made under the Policy.
- Identify how the links between education, sport and health encourage overall Aboriginal well-being.
- The development and implementation of evaluation tools, aligned with the Strengths Perspective, would help to optimize the elements of the sport system by assessing the extent to which sport organizations that provide support for Aboriginal sport are meeting the needs and goals of the people they claim to represent. Data collected from the evaluations could be used to build a record of what sport organizations are doing well and to offer ideas on how to build upon existing strengths.
- Explore the ways that government agencies can work in a more integrated fashion with other sectors, including initiatives and policy directives, to address issues in a more holistic way.
- Generate an ongoing sport and physical activity policy process that is more inclusive of grassroots Aboriginal input and involvement, and/or starts at the grassroots level. For example, what is an effective Aboriginal policy research process? What would that look like? Once a process is developed and successfully implemented (e.g., the process utilized for the Aboriginal Sport Forum), it could be used for similar undertakings throughout Canada and abroad.

### *Participation*

- Research needs to be linked to the field of practice. Research is needed to measure the cost-benefit of interventions to increase participation levels of Aboriginal people. Are the interventions having their desired effect on increasing activity levels, improving the quality of life, and dealing with social issues that Aboriginal people hope to address?
- Generate qualitative evidence on the social benefits of sport and physical activity. Research on the development of social indicators, based on the Strengths Perspective, can be drawn from the health field, as well as from research on Aboriginal sport that has been conducted in countries other than Canada (e.g., Australia).
- Investigate the NAIG-athlete development relationship. The principal questions here are: Where does the NAIG fit in the long-term athlete development model, specifically in terms of the Canada Games? What is the purpose of the NAIG? A number of different public meanings may be attached to the NAIG (e.g., it supports both participation and excellence). However, research in the form of case studies which explore how the NAIG actually supports athlete development will help sport leaders to make more appropriate decisions about where the NAIG fits within the context of the *Canadian Sport Policy* and how to invest human and financial resources in the Games so as to ensure its continuity.
- Identify the human and financial legacies that result from the NAIG. The first financial analysis of the Games was conducted for the 2002 NAIG, lending weight to the argument that the NAIG can contribute to the economy. However there is a complete absence of research which demonstrates how the NAIG can lead to positive social outcomes for Aboriginal people, specifically Aboriginal youth (e.g., drop in suicide rates, substance abuse, incarceration, etc.). Research which documents the social benefits of the NAIG will help sport leaders to make better decisions about which aspects of the NAIG need to be enhanced to encourage positive social outcomes versus those aspects which do not contribute directly to that aspect of the NAIG.
- Document how the transfer of knowledge that occurs between host societies, mission staff and sport leaders can be improved so as to facilitate the development of the NAIG. The development of a website of promising practices, as well as hosting symposiums and conferences where discussions about knowledge transfer in sport can occur will contribute towards this goal.

### *Capacity*

- Further research must be conducted to determine the ways and means to eliminate barriers to sport participation for Aboriginal athletes, coaches, officials, and administrators. Given that our social environments are always changing, it is important to develop a consistent method through which to investigate and expose how barriers (e.g., poverty, racism, sexism) continue to limit Aboriginal participation in sport. This data could be collected at vari-

ous NAIG or other major events, as well as through various community case studies (e.g., through the bilateral agreements).

- Research that increases Aboriginal and government understanding of the ways and means to develop and sustain community capacity in Aboriginal communities will help in the construction of more viable and sustainable programs, two key elements in the current Federal-Provincial/Territorial bilateral agreements to advance the goals of the *Canadian Sport Policy*.
- The Aboriginal Coaching Manual is one example of a culturally appropriate coaching tool. An evaluation of the Aboriginal Coaching Manual, and its efficacy in facilitating culturally appropriate coaching styles, will help Sport Canada to better meet the coaching needs of Aboriginal people and help identify how Aboriginal perspectives on coaching can enhance the Canadian sport system.
- Research which documents the experiences of Aboriginal people in coaching and officiating can expose the barriers that limit their ability to obtain certification (especially in remote communities), as well as identify ways to sustain their interest in coaching and refereeing once they gain the necessary skills.

