

“IT’S A BIG ADJUSTMENT COMING FROM THE RESERVE TO LIVING IN A TOTALLY
DIFFERENT SOCIETY”

EXPLORING THE WELL-BEING OF FIRST NATIONS ATHLETES PLAYING SPORT IN
AN URBAN MAINSTREAM CONTEXT

A Thesis Submitted to the College of
Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies in
Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Science
in the College of Kinesiology
University of Saskatchewan
Saskatoon

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ABSTRACT

Indigenous athletes who are interested in pursuing sport at elite levels and seeking broader opportunities in Canada often relocate from their home communities to urban “mainstream” centres. Their reasons for relocating may include seeking elite facilities and coaching expertise as well as accessing more competitive sport environments. Adjusting to a mainstream context may involve navigating challenges such as racism and discrimination, isolation from family, friends, and community, and a dismissed cultural identity. The purpose of this study was to explore the psychological well-being and multicultural adjustment experiences of Indigenous athletes who relocated to pursue sport in mainstream context. The experiences of two Indigenous female athletes who relocated from a rural First Nations community to pursue hockey in an urban centre were explored using a qualitative case study. Grounded in an Indigenous research framework, culturally relevant methods of conversational group interviews and photovoice reflections were adopted to hear stories from six participants: the two athletes, the athletes’ parents, and the athletes’ billets. A mixed method approach was used to analyze the data which included thematic analysis, presenting story, and present self-in-relations. Five main categories were created to explain how the athletes adjusted and strove to flourish in their new environment including: (1) Having an interconnected web of support; (2) Managing emotional challenges; (3) Being comfortable in the new environment; (4) Progressing while dealing with setbacks; and, (5) Maintaining a cultural connection to their home community. These findings suggest that Indigenous athletes who relocate from their home communities require a robust support network and nurturing environment to flourish in an urban mainstream context. Further collaborative research is needed to develop and implement initiatives that would facilitate the factors identified as critical to the well-being of Indigenous athletes when they relocate.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I Thank:

My Participants: I am extremely grateful to my participants who embarked on this research journey with me. I appreciate the lifelong relationships built and am honoured that they entrusted with me their stories. I have been truly inspired and thanks for gifting me your wealth of knowledges.

My Supervisor: I thank my supervisor Dr. Leah Ferguson for being an excellent mentor, teacher and friend. I was constantly challenged by Dr. Ferguson each step of this Masters journey to think and when I felt I had done my best I was always pushed to even improve on that. Thank you, Dr. Ferguson, for gifting me so much of your time, wealth of knowledge and for always caring about my well-being. I appreciate you.

My Advisors: I thank my committee advisors Dr. Jennifer Poudrier and Dr. Heather Foulds and my external examiner Dr. Ashleigh Androsoff for their significant contributions made to this research. I appreciate all the insights, constructive feedback and guidance provided. Thank you all for pushing me to think critically each step of the way.

My Family and Lifelong Friends: I would like to acknowledge the unyielding support and encouragement I got from my family and lifelong friends; Sonia, Hugh, Junior, Xavier, Carissa, Camia, Kerry, Sherieka, Kimone, Nardia and Shani. I thank you all from the bottom of my heart.

SHE Lab Group: Thanks to all for the brainstorming sessions, the constructive feedback, sharing of resources and friendships that helped me have a successful Masters experience.

Funding Organizations: This research was made possible through funding from the Saskatchewan Health Research Foundation and College of Kinesiology Graduate Scholarship.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my mother Sonia and my daughter Carissa. You have both been pillars of support and motivation for me throughout this process.

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CHAPTER 1

1.1 INTRODUCTION

In Canada, the participation of Indigenous¹ peoples in sport is limited by a host of factors including financial barriers, cultural insensitivity, and travel distance to facilities, as well as racism and discrimination (Canadian Heritage, 2005; McHugh, Coppola, Holt & Anderson, 2015; Schinke et al., 2010). Some of these challenges are heightened when Indigenous athletes pursue sports in the mainstream context. Moreover, how well Indigenous athletes do in mainstream sport is at least partially determined by the extent to which they can adjust to the mainstream culture (Schinke et al., 2010). Further, the complexities involved with Indigenous athletes pursuing sport in a mainstream context may have implications on their psychological functioning, as life challenges and transitions impact well-being (Ryff, 1989). This would suggest that the multicultural adjustment experiences of athletes who move across borders to pursue mainstream sports may play a pivotal role in defining Indigenous athletes' concept of well-being.

