

# Moving Forward: A National Roundtable on Aboriginal Women in Sport February 22-24, 2008

## Final Report

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## Prelude

The National Roundtable on Aboriginal Women in Sport is part of a larger effort by academics and practitioners to identify and discuss sport and recreation issues that are important to Aboriginal people in Canada. Collectively, our goal is to develop strategies to increase Aboriginal involvement in sport and recreation by identifying the strengths of the existing delivery systems, the barriers and challenges to participation, and opportunities to increase access and equity for Aboriginal people in this area of social life. The National Roundtable on Aboriginal Women in Sport thus builds on previous meetings that were organized to address that goal, including the *2002 North American Indigenous Games Research Symposium* and the *2006 Aboriginal Sport Research Symposium*.

What made the National Roundtable on Aboriginal Women in Sport different from previous gatherings was the overall atmosphere in the room. Even before the workshop began it was clear that a national gathering of Aboriginal women in sport and recreation was long overdue. There have been few formal opportunities for Aboriginal women to gather and discuss sport and recreation issues on their terms and in their own preferred ways. When such an opportunity does arise, the momentum it generates can take on a life of its own. Such was the case here.

Readers might think the National Roundtable on Aboriginal Women in Sport focused on issues specific to women. In fact, the opposite was true. While the Roundtable reinforced our understanding that issues specific to Aboriginal women need to be addressed if they are to get involved and stay involved in sport and recreation, it also made clear that issues related to the health and well being of the people in their communities, the youth, and the system as a whole are very important to Aboriginal women. The importance of belonging to a community, be it a geographic location and/or an identity position, is a fundamental source of pride and energy for many Aboriginal women. They have a keen interest in matters related to sport and recreation, and because of their unique experiences, they possess valuable insights on the possibilities and challenges for Aboriginal women, men, and youth in sport and recreation.

This Final Report does not do justice to the focused and robust discussions that took place over the two and a half days in Winnipeg. It is impossible to capture the exquisite emotion in written form. Knowing the Final Report pales in comparison to the actual event, we have included the poem, written by a delegate at the Roundtable, to acknowledge and share the positive energy that this gathering generated. The women who came together for this inaugu-

ral event agreed from here on to make their voices heard with the intent of encouraging and leading constructive change for all within the Aboriginal and Canadian sport and recreation systems.



*You ...*

*radiate beauty, maturity, calm confidence, wisdom, passion, love and tenderness*

*for your families, your communities, your lands, your foods*

*joy and pride in your ways*

*desire to help, inspire, lead our youth*

*foster creativity along the way*

*stand up to be counted*

*choose your battles*

*walk humbly feeding our souls*

*being thankful for the opportunity to share and be a part of each other's circle.*

*Miigwetch*

— Gina Doxtator

Dedicated to each woman at the Roundtable who, through your shared experiences, inspired me to create a collective vision

# Moving Forward: A National Roundtable on Aboriginal Women in Sport

## Background Information

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The idea for the Roundtable emerged at the first annual Ontario Aboriginal Sport Circle Conference hosted in Sudbury, Ontario, in January 2004. A “closed door” session was hosted for the female delegates to discuss the state of affairs for Aboriginal women in sport in their communities. The women talked about the positive impact of sport in their lives, but also about their ongoing frustrations with access and equity issues that continue to limit their ability to influence change in their communities. This brought us to another common theme in our stories. In our group discussion, we came to understand how issues pertinent to Aboriginal females kept getting pushed to the background while more general issues relevant to Aboriginal sport were prioritized. In many approaches and programs that are designed to meet broader community needs, issues that uniquely impact female participants were not being adequately addressed. The lack of information on this subject in the public domain, as well as the lack of opportunities for Aboriginal women to meet and discuss issues of participation from female perspectives, severely limits the potential for sport to be a positive place for Aboriginal female participants as athletes, coaches, organizers, and administrators. We reached the conclusion that a National Roundtable was needed to call attention to the diverse roles that Aboriginal women play in sport, and to develop options that would support the good work that they are already doing so as to enhance their potential for future contributions.

The goals for the National Roundtable were thus three-fold: (1) to bring together Aboriginal female athletes, coaches, and organizers from the mainstream, Aboriginal, and traditional sport settings in a friendly and supportive environment to discuss the place and importance of sport in their lives and to examine the conditions that have helped and hindered their participation, (2) to identify various strategies that will enhance Aboriginal female participation in sport, and (3) to raise public awareness of these issues by producing a final report and proceedings of the gathering that will be available to the public in electronic format.

The National Roundtable examined key issues related to Aboriginal female involvement in sport as they relate to the four goals (enhanced participation, enhanced capacity, enhanced interaction and enhanced excellence) of the [Canadian Sport Policy](#) (2002) and as defined in [Sport Canada’s Policy on Aboriginal Peoples’ Participation in Sport](#) (2005), for short, the [Aboriginal Sport Policy](#). The participants were also encouraged to identify the barriers that limit their potential in sport, including links between social and structural issues related to gender discrimination, racism, and poverty, and then make concrete recommendations in light of the strategic directions outlined in the [Canadian Sport Policy](#) (2002) and the [Aboriginal Sport Policy](#). See [Appendix A](#) for the daily Agenda; see [Appendix C](#) for a list of delegates.

Funding for the workshop was secured through Sport Canada, and was supported in principle and through in-kind contributions by the Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women in Sport (CAAWS). We intend to build on these relationships, as well as form new ones so as to discuss and strategize about how to combine research and action to address the issues that are important to Aboriginal women in sport.

## Enhanced Participation<sup>1</sup>

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**Yvonne Carpenter** is from the Northwest Territories and describes herself as a dedicated mom, coach and coordinator. Her mainstream sport is soccer and her traditional sport is Dene games. The two sometimes cross over and this makes her life challenging. In her presentation, she talked about how significant progress is being made in her region with women in the areas of health, family inclusion, physical activity, networking and higher education in sport and recreation. She made special mention of how participation is linked to coaching, and how more women are becoming certified coaches and taking on bona fide roles at the community level but not so at the elite level. She then identified some challenges that women in sport face, such as gaining access to trained volunteers, which is essential for organizing and hosting events, transient elite coaching, people not staying involved in sport for a long time, and under-developed programs for Aboriginal girls in the mainstream sports. She also spoke about the significance of traditional sports, the different protocols that exist in communities, and the barriers that these protocols pose to some women (e.g., female participation in drumming is not permitted by some groups). She emphasized the strength in, and the pride and opportunities for involvement in the North American Indigenous Games, the Arctic Winter Games and the Canada Games, because these venues help to showcase Dene culture and youth athletic excellence to the rest of North America.

**Sabrina Broadhead** has been involved in Aboriginal sports since 1981 when she participated in the Fastball Championships of the National Indian Athletic Association, an organization based primarily in the United States. She also participated at a young age in the Arctic Winter Games and in the Canada Games. At that time, being an Aboriginal athlete was not highlighted as it is today, so the times have changed quite a bit in that regard. She spoke in great detail about the Aboriginal Coach-



ing Manual (ACM), and the opportunities it affords women. She explained that there are several women trained on ACM in her region. She would like to see more flexibility around the delivery of the ACM (e.g., being more flexible with the time and place), to make it more accommodating for women, especially mothers, who are still the primary caregivers in her region. She identified the strengths and weaknesses of other opportunities for women to gather and develop skills to keep them involved. She noted in particular how the North American Indigenous Games sports have a lot more women involved as community coaches in her region, but the majority of the coaches traveling to NAIG from her region are male. She says there are still challenges such as budgets and fixed agendas that make it hard to attend and to bring people together. She spoke about the recent development of an “alumni” group for the Arctic Winter Games, where the purpose is to use successful athletes who became successful adults as role models (alumni). She explained how this approach is a more attainable goal than being an Olympian and would provide for more role models, in particular girls and women. She also noted how mentoring programs are excellent ways to bring people together, but this brings challenges too (e.g., finding creative ways to include mentors at the regional and territorial games). She said there is an opportunity to help women gain entry into sport organizations that are typically led by men by starting at the community level and building up from there. She sees the ACM as a way to do this, for example, by moving women facilitators around the regions to train other women (and men), rather than having the facilitators teach people in their region only.