### *Excellence*

- It is interesting to note the lack of research recommendations focusing on high performance sport. Instead, most recommendations dealt with issues related to the quality of opportunities and access to sport participation. Nevertheless, it is clear that Aboriginal athletes and coaches face significant challenges in their pursuit for excellence. Research which explores and documents the barriers to high performance sport (e.g., racism) will contribute to the development of sport as a positive and 'safe' space for everyone involved. Documenting the ways racism limits opportunities for sport, and identifying anti-racism strategies, is aligned with the *Canadian Strategy for Ethical Conduct in Sport* (2002).<sup>15</sup>

## Appendix A — Invited Delegates

Delegates are listed in alphabetical order, followed by region, experience and/or expertise:

### **NAIG**

Brenda Germain (Ontario, NAIG athlete and undergraduate student, University of Windsor), Jason Loutitt (Alberta, NAIG athlete and national Tom Longboat recipient), Bruce Miller (Manitoba, 2002 NAIG co-chair for the competition division and M.A. student, University of Manitoba), Alex Nelson (British Columbia, NAIG founder and organizer), Christine O'Bonsawin (Ontario, Ph.D. student, Aboriginal sport history, University of Western Ontario), Glynis Peters (Ontario, NAIG government representative, Sport Canada)

### **Coaching Development**

Ian Bird (Ontario, former Executive Director for the Professional Coaches Association of Canada), Sabrina Broadhead (Northwest Territories, Aboriginal coach), Tara Hedican (Ontario, community coach, World Champion, wrestling and national Tom Longboat recipient), Michael Heine (Assistant Professor, University of Manitoba), Rob Meckling (Northwest Territories, sport consultant, NCCP specialist), Chris Szabo (Alberta, resource person for the Artic Winter Games Manual and Dene Games Manual)

### **Athlete Development**

Victoria Edwards (Ontario, Ph.D. student, University of Ottawa), Jared Fletcher (Alberta, varsity athlete and M.A. student, University of Calgary), Waneek Horn-Miller (Kahnawake, Quebec, Olympian, waterpolo and national Tom Longboat recipient), Mike Robidoux (Ontario, Assistant Professor, University of Ottawa), Desiree Streit (Manitoba, undergraduate student, University of Manitoba)

### **Barriers to Sport Development**

Sheldon Baikie (Labrador, community perspective), Audrey Giles (Ontario, Assistant Professor, University of Ottawa), Joannie Halas (Manitoba, Associate Professor, University of Manitoba), Susan Haslip (Ontario, Professor, Algonquin College), Charly Kelly (Yukon, northern community perspective), Sandra Roach (Ontario, national leader in Aboriginal sport development, Sport Canada)

## Appendix B — Invited Guests

In alphabetical order:

**Adams, Randy**

Senior Physical Activity Development Advisor  
Community Programs Directorate, First Nations and Inuit Health Branch

**Blinn, Dennis**

Senior Policy Officer, Sport Canada

**Desjardins, Louise**

Institute of Musculoskeletal Health and Arthritis  
Canadian Institute of Health Research (CIHR)

**Harvey, Jean**

Professor, School of Human Kinetics, University of Ottawa

**Laframbois, Marie-Catherine**

Senior Policy Office, Sport Canada

**Lofstrom, Karin**

Executive Director, CAAWS

**McCrindle, David**

Manager, Sport Participation Policy, Sport Canada, Canadian Sport Policy

**McNaughton, Craig**

Senior Program Officer, Strategic Programs and Joint Initiatives  
Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC)

**Phaneuf, Steven**

Senior Physical Activity Development Advisor  
Community Programs Directorate, First Nations and Inuit Health Branch

**Spence, Joyce**

Program Manager, National Aboriginal Role Model Program  
National Aboriginal Health Organization (NAHO)