Understanding psychological well-being within the sport context has become increasingly important as it has the potential to address barriers to athletes performing to their highest potential (Lundqvist, 2011). Cross-cultural studies have also indicated that athletes' perceptions of well-being are influenced by their distinct cultural norms and vary across cultures (Ryan & Deci, 2001). This suggests that perceptions of well-being for Indigenous athletes may

¹ The term Indigenous peoples refers to individuals who are descendants of the original inhabitants of North America and encompasses three groups of peoples: First Nations, Métis, and Inuit (Canadian Heritage, 2005) and also refers to the same group of people classified as Aborigines.

differ from non-Indigenous athletes. Furthermore, in the context of relocating, Indigenous athletes who relocate from remote or rural communities to play sports may hold unique perceptions of well-being. Supporting Indigenous athletes to achieve their true potential in the context of relocating to pursue mainstream sports in urban settings requires getting an in-depth understanding of the experiences of the athletes in that situation. As such, this qualitative case study explored the psychological well-being and multicultural adjustment experiences of Indigenous athletes who relocated to pursue sport in mainstream context.

1.1.1 Self-Situating

In doing qualitative research it is important to identify one's positionality because it allows people to see the subjective lens through which the research was done and the motivations of the researcher (Kovach, 2009; Sparkes & Brett, 2014). In an effort to contextualize the personal lens through which I embarked on this research, I would like to introduce how I came to be involved in this research project by situating myself in relations to this research.

I am from the beautiful island of Jamaica. My roots lie in the Ashanti tribe of Ghana. This I know through stories passed down from generation to generation from the side of my family who were Maroons.² Slavery and colonization brought my ancestors to the Caribbean. My cultural identity as a Jamaican of African descent is strongly influenced by the Ashanti way of knowing. As a Jamaican, it has been engrained in us from the earliest of ages that there are two paths to success: sports or education. As much as my father was an athlete and hoped his children took that path, I went the route of education. I completed a Bachelor of Science in

² The Jamaican Maroons are often described as enslaved Africans and persons of noticeable African descent who ran away or escaped from their masters or owners to acquire and preserve their freedom (The National Library of Jamaica, n.d.)

Psychology at the University of the West Indies and a Master's in Business Administration from Nova Southeastern University. After working in banking for 12 years I came to the realization that I needed to do more to contribute to the development of my people. I decided to change career paths and pursue my passion for Sport Psychology.

Until twenty years ago, Jamaican athletes looking to pursue track and field beyond the high school level had to go the United States to do so. A typical path for Jamaican athletes would normally require getting a scholarship to attend a college/university and relocating to the United States, as the requisite world-class training facilities and sport expertise were not locally available. The Jamaican athletes painted a grim picture of their border-crossing experiences. In her study exploring the experiences and challenges of former Jamaican student athletes, Rankine (2014) found that acculturation (i.e., the transition from one's own culture to a new culture; Tibbert, Andersen & Morris, 2015) and racial discrimination had negative impacts on Jamaican student athletes in the United States. The Jamaican athletes' stories demonstrated that their athletic success was hindered by their migration experiences. Although the athletes showed promising signs of sporting competence in their high school years, their stories indicated that progress in pursuing a career in sport was hindered by the struggles they faced when relocating to a different cultural environment. A lot of Jamaica's talented athletes did not progress beyond the college/university level due to the challenges they encountered in a cultural environment that was different from the Jamaican context that they were familiar with (Rankine, 2014). In the end, the athletes' full potential was not realized.