**Cheryl Henhawk**, of the Six Nations of the Grand River, is a graduate of the University of Western Ontario in Physical Education. She has been the Director of Parks and Recreation in her community for almost twenty-five years. Her parents were very supportive, both in education and sports.

Her mother, a former elite fastball player, encouraged her to “aim for the best and highest” which meant being in the mainstream in terms of doing sport. As a Minor Softball player, she played on the first all-Aboriginal girls’ fastball team, which competed in the Ontario Summer Games and won the bronze medal in 1976. She wonders why more Aboriginal female teams do not compete in mainstream sports. She noted that there is very little information on the internet to celebrate Aboriginal female achievements in sport, even though the Six Nations Minor girls’ and Women’s softball teams have won more than 50 championships in Ontario since the 1950’s. At the recreational level, there are four main sports for girls at Six Nations, including softball, lacrosse, hockey, and figure skating. The girls are excelling at these sports and perhaps, to encourage them to continue competing during their adult lives, competitive leagues similar to those that are held for Junior A and B lacrosse/hockey male teams need to be created, but then that would mean trying to engage all Ontario communities and that would be a big job. There are many examples of elite female athletes who are and could be recognized as role models at Six Nations. A goal is to build a community sports hall of fame in Six Nations to showcase the accomplishments of both the men and women. The sport volunteers are doing a great job in providing opportunities for girls and boys. As part of her job responsibilities, she plans at looking at ways to encourage more development for female youth and women at Six Nations to keep their strong sporting traditions alive.

## Enhanced Capacity

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**Kris Johnson**, a member of Six Nations, worked with the Ontario Aboriginal Sport Circle from 2005 to 2007 in program and leadership development, and in her position was the liaison person for 134 First Nation communities in Ontario. She was also Chef de Mission for the 2006 North American Indigenous Games (NAIG) in Denver, was a mission staff team member for the 2002 North American Indigenous Games in Winnipeg, and has coached numerous successful lacrosse and volleyball teams. She is also involved in the grassroots development of proposal submissions to increase opportunities for Aboriginal women to be physically active. She is now coaching women’s field lacrosse, and is volunteering with the Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women in Sport and Physical Activity (CAAWS) on the Team Spirit project to increase opportunities for Aboriginal girls to get more physically active. She took on the 2006 NAIG position to build coaching relationships, and, through that, saw a real need to develop and implement a governance and accountability model. She talked about the challenges of dealing with different political bodies and funding agencies in sport, which often seem to be at odds with each other. She spoke about her experiences and the frustrations of trying to organize sport with communities, especially rural and remote communities, on a limited budget, and having to do all of the communication by email and telephone and not having money to get together once in a while. She noted that there are some good strong women leaders in her province, but that there is also a real need for woman coaches and facilitators to increase those numbers and get more girls and women active.

**Gail Welburn** is from Camperville, Manitoba. It is a Métis community with about 650 people, and she is the Recreation Director there. She explained how her community used to be a strong sport community. When she was growing up in Camperville, she was playing ladies fastball by the time she was thirteen, and they would play throughout the province. They also had men's fastball, minor baseball, and hockey. Today, there are no organized sports in Camperville and this is a real community weakness. Gail also explained that she does not see herself as "doing sports"; she sees herself as doing resource development, and this distinction is important because it says a lot about where her community is, in terms of capacity development. She developed a youth centre in the local arena with the help of local youth; she trained them and they were empowered to take action. They receive some money for their annual operating budget for the youth centre, but it is very small amount. The only other sources of funding are from Sport Manitoba, through the bilateral agreement, and the Lighthouse fund and the Manitoba Métis Federation for minimal staffing. In her community, the men are the decision-makers and the women operate the businesses, but have to sell their ideas to the men first. This is sometimes a big challenge. For example, transportation is a big issue in Camperville because all of the organized sports take place in Dauphin (75 km away) or Winnipegosis (35 km away). Most of the community members only own ATVs (all terrain vehicles) and the children have to be bused to and from school. So partnerships are needed to assist with transportation to these places, although the children still encounter racism, as they are predominantly white communities. One of the challenges they face in recreation is the Community Council, which does not see sports and recreation as a priority. Volunteerism is another problem. They have a very small base of volunteers who are not recognized for their accomplishments, and the youth volunteers are seen only as trouble. The mindset is one of the biggest barriers in her community. Girls are not involved in any sporting activities; the focus is mainly on men's hockey in neighboring communities. The lack of female mentors is also a problem even higher up in decision-making positions. Strong women are needed as mentors, to speak about sport and recreation to the male decision-makers. Right now, there are more barriers than capacity, but they are slowing rebuilding.

**Charly Kelly** spoke about working in sport and recreation in the Yukon, which is one of two regions that work directly with government. The Aboriginal Sport Circle in this region works directly with a designated government representative. Within this structure, the government provides assistance in the form of a person and financial resources to help with such things as writing proposals and filling out reports; these are capacity issues that don't often get addressed properly at the regional level. There are a lot of amazing women who contributed to building her position within the Government and the Aboriginal Sport Circle in her region. She sees this Roundtable in an interesting way; while it is aimed at building capacity in Aboriginal women, in fact what we are actually doing is trying to build up our men. One of the many challenges for women is finding a balance between family commitments and outside commitments. Sport and recreation lose a lot of volunteers and coaches because of the many commitments women hold. She emphasized that

having family responsibilities is not a bad thing; it should more appropriately be seen as a capacity issue for women. She then discussed the following challenges for Aboriginal women in sport and recreation: overuse of the same coaches, and the fact that some newly trained coaches cannot participate because of other ongoing commitments; increasing opportunities in major games; equity of women on boards at the higher levels, like the Aboriginal Sport Circle, the NAIG, and even on the smaller committees of these national and international organizations; ensuring that strong women's voices are heard and acted upon at these tables; and finding Elders who are willing and knowledgeable about sport and recreation—her experience is that female Elders do not have the experience to enable them to participate in a meaningful way.



### Enhanced Interaction

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**Gina Doxtator** discussed her role working in Aboriginal sport for the past seven years. She worked most of those years with the Aboriginal Sport Circle and during that time learned a great deal about the Aboriginal sport system and also developed some of her own ideas about the strengths and weaknesses for Aboriginal women in sport. Talking specifically about interaction, she sees the Aboriginal Sport Policy as a positive element because it creates a formal link between the Aboriginal sport system and the government, but believes that Aboriginal sport staff, volunteers, and Aboriginal organizations should be better educated about the existence and significance of this policy. The policy could facilitate greater interaction between people and organizations, including people in

the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal sport systems, and specifically women. She then talked about the idea of interaction, and how it is often understood as an organizational issue, but it could also be interpreted as addressing issues at a more personal level, like interactions between women, and governance and accountability issues. More capacity development and mentoring for Aboriginal women also needs to be developed, and organizations such as CAAWS have models in place that could be used and adapted to fit our needs. Universities are also potential partners for projects and research in Aboriginal sport; so far this also has been a missed opportunity. As opportunities for Aboriginal people in sport continue to grow, it will be important to have more women in leadership roles, including Aboriginal women in the mainstream system.

**Janice Forsyth** talked about the different ways to understand the word ‘interaction’. She explained how ‘interaction’ often means something different to people at the community level than to people who are involved in government and policy. For example, people who are far removed from daily operations of government and policy might interpret ‘interaction’ as a way to foster and build positive healthy relationships between coaches, athletes, parents and other volunteers, whereas ‘interaction’ at the policy level refers generally to collaboration between governments and organizations. These differences in understanding might seem trivial at first, but they are significant because it suggests a difference in power. The policy understanding is evidence of the intent to enhance collaboration between government departments and sport organizations, when a lot of people and organizations that service communities could also benefit from increased opportunities to meet, discuss, and strategize about how to resolve issues pertinent to their needs and goals for sport. For instance, while there is money out there for athlete and coaching development, there appears to be a lack of funding for people in rural and remote areas to host and attend meetings, conferences, and strategy workshops that would help them better service their communities.