**Tanguay, Guy**

Executive Director, Athletes CAN

**Wildgoose, Annette**

Senior Programs Officer, Sport Support Program, Sport Canada

## Appendix C — Daily Schedule

### DAY 1 (Lord Elgin, Quebec Room)

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08:00-08:30 **Breakfast**

08:30-09:00 Welcome and Introductions  
Alex Nelson, elder to open the Forum & get us focused on the day  
Janice Forsyth, welcome, background & purpose of the gathering  
Vicky Paraschak, explain how the day will work

9:00-10:15 **NAIG Panel**

purpose, to discuss the various strengths of the NAIG  
Gina Doxtator and Janice Forsyth (facilitators)  
6 panelists, each address 1 question / 10 minutes per question  
questions and discussion, observer participation

**Alex Nelson**  
**Brenda Germain**

**Glynis Peters**  
**Bruce Miller**

**Jason Loutitt**  
**Christine O’Bonsawin**

1. Based on your experience as an athlete at the NAIG, describe what you enjoyed most about the Games. What barriers need to be removed in order for you to enhance your experience at future NAIG? How can your insights be addressed through research and intervention?
2. Based on your previous involvement as an organizer (i.e. government, team leader, researcher, etc.) in the NAIG or other major sporting events in which Aboriginal athletes have competed, what elements need to be enhanced in order for the Games to thrive in future years? How can your insights be addressed through research and intervention?

10:15-10:30 **Snack Break**

10:30-11:00 **Research Opportunity Presentation**

Jean Harvey, Sport Participation Research Initiative, 10 min  
Craig McNaughton, SSHRC, 10 min  
questions from the floor

11:00-12:00 **NAIG Discussion**

flip charts on strengths, recommendations, research suggestions  
Gina Doxtator (facilitator)  
Christine O’Bonsawin, Jared Fletcher, Janice Forsyth (flipcharts)  
Audrey Giles (note taker)

12:00-1:00 **Lunch at SIRC**  
Sport Information Resource Centre  
sandwiches and veggies, tour of new facility

1:00-2:30 **Coaching Panel**  
purpose, to enhance opportunities for Aboriginal coaches  
Vicky Paraschak and Sheldon Baikie (facilitators)  
six panelists, each address one question / ten minutes per question  
questions and discussions from observers

**Michael Heine**  
**Sabrina Broadhead**

**Chris Szabo**  
**Ian Bird**

**Tara Hedican**  
**Rob Meckling**

1. Based on your experience as an Aboriginal coach, describe the features of your program that worked really well for you and your athletes. What barriers need to be removed in order for you to develop your leadership ability as a coach and to provide good quality experiences for your participants? How can your insights be addressed through research and intervention?
2. Based on your involvement in coaching Aboriginal athletes and/or generating training materials for Aboriginal coaches, what aspects of your approach and/or programs are working really well? What barriers need to be removed in order for you to provide a better experience for the participants? How can your insights be addressed through research and intervention?

2:30-3:00 **Snack Break**

3:00-4:00 **Coaching Discussion**  
flip charts on strengths, recommendations, research suggestions  
Vicky Paraschak (facilitator)  
Sheldon Baikie, Jason Loutitt, Brenda Germain (flipcharts)  
Janice Forsyth (note taker)

6:00-7:30 **Celebration and Supper**

## DAY 2 (Lord Elgin, Quebec Room)

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8:30-9:00 **Breakfast**

9:00-10:15 **Athlete Development Panel**  
purpose, to enhance the sporting experiences of athletes  
Vicky Paraschak and Brenda Germain (facilitators)  
six panelists, each address one question / ten minutes per question  
questions and discussion, observer participation

**Jared Fletcher**  
**Mike Robidoux**

**Waneek Horn-Miller**  
**Victoria Edwards**

**Desiree Streit**

1. Based on your experience as an athlete, describe which elements have helped you most to succeed as an athlete. What does being a “successful” Aboriginal athlete mean to you? What barriers need to be removed in order for you to enhance your athletic experience? How can your insights be addressed through research and intervention?
2. Based on your experience working with Aboriginal athletes as a physical education teacher, coach, advocate, or administrator, what elements need to be enhanced to improve sporting experiences for Aboriginal athletes? How can your insights be addressed through research and intervention?