The negative experiences and challenges of Jamaican student athletes abroad eventually led to the establishment of local track and field clubs in Jamaica of similar standards to those in the United States (Patterson, 2016). Jamaicans now had access not only to world-class sporting

facilities and coach expertise, but they could train in their own cultural context. Jamaican athletes no longer had to relocate if they were interested in pursuing a career in track and field. The advantages and level of comfort that the Jamaican athletes obtain from training in their home country and culture helps them to grow and flourish in their athletic career. This has contributed remarkably to Jamaicans becoming a dominant force globally in track and field and the establishment of the country into what many have come to dub as the “sprint factory” in popular media (Moore, 2015). The achievements of athletes such as Usain Bolt, Shelly-Ann Fraser Pryce, and Asafa Powell, to name a few, are world renowned and show how important cultural context is to flourishing³ in sport.

The stories of Jamaican track and field athletes performing better in their own cultural context is not unique to Jamaica. The same is evident in countries such as Australia, which is known as the swimming capital of the world and labeled as an expert culture in swimming (Light & Rockwell, 2005; Ryba, Haapanen, Mosek, & Ng, 2012), and Brazil, which has soccer as a core feature of Brazilian’s cultural identity and is the most successful country in international men’s soccer (Sen Nag, 2016). For Jamaican track and field athletes, Australian swimmers, and Brazilian soccer players, the ideal situation for athletes performing at elite levels in these sports would be to remain in their home culture while pursuing their sport aspirations. This is not the reality for many elite athletes, however, as not all cultural environments afford athletes the same opportunities to perform to their true potential.

³ Flourishing is a central focus in the field of positive psychology where is it defined as fulfilling one’s true potential or functioning optimally (Dodge, Daley, Huyton & Sanders, 2012). This current researcher recognizes the colonial lens that this concept of flourishing is derived from. There is however evidence of previous work involving Indigenous peoples (Ferguson et al., 2018; Tuhawai Smith, 2016) utilizing the term flourishing, which helped to inform the use of the term in this current research.

I have a keen interest in wanting to help athletes from a marginalized culture pursuing sports in a mainstream culture achieve their highest potential. I am now pursuing a Masters in Kinesiology specializing in Sports Psychology at the University of Saskatchewan. The more I pursue academia and understand the impact of colonization the more I understand who I am in this world. I am understanding how the experiences of the Indigenous people living in Canada bear a lot of resemblance to the experiences of my people. I am particularly interested in doing Indigenous research because like Jamaicans, Indigenous people living in Canada interested in a career in sports often must pursue this in a cultural context that favours a Eurocentric⁴ way of thinking, ideals and values.

As colonized peoples, I can identify with having had our cultural identity stripped and our achievements and success being tied to how well we do in a mainstream cultural context. I have seen athletes not achieve their highest potential because of the challenges they experienced with adapting to a mainstream culture. The challenges I believe will be similar for persons from other marginalized cultures pursuing sports in mainstream. Therefore, in relocating to Canada to pursue my Masters in Kinesiology I have the privilege to work with a supervisor whose research interests included Indigenous athletes' well-being. In reviewing the projects my supervisor was undertaking, I was particularly drawn to one project that was exploring the meanings of flourishing for Indigenous athletes. This area really interests me, and I decided to get involved in that project with the intention of specifically exploring the well-being of Indigenous athletes when they relocate from their rural or remote communities to play sports in an urban mainstream context. This interest led to this research project for my thesis. Using the Canadian mainstream

⁴ Eurocentric is defined as reflecting a tendency to interpret the world in terms of European or Anglo-American values and experiences (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2018).

context as a reference point and drawing on a decolonizing theoretical lens (Kovach, 2009), this research explores the multicultural adjustment experiences and psychological well-being of Indigenous athletes pursuing sports in that context.

1.1.2 Significance of Study

Despite the numerous benefits of sports participation, the number of persons actively playing sports in Canada is declining, with only 26% of persons over the age of 15 years old actively participating in sports (Canadian Heritage⁵, 2013). This is a 17% decline over the past 18 years. In the Canadian sports system, which comprises organizations geared towards providing Canadians access to sports at all levels, the groups that are underrepresented include Indigenous peoples, people with disabilities, visible minorities, and women (Canadian Heritage, 2005). Although there are limited statistics documenting the extent of Indigenous peoples' participation in sport, there is some evidence to suggest that the sport participation rate for Indigenous people in Canada is even lower than the national average (Forsyth, 2014). This is concerning given that the Indigenous demographic is the fastest growing demographic in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2018). Self-reported physical activity data found in the Canadian Community Health survey indicated that 57.2% of Indigenous adults and 65.8% of Indigenous youth were not meeting the recommended physical activity levels required to achieve associated health benefits (Lavallée & Lévesque, 2012). Indigenous peoples' low levels of physical activity and participation in sports is at least partially attributed to the Indigenous population falling in the lowest income and educational attainment bracket (Canadian Heritage, 2005; Gates, Hanning, Gates, Stephens, Fehst & Tsuji, 2016; Hedayat, Murchison & Foulds, 2018). Indigenous peoples