**Shirley Greeyes** is from Saskatchewan and has been in the Aboriginal sports system for over ten years. She is now working with the White Buffalo Youth Lodge, bringing sports and recreation to the youth in her city. Her goal is to approach everything holistically, and to be proactive, not reactive. Some of the challenges she sees with interaction have to do with “surface” issues, like partnerships. Organizations are required to form partnerships but are not working all that well together. Underneath, there are a lot of issues that prevent people from working collaboratively, like competitiveness and a lack of inclusiveness among the organizations involved in sport, recreation, and health. She acknowledged that the forming of partnerships is political and these politics play a huge role in who is at the table, and who does what. The two sport systems, the Aboriginal sport system and the mainstream sport system, run side-by-side but they don’t join a whole lot unless they have to. There is also the problem of underlying racism in Saskatchewan, but people are also making great strides to eliminate it. She noted that Aboriginal women are not valued as members and their education and experiences are not recognized in sport, yet still women persist. She stays in sports for the kids, and as an Aboriginal person in sport, and as an Aboriginal woman.

## Enhanced Excellence

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**Denise Kurszewski** is taking time out to balance her life, spend time at her camp, and practice her traditional skills. These are the ways she grounds herself and gains mental and emotional strength. Denise spoke about what makes people strong and her understanding of success, and related these elements to family support, the connection with being “on the land”, traditional foods, and positive teachers and families with high expectations of the youth. Her presentation was based partly on her Master’s thesis where she explored the idea of excellence. She talked about the TEST (Territorial Experimental Ski Training) program in the north and looked at the successes of those athletes as evidence of Aboriginal people being able to produce something significant, in terms of excellence from the region. The strength and success of the program was that people knew each other, knew the families, were a team and had proper training. She compared her thesis findings with her son’s experience in sport (a former elite javelin thrower); he found athletics lonely and gave it up because there were no other Aboriginal youths around. Instead he took up baseball, a team sport with other Aboriginal male athletes, and was much happier. She sees the North American Indigenous Games as an important place for youth to be involved in sports and to socialize with other Aboriginal youth. Challenges are still there, especially in the smaller communities, where there is a real sense of hopelessness and where they don’t have the family or monetary support to take advantage of opportunities in sport. She also spoke on how she previously believed that gender was not an issue in sport, but has learned that it is a big issue. It is still men making the decisions, and it is no different in the sporting world. We can learn strategies from other areas though because it is everywhere. She encouraged everyone to not be negative and to work around the issues, maintain integrity, be professional and ethical. She explained that we have to consider ourselves as leaders, stand up and be counted, and that all of the answers are in our heart. And in listening to our heart, we will make good decisions.

**Valentina Nolan** is employed as the Regional Coordinator for the Aboriginal Sports Circle in her region, Newfoundland. Valentina explained that out-migration is a huge issue in her region, and



that this trend has had a huge impact on sports participation and excellence. The men are leaving the community to find work and the women are doing double duty as the sole caregivers. The problem is that to look at achieving excellence you have to have the time, and time is an issue for the women in her area. When she was young, the main goal for the youth was not sports or sporting excellence but to get an education and leave, to go where the job opportunities are. Another big struggle in Newfoundland is that there is no governing body in fitness, only in sports. The frustration is that the sport governing body is looking at fitness and health more generally. She believes that is the place to start before focusing on development in sport, or sporting excellence. Another big challenge is the lack of leadership in her community. She plans on becoming a facilitator with ACM (Aboriginal Coaching Manual) and using this knowledge to be a leader in sports and recreation, and maybe, through that, train more leaders who can contribute to sporting excellence in her region. She is thankful for the networking opportunities that the Aboriginal Sport Circle and this Roundtable have afforded her.

**Regan Bruce**, an athlete and accomplished coach, spoke from the point of view of her own experiences about her definition of excellence. To her, sports have been more about the process, about what you learn and how you develop as a person. Participating in sports has given her a lot of confidence and a lot of opportunities. She has played in both the mainstream system and on Aboriginal teams and found both equally rewarding, though sometimes the politics associated with Aboriginal sport was frustrating, especially in hockey and when it came to selecting athletes for teams. In high school, she was selected for the Coaching Leadership class, which was a great opportunity. She then began her coaching career in high school and considers it one of her best experiences. While coaching in a northern town in Manitoba, she encountered challenges, as Aboriginal people saw her as “white” while white people saw her as “Aboriginal”. To overcome this negativity, she stayed focused on coaching her hockey team and used that as a learning experience about how to focus on the youth and their experiences, saying: “Sometimes we have to look at where we get our experiences from.” So she turned what could have been a negative experience into a good learning experience and really enjoyed working with the athletes. She has also had many positive male role models in her life, people who supported her and enabled her to become a good coach, and now a role model for female youth, though she agrees on the need for more female role models. A forum such as this is good, as there is strength in numbers.

**Dr. Rosalin Hanna** used the [Aboriginal Sport Policy](#) to focus her presentation on ‘enhanced excellence’. She highlighted key areas in the policy that require immediate development for it to be an effective means to increase Aboriginal female participation in sport. In particular, she talked about the importance of understanding what a “welcoming environment” in sport means for Aboriginal women, and then working to create an inclusive culture. She also highlighted the importance of collecting and publicizing quantitative data about Aboriginal female participation in sport, especially data on female involvement as national level athletes, coaches, and officials. She explained

how this data will serve as important baseline measures to show what opportunities the women have access to and are taking, as well as the changes in participation rates over time. Furthermore, identifying women and girls in sports will promote positive mentors in the Aboriginal community. She also discussed the need to create more culturally sensitive supports for Aboriginal women in sport, especially for leaders, and to not just recreate the same supports that are already available to men and non-Aboriginal women. She explained how many Aboriginal women are also mothers or are an integral part of the family support system, and because of their care-giving roles, they place a very high value on family and youth. Thus, Aboriginal women require different but equally important supports to stay involved and succeed in sport. She emphasized that there are strengths in the existing sport system, but that they need to be enhanced, envisioned by and reshaped for the needs of Aboriginal women, who are often the front-line workers and fundraisers in community sport and recreation.



## Goal Priorities

The following list of priorities was identified by the delegates at the National Roundtable on Aboriginal Women in Sport. The list was developed initially through the small group discussions and then expanded on in the large group plenary. It thus represents the cumulative and collective interests of the delegates. Our intent was to provide Sport Canada and CAAWS, as well as other non-profit sectors in sport and recreation, with information that would help improve opportunities for Aboriginal girls and women in sport and recreation. As such, the structure of the Roundtable dialogue corresponds with the goals identified in the [Canadian Sport Policy](#) (2002) and the [Aboriginal Sport Policy](#); see [Appendix B](#) for a description of the four goals

We have purposefully included the entire set of priorities as identified by the delegates in the *Final Report*; the purpose is to help readers gain a better understanding of what the delegates believe are the most important issues that need to be addressed if opportunities for Aboriginal girls and women are to be built and enhanced in genuine and meaningful ways. A summary and analysis of the main themes, developed from the list of priorities, follows in the next sections: Highlights and Next Steps. The bullets have not been rearranged; they appear in the order they were written on the flip charts at the Roundtable.

## Enhanced Participation

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### *Strengths*

- Women in coaching—community based and/or certified
- More Aboriginal youth involved in P/T programs—e.g., soccer in Saskatoon is increasing due to parental support, money and parents involved in coaching
- CAAWS leadership development courses
- ASC has made efforts to include women, e.g., hockey, awards
- Strong Aboriginal women in key leadership places at several levels, but work within silos, which is a challenge for networking
- Youth voice
- Encourage women to come forth and speak at senior/decision-making levels; put sport and recreation on the table/agendas
- Gathering of women (this event)
- Sport as a common group—increases opportunities to experience other cultures, e.g., at the NAHC (National Aboriginal Hockey Championships), the kids experience new cultures
- Promising practice—AWG (Arctic Winter Games) alumni program in Yellowknife Games
- Ambassador program for major games/activities shows that you can participate at all levels

- Aboriginal women are very “resilient”
- Increased activity—need to have activity, not just talk about it, e.g., walking program, “move the nation”, includes ages 18 to 73 years
- Promising practice—traveling coaches (university students) in NWT—progressive experience for both coaches and athletes
- Resourceful
- Multi-tasking in our roles, e.g., as mothers and people with jobs
- Family-oriented
- Education