10:15-10:30 **Snack Break**

10:30-11:00 **Research Opportunity Presentation**  
Craig McNaughton, SSHRC, 10 min  
questions from the floor

11:00-12:00 **Athlete Development Discussion**  
flip charts on strengths, recommendations, research suggestions  
Vicky Paraschak (facilitator)  
Brenda Germain, Rod Jacobs, Tara Hedican (flipcharts)  
Janice Forsyth (note taker)

12:00-1:00 **Lunch**

1:00-2:30 **Barriers to Aboriginal Sport Panel**  
purpose, to expose existing barriers limiting Aboriginal participation  
Christine O’Bonsawin and Janice Forsyth (facilitators)  
six panelists, each address one question / ten minutes per question  
questions and discussions from observers

**Sheldon Baikie**  
**Susan Haslip**

**Sandra Roach**  
**Charly Kelly**

**Joannie Halas**  
**Audrey Giles**

1. Based on your knowledge and experience of Aboriginal participation in sport, recreation, and physical education, what are the some of the key barriers limiting Aboriginal participation in sport? Why are these barriers significant? How can your insights be addressed through research and intervention?
2. How does the strengths perspective encourage you to see barriers in a different way? What are the strengths in the Canadian Sport Policy and Sport Canada’s Policy on Aboriginal Peoples’ Participation in Sport, and how do we use those strengths to reduce existing barriers in Aboriginal



sport, recreation and physical education? How can your insights be addressed through research and intervention?

2:30-3:00

**Snack Break**

3:00-4:00

**Barriers to Aboriginal Sport Discussion**

flip charts on strengths, recommendations, research suggestions

Christine O'Bonsawin (facilitator)

Janice Forsyth, Jason Loutitt, Jared Fletcher (flipcharts)

Vicky Paraschak (note taker)

4:00-5:00

**Closing**

Janice Forsyth and Vicky Paraschak, thank-you and 'next steps'

Alex Nelson, closing and wish delegates a safe journey home

6:00-7:30

**Supper**

## Appendix D — Summary of Evaluations

*What strengths did you feel arose due to the organization of this forum? Comments on the two-day format, session topics, panel presentations, audience participation, are welcome.*

- The stories. Thank-you for allowing people to continue on. It's important to share. It doesn't get any better than that!
- The passion!
- More interest continues to be expressed for future meetings.
- Everyone had an opportunity to be involved.
- Good range of athletes, practitioners, and researchers.
- As an administrator, I didn't generally present from a personal perspective – in vulnerability there is strength.
- Two days was great; the sessions and panels were well organized.
- The power and passion of the members of the Forum, from all aspects of sport, academia and government.
- The Forum was excellent. It was well prepared and organized. The issues were well discussed and explained.
- The networking, sharing, strategizing.
- Opportunity to bring forward barriers for Aboriginal athletes.
- Deeper understanding of the strengths perspective.

*What changes might you suggest to enhance similar gatherings in the future?*

- Small group opportunities, e.g., breakout sessions.
- Create an action-oriented, physically active forum.
- Need to hear more from all speakers.
- Information sharing. Need to create a website forum.
- The location was convenient.
- Change the amount of time that the panel is allowed. Given them more time to discuss ideas. Also, allow more time for group questioning.
- More time for discussion.

*What strengths did you find in the administrative details of this conference?  
Comments on flights, per diems, location, etc. are welcome.*

- Host the conference in the same location. Being in Ottawa helped the dialogue among diverse people, e.g., government officials, researchers, coaches, athletes, etc.

- All the administrative details of this conference were great.
- Well planned.
- Two days was great – for the first time.

*What changes might you suggest to enhance similar gatherings in the future?*

- Sending profiles of the participants to each other before the start of the conference might assist in getting more from the sessions, e.g., networking.
- Encourage participants to forward ideas for strengths, research, and barriers to organizers afterwards. Consider having participants put together slides, even as handouts, to gather the main points.
- Longer timeframe.
- A cultural event might be a great idea for next time.
- It might be nice to host the next event on the east coast. Labrador would be a great place to host this.