⁵ Canadian Heritage is the department in the Government of Canada responsible for sport policies and programs.

living on reserve or rural areas are further challenged by reduced access to adequate sport infrastructure and coaching expertise and often must relocate to urban centers if they are interested in pursuing sports at elite levels (Canadian Heritage, 2005). This relocation entails moving across cultural borders to a mainstream context to pursue their sport aspirations as well as seek out more favourable opportunities (Blodgett & Schinke, 2015).

Mainstream refers to the “ideas, attitudes, or activities that are shared by most people and regarded as normal or conventional” (Oxford Dictionary, 2018). According to cultural sport psychology researchers in Canada, Blodgett et al. (2014), mainstream is categorized as predominantly favouring a Caucasian, Western, and middle-class way of thinking whereby groups that do not identify with this dominant culture are often marginalized. Mainstream sports and the rules governing mainstream sports continue to be dominated by and give preference to a Eurocentric way of knowing (Blodgett et al., 2014).

When Indigenous athletes choose to pursue mainstream sports, they must adjust to mainstream culture to achieve their goals. This adjustment involves navigating through several challenges such as racism and discrimination, as well as isolation from family, friends, and community (Blodgett et al., 2014). Already a marginalized group, adjustment challenges in sport tend to marginalize Indigenous athletes further by discounting their cultural identity as they seek to excel in sports. These challenges can prevent Indigenous athletes from successfully adjusting to mainstream culture and can result in negative effects such as social and cultural isolation, mental fatigue, hindered growth and development, and premature discontinuation of sports (Blodgett & Schinke, 2015). These factors contribute to Indigenous athletes’ declining participation in sports, which may contribute to the increasing disparity in the health status of Indigenous peoples in Canada.

The problems highlighted here, namely the underrepresentation of Indigenous peoples in sport and the challenges faced by Indigenous athletes navigating mainstream cultural environment, suggest that Indigenous peoples may be at a disadvantage as it relates to attaining satisfaction in life and achieving psychological well-being as outcomes of physical activity and sport. It is important to explore and better understand the extent to which the psychological well-being of Indigenous athletes pursuing sport in mainstream context has been impacted by their experiences adjusting to that cultural context.

1.1.3 Overview

This qualitative case study grounded in an Indigenous research framework and a cultural sport psychology theoretical approach, explored the psychological well-being of two female sibling Indigenous athletes who had recently relocated from a rural reserve in Canada to play sport in an urban context. This research is part of a larger research project by Ferguson et al. (2018) exploring flourishing in Indigenous athletes. The first phase of this larger research project explored the meaning of flourishing for Indigenous athletes, where the findings identified unique meanings of flourishing held by Indigenous athletes. The review of the literature, shown in Chapter 2, suggested that there has been little research done to understand the psychological well-being of Indigenous athletes. Ferguson et al. (2018) was one of few known studies that aimed to understand well-being from Indigenous athletes' perspective. There are bodies of literature indicating that perceptions of well-being are situational and there are cultural variations of the perceptions of well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2001; Lundqvist, 2011). To the best of my knowledge no previous research has explored Indigenous athletes' well-being in the context of relocating and adjusting. The review of the literature also highlights that previous research exploring the experiences of Indigenous athletes who relocate from reserves to play sports in a

mainstream context focused on understanding the athletes' experiences in the context of adapting to the new environment. The literature review also suggests that the vast body of literature available to understanding adjustment experiences has been created from a colonial perspective.