### *Barriers*

- Limited chances to become instructors (need to have elite coaching certification to be a community based coaching certifier)
- Top level of most organizations are male
- Politics - it’s about who you know
- Personal choices, e.g., family, children come first
- Travel away from home to train/develop
- Bringing instructors to small communities rarely happens
- ACM facilitators—who decides who delivers courses and where?
- Lack of transfer of knowledge of facilitators
- CAAWS leadership development courses need to be more culturally appropriate
- ASC leadership is not representative of Aboriginal/women—it is First Nations heavy
- Capacity issues—not many opportunities to exercise your leadership
- Baseline data at all levels—what has happened to the NAIG data? How many are involved in mainstream/elite sport? Make this public.
- Lateral violence at the community level
- Non-recognition of accomplishments
- Busy lives prevent us from maybe even doing the basics, e.g., eating properly
- Demographical location—isolated communities

### *Opportunities*

- Lots of ACM facilitators are women; women teaching women is a good approach, but need resources and need to avoid politics of selection (few women are chosen to facilitate)
- Coaching Association of Canada (CAC) has a self-identifier for coaches—maybe apply this to athletes
- Link young certified coaches with programs and youth

- Are certified coaches actually still coaching outside of NAIG or a specific event?
- Existing programs—add traditional sport component, cultural camps and sport activities such as snowsnake to programs
- Family focus on sports, e.g., fitness night, pot luck at the event
- Add mandated cultural component to opening/closing ceremonies
- Use alumni to speak to youth—increases interest and participation in major games/events
- Need opportunities to share best practices
- Becoming more aware of lateral violence
- Partner with health organizations because they have the money and resources
- The national focus is on active living, so we could develop programs to encourage women to participate this way too

## Enhanced Capacity

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### *Strengths*

- There are existing people who have excelled in the development of sport and recreation and are female
- Bilateral agreements help with building capacity
- Non-Aboriginal champions supporting Aboriginal sport development
- Networking/partnerships outside of sport system, e.g., health, justice, education, service groups, RCMP
- Everyone is coming from a community base
- Opportunities to provide cultural awareness, ACM (Aboriginal Coaching Manual) as part of a training model
- Recreation leadership
- P/T body (person) to aid P/TASBs (Provincial/Territorial Aboriginal Sport Bodies) and provide money to help support the PTASBs
- Partnering with other organizations that work with grassroots, e.g., Métis local, RPA, tribal councils, friendship centres, health clinics, schools, city, government
- Mentor/role models—volunteers, parents, jobs, peer teaching (leaders)
- Existing leaders that are here today; need a history of leaders
- Growing healthy populations through education, e.g., “youth with potential”
- Include high level female athletes in capacity training

### *Barriers*

- Not enough opportunities for mentorship/leadership—we need to build on that
- Difficulty with recruitment/retention of volunteers
- Sustainability of resources; lack of political will from our Aboriginal leadership to recognize sport and recreation as a priority
- Transient employees/leadership (high turnover)
- Male dominated perspectives at the decision-making table
- Geography—north versus south issues
- Many political/territorial organizations in the province
- How can you measure results? What tools can you use? Who determines what results are achievable? Who sets targets and tools to evaluate?
- How does government deal with “soft racism” (not the overt kind)?
- Volunteer burnout
- Priorities, e.g., building balance, develop support system
- Funding—access, facilities, fees
- Men—top positions and unwillingness to include others, especially women; there’s a reason why the term is spelled “MENTality”
- Roles/responsibilities—different expectations of women volunteers—one man=coach versus one woman=coach, manager, fundraiser, etc.

### *Opportunities*

- There is an existing system that we can build on
- Many women with experience out there; can be a resource pool
- This forum provides an opportunity for networking/sharing; hopefully, it’s the first of many to come
- Aboriginal Sport Policy as a tool to gain access; Sport Canada is supportive; can see this with getting money to have this gathering
- Opportunity to build upon the existing bilaterals to include opportunities/programs for Aboriginal women
- Academic work is beneficial to increase capacity, e.g., do research and build research capacity
- Registration forms—people can self-identify; helps with tracking numbers
- Research/develop frameworks for participants at various levels
- Strong relationship between sport body and government, e.g., Yukon model
- CAAWS as a resource to share best practices
- Increase/enhance education; building confidence/safety; knowing where to go to get education

- Peer teaching/role model; engaging youth to give back; creating youth leaders
- Active and healthy lifestyle choices; need to promote
- Sharing of knowledge, ideas, stories for support

## Enhanced Interaction

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### *Strengths*

- Existing networks
- Government recognition (e.g., Yukon, Saskatchewan)
- Gathering of Aboriginal women regionally, locally, nationally
- Holistic approach to physical activity
- Youth model includes sport, recreation, play, fitness; a new model for sport would include all genders and all ages
- Knowledge sharing goes both ways; experts are in the communities and people share information
- CAAWS—mentorship program
- Courage
- Consultation/collaboration
- Other governance models exist and can be adapted/considered
- Personal boundaries for how people treat you
- Need to network/collaborate/create partnerships; value network; “consultation” is not necessarily a great word because it doesn’t always lead to collaboration or partnership; need to know what it means with each initiative, e.g., Gen7, CAAWS, bilaterals for sport development
- Mentorship/leadership development—can learn from other organizations (e.g., see CAAWS board structure approach for mentoring people)
- Traditional Games at the Canada Games—good example of seeing Aboriginal culture for athletes and coaches, managers; Canada Games involvement is a good experience too
- Network among women—interaction to build the Aboriginal sport and recreation system
- It’s okay to feel a certain way—emotional—it gives us strength and means we’re still doing good work

### *Barriers*

- Technology, e.g., internet, mapping (knowing where to find things)
- Protocol
- Racism between Aboriginal people, and between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people
- Chauvinism

- Nepotism
- Communication, e.g., lack of openness and honesty
- Membership—who are organizations accountable to?
- Power versus fear about who gets to discuss things
- Fear of safety
- Silencing
- Power—levels, authority
- Collaboration among Aboriginal peoples
- Lateral violence by women
- Policies—not adhering to them, lack of respect for them
- Unwritten rules
- Labeling
- Check “emotions/feelings” at the door
- Ability to “depersonalize”
- Idea that gender equity is everyone’s responsibility, not just women, e.g., developing and implementing a policy for maternity leave should be undertaken by the organization as a whole
- How to connect, communicate and interact with partnerships
- In trying to create an environment for interaction, challenges include multiple identities (wearing different ‘hats’)—am I a woman or Aboriginal today—which perspective counts? It’s not so much about accomplishments, but about experiences; women need to talk more about which ‘hat’ to wear; this is the importance of sharing experiences; so see sharing as a strength, because interaction is more than just being at the table, more than just about business
- Governance structures—interaction as a governance issue—could also relate to the meaningful inclusion of elders and male/female balance
- Have government and funders accept this understanding of interaction, look to universities for potential models for interaction (e.g., Trent University, and how elders are incorporated in that system)
- Women are front line workers in many cases, but men are the ones in leadership roles and are thus removed from the impact of their decisions. This means we need gender balance at the tables because women bring that community focus, to balance out the “community focus”. No women at the table? Should lead us to ask how much of a real community focus is being represented here (e.g., Camperville needs transportation for sport development, but not supported by leaders)
- Women’s budget justifications continually questioned; seems like the same scrutiny is not applied to other budget areas, supporting activities valued more by males. And if they challenge your budget justifications, they question your leadership capabilities

- How to measure and celebrate our successes? Evaluating our successes is critical. Too much emphasis on elite athlete development, for example, seen with lack of social indicators for the NAIG, where emphasis is often on performance indicators for sport development

### *Opportunities*

- Increase information systems to share information
- Research support and collaboration
- Sharing resources, e.g., grants
- Asking for help and being willing to admit “I don’t know”
- Delegating for healthiness
- Experiential learning
- “Been there-done that” opportunities; sharing to decrease isolation
- Increased capacity—“Like minds think alike”
- Cultural equity, e.g., include female elders to provide balance at tables
- Legal rights; what are our legal rights in the non-profit sector in sport; assist with education/ understanding
- Holistic approach—social determinants of health
- Involvement in the profession of sports increases positive, healthy lifestyle choices
- Recognition of importance from grassroots/playground to podium
- Voice—sport/women’s forums, policy/program development
- Networking and sharing that information
- Interaction means something different at the personal level—we have a “disjuncture” between what happens with higher ups and people at the community level; need to discuss these differences in understanding, and come to a new understanding of what they could mean
- Send a strong message to government/non-profit sector to change the way programs are funded
- There is a need to emphasize, maintain the “community connection”—walking your talk
- Look to other countries for information and look to other organizations for ideas and assistance, e.g., the International Working Group on Women and Sport, International Olympic Committee (IOC) Conference on Women and Sport