*What strengths do you think this forum facilitated for the development of Aboriginal sport in Canada?*

- Good networking opportunity.
- Provides direction for all parties involved, and flexibility to direct attention.
- Was an opportunity to reflect on personal situation.
- Will help build on existing knowledge.
- Shows need for an integrated, multi-disciplinary approach to research.
- Reinforces need for a number of federal departments to be involved.
- Use of personal stories, combined with research ideas, is active policy research.
- The youth reminded me of why I do Aboriginal policy research.
- I think the barriers were not only identified, but ideas were given to take down the barriers and a closer look was given to sport policy.
- Outlined potential future research topics.
- Gave a multitude of recommendations to Aboriginal sport.
- I think this Forum has opened the doors for improvement and development of Aboriginal sport. It provided issues that needed to be worked on.
- Clear communication between the researchers, community and policy makers.

*What changes might you suggest to enhance this development?*

- Send all participants a contact list.
- Link to Pan-Canadian Healthy Living Strategy, Diabetes Initiative, etc.
- Build on the Recommendations from the Recreation Roundtable on Research (2003) held in Edmonton, Alberta.
- Break-out groups to help further develop conversations to break down the time limit and fear of talking.

## WWW Links

Aboriginal Cadets Canada

<http://www.cadets.forces.gc.ca>

Aboriginal Coaching Manual

<http://www.aboriginalsportcircle.ca/main/coachingcertification.html>

Aboriginal Sport Circle

<http://www.aboriginalsportcircle.ca>

Arctic Winter Games International Committee

<http://www.awg.ca>

Access Program, University of Manitoba

<http://www.umanitoba.ca/extended/access>

Canadian Heritage Information Network

<http://www.chin.gc.ca/English/index.html>

Canadian Sport Policy

[http://www.pch.gc.ca/progs/sc/pol/pcs-csp/index\\_e.cfm](http://www.pch.gc.ca/progs/sc/pol/pcs-csp/index_e.cfm)

Coaching Association of Canada

<http://www.coach.ca>

Faculty of Physical Education & Recreation Studies, University of Manitoba

<http://www.umanitoba.ca/faculties/phyped>

History of the North American Indigenous Games [Virtual Museum of Canada]

<http://www.virtualmuseum.ca/Exhibitions/Traditions/index.html>

Junior Rangers

<http://www.rangers.forces.gc.ca>

KidSport

[www.kidsport.ca](http://www.kidsport.ca)

National Coaching Certification Program

<http://www.coach.ca/eng/certification/index.cfm>

National Recreation Roundtable on Aboriginal People (Hobbema, AB)—  
The Maskwachees Declaration

[http://www.canadianheritage.gc.ca/progs/sc/pol/aboriginal/2005/6\\_e.cfm](http://www.canadianheritage.gc.ca/progs/sc/pol/aboriginal/2005/6_e.cfm)

Native American Sports Council

<http://www.nascsports.org>

Research Symposium Proceedings, NAIG 2002.

[http://www.umanitoba.ca/faculties/phyped/research/naigrs\\_proceedings.pdf](http://www.umanitoba.ca/faculties/phyped/research/naigrs_proceedings.pdf)

Social Sciences and Humanities Reserach Council of Canada (SSHRC)

<http://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca>

Sport Canada's Policy on Aboriginal Peoples' Particpation in Sport

[http://www.pch.gc.ca/progs/sc/pol/aboriginal/index\\_e.cfm](http://www.pch.gc.ca/progs/sc/pol/aboriginal/index_e.cfm)

Sport in the Aboriginal Community Symposium, Edmonton, AB

[www.sport.arpaonline.ca/AboriginalSportPCproceedingscomplete.pdf](http://www.sport.arpaonline.ca/AboriginalSportPCproceedingscomplete.pdf)