This current research set out to gain a rich account and in-depth understanding of the experiences and well-being of two sibling athletes from a western province in Canada who relocated from a rural reserve to pursue hockey in an urban centre. Being mindful that I am a non-Indigenous researcher doing Indigenous research I wanted to ensure that this research was carried out in a culturally respectful and authentic way. I therefore strove to achieve authenticity in this research by applying a decolonizing lens throughout the research process. This meant being mindful of ethical and cultural protocols, as well as working collaboratively with the participants, community advisors, and advisory committee which was comprised of Indigenous persons. Throughout this research we have strove to maintain a decolonizing approach by incorporating three key principles: (a) understanding the power dimensions in research and ensuring that participants and their community are fully engaged in the generation of knowledge; (b) ensuring the research benefits and does not harm any Indigenous participants or communities; and, (c) ensuring the research accurately reflects the participants and community values (Johnson, Poudrier, Foulds & Ferguson, in press).

To achieve the rich insight that was sought, stories were heard from the two athletes, their parents, and their billets using two methods conducive to storytelling: conversational group interviews and reflexive photography. Using photographs and direct quotes shared by the participants, five categories were created to organize the stories gathered: (1) Having an interconnected web of support; (2) Managing emotional challenges; (3) Progressing while

dealing with setbacks; (4) Being comfortable in the new environment; and (5) Maintaining a cultural connection to their home community.

The findings from this research made significant contributions to understanding the concept of well-being from Indigenous athletes' perspective. This research also highlighted important factors that come into play when Indigenous athletes relocate from rural communities to pursue sports in urban mainstream context. These factors include the complexities involved with coping with emotional stressors, which entailed the use of various coping strategies namely communal coping, positive reframing, rationalizing and distraction. Another factor this research identified as significant to Indigenous athletes' well-being when they relocate is having a sense of belonging with both their home and host communities. The importance of sense of belonging highlighted in this research supports the concept of "multiple embeddedness" identified in previous literature. Additionally, the interconnected web of support available to the athletes was also a significant factor in understanding the athletes' multicultural adjustment experiences and their well-being. The strong support groups were observed to play an integral role in maintaining the athletes' cultural identity, assisted the athletes to cope with their emotional challenges, and facilitated the athletes adjusting comfortably to the new environment.

Overall, this research took a significant step forward in understanding what mechanisms need to be in place to foster Indigenous athletes achieving their true potential when they relocate from their home community to pursue sports. Furthermore, this research expands on the limited research available in the field of sports psychology that takes a culture-focused approach to understand athletes' experiences in sports.

1.2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In order to better understand the experiences of Indigenous athletes playing sport in mainstream context a review of the literature must draw upon existing knowledge that relates to Indigenous athletes in mainstream sports, as well as highlight gaps in the literature. In this review, I will address literatures that are relevant to the experiences and psychological well-being of Indigenous athletes pursuing sports in a mainstream cultural context. These main themes of the literature include: the health benefits of sport; the relationship between culture and sports; the theoretical lens of cultural sports psychology; adjusting to sports in mainstream cultural context; and Indigenous athletes' psychological well-being.

1.2.1 Health Benefits of Sports

Sport has been an integral part of society and can be traced as far back as ancient Greece. Sport is defined as socially sanctioned physical activity that is played in an organized, disciplined, and competitive manner (McKibbin, 2011). The wholistic⁶ benefits (physical, psychological, and social) that can be derived from sport participation paint a compelling picture for the significance of sport (American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance, 2013; Tremblay, Shephard, & Brawley, 2007). In reviewing the body of evidence that informed Canada's Physical Activity Guidelines, the main benefits associated with physical activity, and by extension sports, include: balancing cardiovascular functioning, improving physical fitness such as aerobic fitness and muscle performance, and maximizing lifelong fitness and physical well-being (Tremblay et al., 2007). Additional desirable outcomes derived from physical activity participation include mental health benefits such as improved cognitive functioning and reduced depression and anxiety (Tremblay et al., 2007). Positive sport

⁶ "Wholistic is spelt with a 'w' to signify the concept of wholeness when the four areas of health-physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual-are in balance" (Lavallée, & Lévesque, 2012, p.208).

participation, as noted by sport psychology researchers Ferguson, Kowalski, Mack, and Sabiston (2014), also promotes psychological well-being through enhanced self-esteem, self-concept, and emotional health. At the youth level, the benefits of sport are also linked to better academic achievement and protection against negative influences that can lead to delinquency and drug abuse (Pate, Trost, Levin & Dowda, 2000). The social benefits of sports include enhanced social awareness, social skills, interpersonal relationships, and social interactions (Canadian Heritage, 2013). The wholistic benefits that are derived from sport participation point to its contribution to longevity and living healthy and fulfilled lives.