## Enhanced Excellence

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### *Strengths*

- Support, e.g., family, economics (money)
- Overcoming barriers/obstacles with determination and strength

- Strong technical supports, e.g., P/TSOs (Provincial/Territorial Sport Organizations), ASC (Aboriginal Sport Circle), mainstream supports
- Coaches who believe in you and have high expectations is critical
- Involvement from an early age
- Spiritual/cultural connections, e.g., lacrosse, Dene games, Inuit games
- Natural athletes, e.g., TEST (Territorial Experimental Ski Training)
- Having support, e.g., family, community
- Build on sport experiences and make them positive
- Celebration/acknowledgement of elders
- Your best is “excellence”, e.g., longevity regarding involvement in sport
- Looking for role models inside your family and community as opposed to the National Hockey League (for example)
- Dialogue around evaluation

### *Barriers*

- Increased technology: TV, internet, ipods, music—negative images being circulated in the media—tied to body issues—so that kids don’t do sport
- Peer pressure
- Athletes on the way to elite levels don’t qualify yet for support
- Selection process for teams/programs not always transparent/evident/fair
- Access/knowledge of competition is frequently shaped by who you know, not how good you are
- Demographics, e.g., single parents, low income, literacy
- Attitude about success, e.g., belief that they are not good enough, lack confidence/self esteem
- Being alone
- Financial cost, e.g., travel and equipment
- Self-efficacy (self worth)
- Lack of visible Aboriginal role models/pride in them and sharing their stories
- Biases within communities/jealousy

### *Opportunities*

- Traditional/cultural sports to be recognized nationally/internationally
- Training for leaders
- Large gatherings—gather information on what contributed to success, e.g., research

## Highlights

These highlights are the main themes that enable Aboriginal women to, and constrain them from getting involved and staying involved in sport and recreation.<sup>2</sup> The data from the Roundtable was divided into two main sections: ‘strengths’ (which includes opportunities) and ‘barriers and challenges’. A brief introduction to each section is provided.

### Strengths (including Opportunities)

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When the idea for this project was first developed and the proposal was submitted to Sport Canada, the authors used the term ‘strengths’ to refer to ‘things that the women are already doing well’ in sport and recreation. As so often happens in workshops such as this, the concept was expanded upon and came to mean something slightly different from its original intent. At the Roundtable, the delegates used the term ‘strengths’ to identify qualities/conditions that positively impact their involvement as women, as well as to identify qualities/conditions that positively impact the involvement of all Aboriginal people in sport and recreation. This collective orientation speaks to the fact that sometimes it is not possible for the delegates to distinguish between issues that directly impact their lives as women, and issues that impact their roles in their community. Opportunities were also identified by the delegates, which referred to existing conditions that could be tapped into to further enhance existing strengths. As such, in this report we use the term ‘strengths’ (which includes opportunities) to refer to:

- things that make us strong;
- things we are already doing well; and
- things that already exist in the sport and recreation system that we can use to further develop the Aboriginal and Canadian sport and recreation systems.

### Strengths: Themes

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All of the themes that emerged at the Roundtable are identified here. A brief description of each is also provided. The themes are listed according to priority (i.e., the first theme is the most important existing strength, the second theme is the second most important existing strength, etc.):

1. support/capacity
  - people and organizations that we turn to for assistance and/or advice
  - facilities, resources, research that advance our goals and interests
2. networking
  - formal opportunities to meet
3. role models / mentors
  - opportunities to learn from others

4. “strong women”
  - belief that women are committed, hard working, multi-taskers, courageous
5. “culture”
  - beliefs, practices, knowledges that makes us proud to be Aboriginal
6. demographics
  - economics, geography, family structure, education
7. governance
  - accountability, transparency, communication

## Barriers and Challenges

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Similar to the discussion on strengths, the delegates addressed the issue of barriers and challenges sometimes as an issue pertinent only to Aboriginal women in sport and recreation, while other times addressing it as an issue that impacts all Aboriginal people. More themes were identified for the barriers and challenges section than for the section on strengths; this can be viewed as the broader cultural phenomenon in which people are frequently encouraged to identify the deficits so as to remedy them (thus, we become accustomed to identifying the deficits more so than the strengths), as well as the definite possibility that there are currently more weaknesses than strengths for Aboriginal women in sport and recreation (hence their ‘disadvantaged’ position within the Aboriginal and Canadian sport and recreation system). In this section ‘barriers and challenges’ refers to:

- things that stand in our way;
- things that weaken our strengths; and
- things that the environment lacks but are necessary for our advancement

## Barriers and Challenges: Themes

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All of the themes that emerged at the Roundtable are identified here. A brief description of each is provided. The themes are listed according to priority (i.e., first theme is the most significant barrier and challenge, the second theme is the second most significant barrier and challenge, etc.):

1. support/capacity
  - lack people and organizations that we turn to for assistance and/or advice
  - insufficient facilities, resources, research that advances our goals and interests
2. sexism/patriarchy/nepotism
  - attitude of superiority by the opposite sex
  - devaluing female contributions
  - hard to break into the old boys network
3. governance
  - lack of accountability, transparency, communication

4. lateral violence
  - jealousy among Aboriginal people
  - bringing other women down
5. demographics
  - economics, geography, family structure, education
6. networking
  - not enough formal opportunities to meet
7. “culture”
  - beliefs, practices, knowledges that makes us proud to be Aboriginal
8. self-esteem
  - lack confidence, courage, faith in abilities
9. role models/mentors
  - few people from whom to learn
10. racism
  - prejudice concerning ‘race’ among Aboriginal people
  - prejudice concerning ‘race’ from non-Aboriginal people

## Overview of Highlights

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The purpose of this analysis is to render the complex environments in which Aboriginal women are located more understandable so that issues pertinent to Aboriginal women in sport and recreation can be addressed in a more systematic fashion. Suggestions about the types of projects that can help Aboriginal women to ‘move forward’ in their chosen fields are outlined in the Next Steps section.

First, it is significant that the delegates identified ‘support and capacity’ development as the most important strength (something that ‘makes them strong’) as well as the leading barrier and challenge (something that ‘weakens their strength’). This means that while Aboriginal women have some supports in place and some opportunities for capacity development, the struggle to find, gain access to, and maintain appropriate supports and opportunities for capacity development remains a critical challenge that limits their ongoing involvement in sport and recreation. This issue is similar to the situation that has long been identified and is still being addressed by primarily non-Aboriginal women and their male allies in sport and recreation through the hosting of meetings, conferences and workshops that focus on issues specific to ‘women’ in sport (these issues are most often centered on the experiences of the white, middle/upper class, English-speaking women in sport and recreation). To be sure, a similar movement to create spaces for dialogue and action among Aboriginal people has been underway in sport and recreation for some time now in Canada. These gathering spaces, whether among non-Aboriginal women and/or Aboriginal men, are a paradox in that they can be a source of inspiration and support for Aboriginal women, while at the same time

being isolating and unproductive. In these spaces, issues pertinent to Aboriginal women are routinely positioned as secondary to the issues of the larger group (i.e., it is not a woman's issue, it is an Aboriginal issue); Aboriginal women are made the object of attention (i.e., they are being talked about); and potential solutions are tackled from a disempowering deficit paradigm (i.e., these are the problems we think Aboriginal women face and these are the solutions). Another common factor that often contributes to feelings of isolation is the relatively small number of Aboriginal people at these gatherings, as well as their marginal position within the overall structure of the event (i.e., Aboriginal women are more often than not attendees at non-Aboriginal events where Aboriginal issues might be discussed, as opposed to being collaborators or organizers of a discussion, session, workshop, etc.). These insights reveal where potential interventions, and in some cases major shifts, would enhance the involvement of Aboriginal women in sport and recreation.

Second, it is important to note that all of the issues are interconnected. This is another way of talking about sport and recreation from a 'holistic' point of view. For example, women need and value 'support' and 'networking' opportunities (two key strengths) to discuss, analyze, and strategize how to work through the problems associated with 'sexism/patriarchy/nepotism' as well as issues of 'governance' (two key challenges). The list of themes can thus be used as a guideline for better understanding what Aboriginal women in sport and recreation currently need and want.