Sport Matters

<http://www.sportmatters.ca/Content/home.asp>

Traditional Aboriginal Sport Coaching Resources

[http://www.awg.ca/Aboriginal\\_Coaching\\_Resources.html](http://www.awg.ca/Aboriginal_Coaching_Resources.html)

Winnipeg Aboriginal Sport Achievement Centre

<http://www.masrc.com/wasac/aboutus.html>

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> The Research Roundtable was held on November 29, 2004 in Ottawa, Ontario and included invited members of the research community, the Canada Research Councils, the Sport Information Resource Centre, and Sport Canada officials. The purpose was to outline the trends, barriers, and issues related to participation in sport in Canada, which would serve as guidelines for funding the Sport Canada Research Policy Program.
- <sup>2</sup> The policy states, "Research, data collection and progress evaluation are essential to increasing participation and excellence in sport for Aboriginal Peoples." See Canadian Heritage, *Sport Canada's Policy on Aboriginal Peoples' Participation in Sport*, Ottawa: Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada, 2005: 7.
- <sup>3</sup> See, Vicky Paraschak and Janice Forsyth, eds., *North American Indigenous Games Research Symposium, Proceedings*, Winnipeg, MB: University of Manitoba, 2003: 5-8.
- <sup>4</sup> I would like to thank the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada for funding this research.
- <sup>5</sup> It is acknowledged that the presentation was given on Algonquin land. The Algonquin Peoples and their territories were acknowledged by Elder Alex Nelson.
- <sup>6</sup> Reference to "sees, hears and feels" is attributed to Elder Alex Nelson. Miigwetch.
- <sup>7</sup> By way of example, I placed a milk carton, an egg container and a Kool-Aid container and offered a price comparison of these goods between Ottawa and the far north. I credited this illustration to Jose Kusugak, (President of Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, the national political voice of Inuit in Canada). Jose shared the cost of these items during a presentation I attended that he delivered at the University of Ottawa in early November 2005.
- <sup>8</sup> See, for example, Mary Beneforti and Joan Cunningham, *Investigating Indicators for Measuring the Health and Social Impact of Sport and Recreation Programs in Indigenous Communities*, Australian Sports Commission and Cooperative Research Centre for Aboriginal and Tropical Health, 2002. This report was later published in the *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 40(1), 2005: 89-98.
- <sup>9</sup> For examples, see, Craig McNaughton and Daryl Rock, *Opportunities in Aboriginal Research: Results of SSHRC's Dialogue on Research and Aboriginal Peoples*, A paper prepared for the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada, 2003; Jennifer Espey, *OCAP & Stewardship: A Discussion Paper for the First Nations Statistical Institute*, 2002; Brian Schnarch, "Ownership, Control, Access and Possession (OCAP) or Self-Determination Applied to Research. A Critical Analysis of Contemporary First Nations Research and Some Options for First Nations Research," *Journal of Aboriginal Health* (January, 2004): 80-95.
- <sup>10</sup> Canadian Heritage, *Sport Canada's Policy on Aboriginal Peoples' Participation in Sport*, Ottawa: Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada, 2005: 1.
- <sup>11</sup> Canadian Heritage, *Sport Canada's Policy on Aboriginal Peoples' Participation in Sport*, Ottawa: Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada, 2005: 3.
- <sup>12</sup> Vicky Paraschak and Janice Forsyth, eds., *North American Indigenous Games Research Symposium, Proceedings*, Winnipeg, MB: University of Manitoba, 2003: vi.
- <sup>13</sup> Vicky Paraschak, Janice Forsyth and Audrey Giles, eds., *Aboriginal Sport and Recreation: Ready to Learn and Lend*, Proceedings, Edmonton, AB: Alberta Parks and Recreation Association, 2005: 6.
- <sup>14</sup> Vicky Paraschak and Janice Forsyth, eds., *North American Indigenous Games Research Symposium, Proceedings*, Winnipeg, MB: University of Manitoba, 2003: v-vi.
- <sup>15</sup> Sport Canada, *Canadian Strategy for Ethical Conduct in Sport*, Ottawa: Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada, 2002: 7.