Despite the benefits of sport, evidence suggests that Indigenous populations in Canada are not accruing some of these benefits with their declining levels of physical activity participation (Canadian Heritage, 2013; Forsyth, 2014). The Canadian government issued its first-ever *Canadian Sport Policy* in 2002 (Canadian Heritage, 2002), with a vision to create a dynamic sport environment that allows all Canadians to engage in and enjoy sport to the extent of their abilities and interests (Bloom et al., 2005). With this vision in mind the extent to which “all” Canadians have been able to enjoy sport to their full potential is worth exploring. Canada is a culturally diverse society, with its multiculturalism stemming mainly from migration and its fast-growing Indigenous population (Statistics Canada, 2011). Therefore, having a vision to engage all Canadians in sport participation would entail considering the vast cultural differences that exist. This suggests that examining the relationship between culture and sports is warranted when doing research on the Canada sporting context.

1.2.2 Culture and Sports

There has been extensive scholarly work supporting the role that culture plays in a person’s identity. Culture is defined as the shared knowledge, values, traditions, and beliefs of a

group of people acquired through the process of socialization (Fischer, 2009). Culture can have an influence in the sport domain as various sociocultural structures play a role in shaping athletes' style of play, training patterns, as well as the relationship between athletes and coaches, among others (Ryba et al., 2012). The cultural context that a person is socialized in also shapes their identity as an athlete. In Indigenous cultures, for example, physical activities such as game, play, and sport have traditionally held a significant role in the lives of Indigenous people contributing to both personal and community well-being (Canadian Heritage, 2005).

Within Indigenous cultures, sport is often seen as having medicinal value, healing potential, and is essential to promoting wholistic health (Lavallée & Lévesque, 2012). Sport is also seen as part of community and Indigenous people view sport as a medium for being connected. Sport is used in Indigenous communities as a vehicle to preserve and pass on cultural traditions such as teaching community values (Lavallée & Lévesque, 2012). In their work exploring the meanings of community in the context of sport to urban Indigenous youth, sport psychology researchers McHugh et al. (2015) interviewed 18 Indigenous youth from Edmonton, Alberta, where the concept of “sport is community” was vividly highlighted. It was noted that sport and community were intertwined, as sport kept the Indigenous community connected by bringing community members together, reinforcing community values, and fostering a sense of belonging.

The relationship between sport and culture varies across society. Sport is an expression and symbol of the cultural identity of persons (Brandão & Vieira, 2013; McGannon & Smith, 2015; Ryba & Stambulova, 2013). Given the relationship between culture and sport, there is evidence supporting the view that athletes perform better and are more successful in their sports career when they pursue sport within their own culture. Jamaican track and field athletes,

Australian swimmers, and Brazilian soccer players are but a few of the examples that emphasize that athletes perform better in their own culture. There is evidence showing that when taken out of the Brazilian cultural context, soccer players often struggle to transition and cope in a new cultural context. In their work looking at the careers of athletes in Brazil, sport psychology researchers Brandão and Vieira (2013) highlighted how the lack of preparation for cultural transition hindered athletes' career progression when athletes attempted to pursue a career outside of Brazil. In 2010, for example, the Brazilian Football Confederation reported that of all the professional soccer players who were sent to foreign teams, 66% returned to Brazil before completing their first season with the foreign club (Brandão & Vieira, 2013). These athletes were sent to clubs in Europe and North America and indicated that they had challenges adapting to the new culture, including adjusting to the climate, training patterns, playing culture, diet, and language. Finding it difficult to make the transition to a new cultural context prompted the decision of many athletes to return home. Most of the Brazilians pursuing a career in soccer preferred to remain in their own cultural context rather than navigate through the intricacies of playing in a foreign land (Brandão & Vieira, 2013).