Third, as mentioned in the Prelude, many of the themes are relevant to discussions beyond those specific to Aboriginal women, and action devoted to many of these items could benefit Aboriginal people in sport and recreation more generally, as well as enhance the broader Canadian sport and recreation system. For example, the delegates were very attentive to issues of governance, and how a lack of governance is a barrier to Aboriginal women as well as Aboriginal men. When



the process for making decisions is not transparent, such as issues regarding job security, professional responsibilities and advancement within an organization, or when established processes are ignored because they are deemed to be either too costly, time consuming, or not important, the people who are negatively impacted by these decisions might lose trust in the ability of the group or organization to deal effectively with issues deemed to be important by the less powerful segments of the population.



Consequently they might be less willing to engage in or stay committed to sport and recreation in the future. Worse yet, their careers in sport and recreation could be jeopardized. Many Aboriginal women have experienced the negative consequences of poor governance, and have thus identified this issue as an important element needing immediate attention. From this perspective, governance is not specifically a woman's issue; instead, it is an issue that the women are tackling by publicly acknowledging it as a problem to be addressed.

Finally, in addition to broader concerns identified by the delegates, there were issues raised that were specific to Aboriginal women. Admittedly, this is a complex issue, and one that still needs to be addressed through dialogue, reflection, analysis and action because we (authors and delegates) do not yet have a clear understanding of where Aboriginal female interests intersect with and diverge from the interests of other Canadian women in sport and recreation. To be sure, some of the ways that

Aboriginal female interests intersect with those of the broader Canadian female population are obvious. For example, the delegates repeatedly identified how leadership positions are generally occupied by men. Usually, the further away women are from the centre of power the more vulnerable they are to decisions made by men, who may unwittingly place less emphasis on and devalue the ideas, concerns, and issues deemed to be important by women. For example, there is a need for organizations (and not just the women within these organizations) to construct and implement maternity leave packages for employees.

The significance of these themes is clear when one considers the issues from an applied perspective; that is, the possibilities and challenges faced by Aboriginal women who have made sport and recreation a career choice and then tried to advance as professionals within the system. Most of the delegates at the National Roundtable have done paid work at one point or another in sport and/or recreation, so issues related to professional development and career advancement were frequently part of our discussions.

## Next Steps

This final section describes some of the main activities delegates believe will help to engage, retain, and increase the involvement of Aboriginal women in sport and recreation in Canada. Although it could be viewed as a list of recommendations on how to assist Aboriginal women in this area of social life, from the viewpoint of the delegates, this section is better understood as a template for an action plan. An action plan is more concrete than a list of recommendations, since it is developed with the intent of responding to a particular issue in a coordinated and sustained fashion. As such, the following activities could be integrated into a larger action plan that aims to facilitate Aboriginal participation in sport and recreation in Canada. Furthermore, the delegates also recognized the importance of taking a lead role in the development and implementation of an ‘action plan’ and thus devised this section with the following intent:

- to form a collective among Aboriginal women to carry out projects that can be achieved realistically by the group;
- to enlist the help of researchers to collect and analyze data that is deemed important by the collective; and
- to establish strong linkages with allied organizations that can assist the collective in addressing its needs and goals for sport and recreation.

The activities were sorted according to the four goals (enhanced participation, enhanced capacity, enhanced interaction and enhanced excellence) of the [Canadian Sport Policy](#) (2002) and [Aboriginal Sport Policy](#). See [Appendix B](#) for a description of the four goals, and how they relate to Aboriginal people in sport and recreation in Canada. The four goals are used to structure the final section of the report; this framework renders visible those areas that need to be enhanced the most and how this can be done according to the perspectives of the delegates. Most of the activities fit under more than one goal, with ‘enhanced participation’ and ‘enhanced interaction’ emerging as the goals that have the most potential to assist Aboriginal women in sport and recreation. Though not unimportant, ‘enhanced capacity’ and ‘enhanced excellence’ appear to be less crucial avenues for action at the present moment. The activities are not listed in any particular order, as it was felt that the context would determine the relative importance.

### Enhanced Participation

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**Use the ADR system to address problems in the workplace and volunteer environments.** The Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) system was proposed as a potential structure that could be expanded to mediate issues of discrimination, workplace harassment, and unfair labor practices. While addressing this issue could assist a wide range of people who work and/or volunteer in the non-profit sport sector, it holds particular relevance for Aboriginal women who face multiple challenges if they want to succeed in this environment.<sup>3</sup> For example, they must contend with the fact

that most of the decision-making positions in sport are still dominated by men and are increasingly being populated by non-Aboriginal women, resulting in environments where Aboriginal women have very few Aboriginal female colleagues to turn to for support and advice. Furthermore, they have to deal with a sense of male entitlement that is particularly strong in Aboriginal sport and which results in environments that are often unwelcoming and unhealthy. In short, Aboriginal women find it very challenging to ‘get ahead’ as workers and volunteers in sport, and see the ADR system as one possible way to help address this issue.

## Enhanced Participation / Interaction

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**Increase opportunities for dialogue and action.** Meetings, symposia, and conferences that are hosted by organizations in the sport and recreation sector could all make a more determined effort to include sessions that tackle issues pertinent to Aboriginal people, in particular issues pertinent to Aboriginal girls and women, as well as provide meaningful opportunities for Aboriginal women to get involved as presenters and/or organizers of sessions. Several sites come immediately to mind including the North American Indigenous Games Education Symposia, conferences hosted by the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association and its regional affiliates, the Sport Leadership



Conference hosted annually by the Coaching Association of Canada, and the various World Conferences on Women and Sport, Recreation, and Physical Education that are hosted periodically in Canada. These forums are excellent opportunities for Aboriginal women to identify and discuss ongoing and new issues, strategize ways to address those issues, and share information with the public. These venues are also excellent opportunities for addressing issues of knowledge exchange and improving communication among various stakeholders. Using popular sport terminology, this type of exchange and communication could be understood as ‘team building’ exercises, wherein learning takes place on all sides and which could lead to more productive partnerships in sport and recreation. For example, rarely are issues pertinent to elite Aboriginal athletes explored and addressed with Aboriginal female athletes in mind. Most often, issues are addressed from a ‘neutral’ male-gendered

lens. While there are numerous successful Aboriginal female athletes, coaches, organizers, administrators, and board of directors in Canada, the attached list of delegates in [Appendix C](#) is also a good

starting point for people who wish to create meaningful spaces for Aboriginal women in their meetings, symposia and/or conferences as presenters, session organizers, workshop hosts, etc.

**Construct opportunities for information sharing and support through the internet.** The need for a website devoted specifically to Aboriginal sport and recreation has been repeatedly identified by Aboriginal people and their allies as an efficient and relatively cost-effective way to significantly enhance information sharing (e.g., where to apply for funding for sport and recreation programs), knowledge transfer (e.g., how to host an event, or findings from research) and support between community people, practitioners, stakeholders, and researchers (e.g., who is doing what, where and how in sport and recreation).<sup>4</sup> Part of this site could be devoted to issues specifically impacting Aboriginal girls and women. At the present moment, no such site exists and this lack of information and awareness frustrates public efforts to increase participation among Aboriginal people, including Aboriginal girls and women. For example, the website could include a mapping ‘role model’ project that not only shows where Aboriginal female athletes, coaches, administrators, and board of directors are located in Canada, but it could also include short biographies describing their involvement in sport and recreation (e.g., education, training, lived experience, how they got involved, struggles and triumphs); a list of Aboriginal women who possess particular skill sets and training in sport and recreation (e.g., Aboriginal Coaching Manual training, CAAWS leadership training, research training, workshop skills, fundraising and hosting expertise, etc.) and who would welcome opportunities to work with organizations in their areas of expertise (e.g., host workshops, involvement as board of directors, research and evaluation, etc.); and a list of resources on issues pertinent to Aboriginal women in sport and recreation. This information could go a long way in countering the relative invisibility of Aboriginal women in sport and recreation. And, as an active awareness program highlighting the activities of Aboriginal women who are already in the system, this information might encourage more Aboriginal girls and women to get involved and stay involved because they can see and learn from people with experience.



etc.); and a list of resources on issues pertinent to Aboriginal women in sport and recreation. This information could go a long way in countering the relative invisibility of Aboriginal women in sport and recreation. And, as an active awareness program highlighting the activities of Aboriginal women who are already in the system, this information might encourage more Aboriginal girls and women to get involved and stay involved because they can see and learn from people with experience.

**Build in ‘family activities’ at the NAIG.** More family activities at the North American Indigenous Games would better reflect the ‘family’ and ‘community’ atmosphere that make the NAIG an important cultural event for the Indigenous people of Canada and the United States. The fact that

there are no established performance criteria to compete at the Games, as well as the number of family and friends who often travel great distances to watch and support the competitors, demonstrates how the NAIG is more than a sporting event for Indigenous people. Adding family activities would help make the NAIG more welcoming for people who do not 'do' competitive sport, including many Aboriginal girls and women, and is in keeping with the 'community' orientation that many Aboriginal women value and think should be the basis for sports participation. This action also addresses the fact that many Aboriginal women are still the primary caregivers in their families; if Aboriginal women are to get involved and stay involved in sport and recreation, it is important to consider how sport could be organized differently to facilitate their involvement. Ideas about how family activities could be incorporated into the NAIG could be generated through brainstorming sessions with Aboriginal women throughout Canada, through face-to-face meetings and through the aforementioned website.

### Enhanced Participation / Interaction / Capacity

**Diversify the content and format of the CAAWS leadership and training programs.** The CAAWS leadership and training programs have benefited many women in sport throughout the country. However, these programs are based on a set of values and experiences that do not necessarily correspond to the values and experiences of women who have operated on the margins of sport and recreation in Canada. The leadership and training programs could be enhanced and offered to a wider range of women, including Aboriginal women, who view these activities as vital opportunities to develop and enhance their leadership potential and expertise, gain the confidence to move into and remain in leadership positions, and form crucial networks of support. First, the modules need to be prioritized and reviewed, with the goal being to identify the areas that need to be shifted so that its form and content is 'culturally relevant' to Aboriginal women. Then leadership and training workshops for Aboriginal women need to be hosted throughout Canada. These workshops could be tied to meetings, symposia, and conferences where Aboriginal women are already gathered. Last but not least, Aboriginal women should have opportunities to facilitate workshops dominated by non-Aboriginal populations; this will help facilitate cross-cultural interaction and learning, as well as ameliorate the ghettoization of Aboriginal women in sport and recreation (e.g., Aboriginal women can only facilitate workshops for Aboriginal women, whereas non-Aboriginal women are viewed as 'neutral' hosts and can thus facilitate any environment).

### Enhanced Participation / Capacity

**Provide decision-making opportunities for emergent leaders.** Bring emergent Aboriginal leaders as observers to regional meetings in Aboriginal sport and recreation. Furthermore, a space for these new leaders should also be made at the national level with the Aboriginal Sport Circle. In all instances, it is important to achieve a balance between supporting male and female representatives

by using various strategies to do so (e.g., support a female representative one year, and a male the next). This activity is viewed as an important step towards ensuring the ongoing development of Aboriginal sport and recreation in Canada, as well as a vital opportunity for the established generation to take a step back so that they can interact with, learn from, and support the next generation of thinkers and leaders.

**Succession planning.** The issue of governance needs to be addressed in a meaningful way, at all levels in Aboriginal sport and recreation. A good place to start is with the established Provincial and Territories Aboriginal Sport Bodies, and the national Aboriginal Sport Circle, where turnover in membership is too high and the terms for leadership too long, resulting in environments that do not function as well as they could if a different model was in place. The CAAWS governance model is one possible, highly attractive option; here, the executive council (incoming Chair, Chair, past-Chair) operates in two-year terms, with no possible chance of renewal. Once the past-Chair term is completed, that person is no longer part of the Board of Directors, and instead, becomes a ‘friend of CAAWS’ and is kept in the loop through emails, and can be called on for specific tasks and activities. Each board member can remain with the board for a maximum of three two-year terms, at which point they must either move into an executive position or leave the board. This model is attractive because it fosters change, new thinking, energy, and capacity development, and avoids burnout, complacency, and tensions that are associated with static leadership.

## Enhanced Participation / Excellence

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**Create awareness of Aboriginal women in sport and recreation through public promotion campaigns.** Create posters of Aboriginal women in sport. For example, this could be done in partnership with CAAWS, and distributed at sport, recreation, education and health conferences (biographical information could be included, as well as information about existing funding initiatives for sport, recreation and health for Aboriginal girls and women,). This would be a ‘role model’ initiative, with a focus on providing visible evidence of what Aboriginal women are currently doing in sport and recreation.

## Appendix A Agenda

### DAY 1

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

8:30-9:00 **Welcome and Introductions**

**Sandra:** to open, welcome, lead introductions, and explain federal context

- What is Sport Canada looking/hoping for with this gathering? Link to *Sport Canada's Policy on Aboriginal Peoples' Participation in Sport*, which provides our framework of organizing sessions by the four goals: participation, capacity, interaction, excellence

**Janice:** build on welcome with background and purpose

- beginning the process of building an effective approach to providing for the needs of Aboriginal women in sport in Canada
- follow-up phone interviews to extend the symposium information will be conducted; this is to be discussed more fully at the Roundtable
- following a process so that the delegates know each other much better after the symposium; strengths perspective taken

**Vicky:** build on welcome and purpose with overview of weekend

### **Enhanced Participation (Vicky as facilitator)**

9:00-9:45 **Three panel presentations (10 min each)**

Each presenter to address 2 of the following, from one or multiple perspectives (athletes, supporters, coaches, officials, administrators, etc):

- current strengths/promising practices in sport/physical activity for Aboriginal women
- opportunities available that could be tapped
- personal challenges for Aboriginal women in getting/staying involved in sport
- challenges created by factors outside of the women themselves for getting/staying involved in sport

All presentations will be audio taped to assist the writing of the final report.

This information will remain with Janice, and not be shared or distributed.

Unless specified otherwise, only a summary of delegate comments will be put into the report.

9:45-10:30 **Small group discussions**

- three groups of 4 or 5 people, will vary each session
- each group will be facilitated by one of the panelists for this session
- each group will expand on the four questions raised above, building on the presentations by adding in their own experiences
- flip charts and markers will be available to record comments/ideas

- 10:30-10:45 **Snack Break**
- 10:45-12:00 **Large plenary and session wrap-up**
- Sa member of each group will present their points for each of the four questions
  - use flip charts to record info

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

**Enhanced Capacity (Vicky as facilitator)**

- 1:00-1:45 **Three panel presentations (10 min each)**  
Each presenter to address 2 of the following, from one or multiple perspectives (athletes, supporters, coaches, officials, administrators, etc.):
- current strengths/promising practices in sport/physical activity for Aboriginal women
  - opportunities available that could be tapped
  - personal challenges for Aboriginal women in getting/staying involved in sport
  - challenges created by factors outside of the women themselves for getting/staying involved in sport
  - presentations will be audio taped and summarized for final report
- 1:45-2:30 **Small group discussions**
- three groups of 4 or 5 people, will vary each session
  - each group will be facilitated by one of the panelists for this session
  - each group will expand on the four questions raised above, building on the presentations by adding in their own experiences as well)
  - flip charts and markers will be available to record comments/ideas
- 2:30-2:45 **Snack Break**
- 2:45-4:00 **Large plenary and session wrap-up**
- a member of each group will present their points for each of the four questions
  - use flip charts to record info
  - discussion on follow up phone interviews with delegates to extend input during symposium
- 6:30 **Celebration and Supper**  
dinner at Bailey's Restaurant sponsored by the HLHP Research Institute and the Faculty of Kinesiology and Recreation Management

## DAY 2

8:30-9:00      **Breakfast**

### **Enhanced Interaction (Vicky as facilitator)**

9:00-9:45      **Three panel presentations (10 min each)**

Each presenter to address 2 of the following, from one or multiple perspectives (athletes, supporters, coaches, officials, administrators, etc.):

- current strengths/promising practices in sport/physical activity for Aboriginal women
- opportunities available that could be tapped
- personal challenges for Aboriginal women in getting/staying involved in sport
- challenges created by factors outside of the women themselves for getting/staying involved in sport
- presentations will be audio taped and summarized for final report