The significance of cultural context on athletes' well-being is also evident for Indigenous athletes in Canada, with evidence supporting Indigenous athletes thriving when they participate in sports in their own cultural context (Canadian Heritage, 2005). The increasing success of Indigenous sporting events such as the North American Indigenous Games (NAIG) and the Arctic Winter Games is evidence of Indigenous athletes doing well in their own cultural context (Giles, 2015; Heine, 2013). The NAIG, for example, "provide aboriginal youth from Canada and the United States of America the opportunity to showcase their heritage, history and culture through a variety of sport and cultural events. It helps to promote the wholistic concepts of

physical, mental, cultural, and spiritual growth of individuals” (Canadian Heritage, 2005, p.13). An assessment of the social impact of the 2014 NAIG done by research consultants, Praxis Research Strategy, indicated that participating in the games impacted the athletes’ physical, social, and psychological well-being (Praxis, 2014). The impact on athletes’ physical well-being was linked to how their physical health was enhanced because of participating in the games. Of the athletes who were surveyed, 96% reported that they intended to maintain healthy lifestyle choices after the games, such as remaining physically active and maintaining healthy diets including eating less junk food and more fruit and drinking more water. Stories from athlete interviews and focus groups also indicated that the participants in the games maintained healthier lifestyle when compared to non-participants.

The NAIG athletes also identified larger social health outcomes associated with their participation in the games (Praxis, 2014). Athlete participants noted that the games helped them make meaningful lifestyle choices as well as create opportunities for them to pursue some of their goals. For example, 70% of the respondents intended to pursue tertiary education while others welcomed the opportunity to display their skills to obtain contracts from scouts to pursue a career in sport (Praxis, 2014). Some of the social skills athletes noted that they obtained from participating in the games include self-discipline, leadership, and taking up positive life habits.

Additionally, the NAIG can be viewed as an avenue for enhancing the psychological well-being of athlete participants. Athletes who participated in the games indicated that their self-confidence, self-worth, and pride as an Indigenous athlete were enhanced by their participation in the games (Praxis, 2014). They also noted that the cultural elements of the games as well as being around other Indigenous athletes made them feel comfortable in that environment when compared to mainstream sporting events. This suggests that athletes’ sense of

belonging was enhanced through their participation in the games. Overall, the NAIG afford Indigenous athletes the opportunity to play sports at high levels in a familiar cultural context, capitalizing on some of the benefits of sport participation while having a direct impact on their psychological well-being. An athlete's experience in the realm of sport is uniquely their own and is partly shaped by their cultural identity (Schinke et al., 2010). Therefore, when attempting to explore and understand athletes' experiences pursuing sports in mainstream context it is necessary to apply a culturally-appropriate lens.

1.2.3 Cultural Sport Psychology

Increasing globalization of society and advancements in technology and transportation have transitioned into the sport domain with sports participation now moving towards a globalized culture (Ryba et al., 2016). The cross-border movements of athletes have resulted in a shift from homogenous cultures to a blend of people from diverse cultural backgrounds, thereby creating multicultural situations. This shift has resulted in more diversity in the backgrounds of athletes pursuing sports in mainstream context. Despite sports taking on more of a global identity and multiculturalism becoming an even more integral component, there remains a broad-brush approach to athletes and sport with little focus being given to the diverse needs of athletes. The prevailing norms of the mainstream cultural context disregards the cultural identity of athletes from differing backgrounds (Blodgett et al., 2014).