9:45-10:30      **Small group discussions**

- three groups of 4 or 5 people, will vary each session
- each group will be facilitated by one of the panelists for this session
- each group will expand on the four questions raised above, building on the presentations by adding in their own experiences
- flip charts and markers will be available to record comments/ideas

10:30-10:45      **Snack Break**

10:45-12:00      **Large plenary and session wrap-up**

- a member of each group will present their points for each of the four questions
- use flip charts to record info

12:00-1:00      **Lunch**

### **Enhanced Excellence (Vicky as facilitator)**

1:00-1:45      **Three panel presentations (10 min each)**

Each presenter to address 2 of the following, from one or multiple perspectives (athletes, supporters, coaches, officials, administrators, etc.):

- current strengths/promising practices in sport/physical activity for Aboriginal women
- opportunities available that could be tapped
- personal challenges for Aboriginal women in getting/staying involved in sport
- challenges created by factors outside of the women themselves for getting/staying involved in sport
- presentations will be audio taped and summarized for final report

- 1:45-2:30 **Small group discussions**
- three groups of 4 or 5 people, will vary each session
  - each group will be facilitated by one of the panelists for this session
  - each group will expand on the four questions raised above, building on the presentations by adding in their own experiences as well)
  - flip charts and markers will be available to record comments/ideas
- 2:30-2:45 **Snack Break**
- 2:45-4:00 **Large plenary and session wrap-up**
- a member of each group will present their points for each of the four questions
  - use flip charts to record info
- 6:30? **Supper (TBD)**
- Janice and Vicky to summarize findings from flip charts for plenary the next day

### **DAY 3**

- 8:00-8:30 **Breakfast**
- 8:30-10:00 **Large plenary**
- overview of feedback based on the four goals/four questions
  - identify what you consider to be the most important feedback points in working towards a more effective system for Aboriginal women in sport
  - add in additional points we didn't cover in the overview if appropriate
  - strategizing about next steps at the breakfast on the last morning
  - **Janice and Vicky** will summarize those priorities as a group in the final report; draft to be sent to delegates for review and input before sent to Sport Canada as final
- 10:00-11:00 **Closing and wrap-up**
- **Janice and Vicky** to say 'thanks'
  - Delegates have final words

## Appendix B

### The Four Goals of the *Aboriginal Sport Policy*

These descriptions have been pulled directly from the [Aboriginal Sport Policy](#):

#### 1. Enhanced Participation (Day 1, morning)

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Sport Canada is committed to involving a significantly higher proportion of Aboriginal Peoples in quality sport activities at all levels and in all forms of participation. This work will be guided by the belief that:

- a. Aboriginal Peoples must have equitable access to programs, services, resources and infrastructure to fully participate in the Canadian sport system and to increase opportunities for Aboriginal Peoples participation in sport;
- b. Programs, services and resources must recognize the unique needs of all Aboriginal populations, including youth, girls and women and persons with a disability;
- c. Activities involving Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples and uniquely Aboriginal activities can both play a positive role in enhancing the sport participation of Aboriginal Peoples. It may be more appropriate for Aboriginal athletes, coaches and officials to be enrolled in programs specifically intended for Aboriginal Peoples for skill, social, cultural and/or sport development reasons;
- d. The NAIG, the Arctic Winter Games, and other similar events provide competitive opportunities for Aboriginal athletes in an environment that reflects Aboriginal cultures, values and lifestyles. They offer Aboriginal Peoples an opportunity to share their cultural values with the broader Canadian public and internationally. Participation in these Games enhances the development and delivery of sport programs to Aboriginal Peoples from the community to national levels;
- e. Increasing the participation of Aboriginal youth in all forms of sport will help them address social and economic challenges and provide constructive and optimistic prospects for their development.

#### 2. Enhanced Capacity (Day 1, afternoon)

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Sport Canada will strive to enhance the capacity of individuals, communities and organizations in support of Aboriginal sport in Canada. This work will be guided by the belief that:

- a. The needs of Aboriginal Peoples in sport must be identified, promoted and supported in policies and programs that are developed in consultation with the Aboriginal sport community;
- b. Aboriginal communities need appropriate facilities and resources to provide quality, sustained, and culturally appropriate sport programs to their members;
- c. There is a need to increase the number and the capacity of Aboriginal leaders (i.e., coaches, officials, administrators, and volunteers) to strengthen sport within Aboriginal communities and to provide athletes and sport leaders as role models for youth;

- d. Coaching and coaching development are important for the continued growth of Aboriginal Peoples' participation in sport. It is crucial that current and potential coaches of Aboriginal athletes have equitable access to programs and resources to help develop and perfect their skills. Aboriginal coaching materials positively contribute to enhancing coaching in Canadian sport;
- e. Research, data collection and progress evaluation are essential to increasing participation and excellence in sport for Aboriginal Peoples;
- f. All levels of program delivery must be culturally sensitive, flexible and adaptive to the diverse needs of Aboriginal populations.

### 3. Enhanced Interaction (Day 2, morning)

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Sport Canada will strive to develop and strengthen cooperation and collaboration in sport amongst governments, Aboriginal Peoples, sport organizations and interested stakeholders. This work will be guided by the belief that:

- a. Enhancing Aboriginal Peoples' participation in sport can make significant contributions to advancing the Government of Canada's objectives. Building stronger relations with other federal departments to identify and collectively address shared objectives through sport will maximize results;
- b. Enhancing Aboriginal Peoples' participation in sport can make significant contributions to advancing the objectives of Provincial/Territorial and Aboriginal governments. Stronger relations among all Federal and Provincial/Territorial government departments and Aboriginal governments in support of Aboriginal Peoples' participation in sport will maximize individual efforts to the benefit of Aboriginal Peoples;
- c. National Sport Organizations, Provincial/Territorial Sport Organizations, Multisport Service Organizations and governments can play a key leadership role in developing new and stronger partnerships and programs with the Aboriginal sport community and other stakeholders to increase the participation of Aboriginal Peoples in sport;
- d. Supporting the full participation of Aboriginal Peoples in sport demonstrates Canada's values, celebrates Canadian culture, and exhibits to the world our commitment to human rights.

### 4. Enhanced Excellence (Day 2, afternoon)

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Sport Canada will strive to create an environment that welcomes an increasing number of qualified Aboriginal athletes, coaches and officials who reach National Sport Organization national team or high performance levels. This work will be guided by the belief that:

- a. Access to, and support for, quality and meaningful training, developmental and competitive opportunities are essential for the continued success and development of Aboriginal athletes, coaches and officials.

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## Endnotes

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- 1 See Appendix B for a description of the four goals, and how they relate to Aboriginal people in sport and recreation in Canada.
- 2 Due to time constraints at the Roundtable, the authors developed the themes after the gathering was over. To complete this part of the project, a basic thematic analysis was conducted on the list of “Goal Priorities” as identified in the previous section. First, the entire list of bullet points from each of the four goals was compiled together under two headings, ‘strengths’ and ‘barriers and challenges’. Then, the authors developed preliminary themes by using the constant comparative method to categorize the bullet points. The constant comparative method is a standard procedure used to organize and analyze qualitative data. Many bullet points often fit under more than one theme. The final themes were understood to be complete when all of bullet points were categorized in at least one theme. Lastly, the final list of themes were listed numerically; that is, the theme with the most bullet points was understood to be the most important theme, the theme with the second most bullet points the second most important theme, etc.
- 3 Issues of discrimination are particularly complex for Status Indians on reserves; they cannot address complaints through the *Canadian Charter of Human Rights* because Section 67 exempts this population from protection under the *Charter*. No research has been done on this area in sport and recreation; nevertheless, this legal loophole likely has serious implications for people who want to challenge inequities in sport in First Nations communities, as well as for program development and implementation on reserves.
- 4 For examples, see: Janice Forsyth and Vicky Paraschak (2006) *Aboriginal Sport Research Symposium: Final Report and Proceedings*. Ottawa, ON: Sport Canada; Vicky Paraschak, Janice Forsyth and Audrey Giles (2006) *Aboriginal Sport and Recreation: Ready to Learn and Lend*. Final report of the workshop hosted at the Canadian National Parks and Recreation Conference and Trade Show, Pre-Conference Session, Edmonton, AB; Vicky Paraschak and Janice Forsyth, eds., (2003) *2002 North American Indigenous Games Research Symposium Proceedings*, Winnipeg, MB: University of Manitoba.