The visible cultural diversity in sports is pushing the field of sport psychology to be a more culturally inclusive discipline (McGannon & Schinke, 2015). For example, Duda and Allison (1990) were one of the first researchers from the field of exercise and sport psychology to show the importance of applying a cultural lens to understanding human behaviour in sport psychology and pointed out the cultural void that existed in the field. A cultural lens, they

argued, was particularly needed in pluralist societies such as the United States, Canada, and England where there is a growing culturally diverse population with an increasingly culturally diverse sporting environment. Further, there is a growing body of evidence showing cultural variations in style of play, meanings, perceptions, values, and affective responses that different ethnic groups bring to sport that demands the need for applying a cultural lens to the field of sport psychology (Duda & Allison, 1990). There is also the need to highlight how mainstream culture perpetuates a belief system that marginalizes minority ethnic or racial groups (Duda & Allison, 1990). In a follow-up review of literature in sport and exercise psychology over a decade after Duda and Allison's call for more cultural inclusion in sport psychology, Ram, Starek, and Johnson (2004) found that there was still a gap in research exploring the experiences of individuals from diverse backgrounds. In 2003, the American Psychological Association created multicultural guidelines for conducting research in response to the need to make research more racially and culturally inclusive (American Psychological Association, 2003).

The call for cultural inclusivity has resulted in an emerging field of study referred to as cultural sport psychology that is premised on understanding the sociocultural challenges that hinder physical activity and sports performance (McGannon & Schinke, 2015). Using a sociocultural lens, this approach informs sport psychology research by drawing attention to marginalized cultures and inequalities in sports emphasizing concerns relating to social imbalance, social injustice, power, and privilege (McGannon & Schinke, 2015). As pointed out by McGannon and Schinke (2015), most of the existing work in sport psychology is based on a post-positivist approach that privileges the heterosexual, white, European, and middle-class male. Concepts frequently examined in sport psychology such as self-awareness and self-identity are largely influenced by a person's cultural identity and shape the psychological

realities that an individual's experiences. There is therefore a need to use a cultural lens to contextually understand the experiences and challenges of marginalized groups in mainstream sport.

In response to the calls for the field of sport psychology to be more culturally diverse, there is a growing body of research utilizing a cultural sport psychology approach. For example, Schinke and colleagues, as well as Blodgett and colleagues (Schinke et al., 2010; Schinke et al., 2012; Blodgett et al., 2014; Blodgett & Schinke, 2015), have explored the experiences of Indigenous athletes in Canada pursuing sports in mainstream cultural context from a cultural sport psychology perspective. This body of research addressed the multicultural adaptation challenges and strategies employed by Indigenous athletes when they leave their reserves or rural areas in Canada to pursue sport in urban settings. Further support for the relevance of using a sociocultural lens in sport psychology research has been demonstrated by researchers exploring athletes' cultural and transnational migration, and how athletes' transition across national borders in professional sports (e.g., Agergaard & Ryba, 2014; Ryba et al., 2016; Ryba et al., 2012). Agergaard and Ryba (2014) assessed the adaptation challenges of soccer players who moved from Africa and North America to play in the Scandinavian leagues, while Ryba et al. (2012) researched the acute adaptation experiences of Finnish swimmers who relocated to Australia for a short period of training. In another study, Ryba et al. (2016) addressed the cultural transition and career adaptability of professional and semi-professional athletes who moved across national borders to pursue a career in sport. A cultural sport psychology approach was also used by sport psychology scholars Si, Duan, Li, Zhang and Su (2015) to examine the role that sociocultural factors play in sport psychology services during the Olympic games in China. In keeping with the multicultural guidelines recommended by the American Psychological Association (2003),

these researchers advanced knowledge and understanding, and reliably reflected the experiences and worldviews of people from diverse cultural backgrounds participating in sports by taking a culture-centered approach to their research. The cultural diversity of athletes that are participating in sports would suggest that athletes are training and competing in increasingly unfamiliar contexts and adjusting to those contexts is a significant factor contributing to their well-being in that environment. This also is true for Indigenous athletes pursuing sports in the mainstream context.

1.2.4 Adjusting to Mainstream Culture

Not all Indigenous athletes have the privilege of remaining in their own cultural context to achieve their potential in sport, especially if they are interested in pursuing sports at the highest levels. For varying reasons, such as lack of facilities, seeking better coaching expertise, and accessing a more competitive environment and broader opportunities, some Indigenous athletes move across cultural or physical borders to play sports (Agergaard & Ryba, 2014; Blodgett & Schinke, 2015). For Indigenous athletes living in Canada, these cultural and physical borders may entail moving from a rural reserve to an urban centre.

As aspiring athletes seek out better opportunities to develop and progress in their athletic career, they can be faced with challenges to adopt a new culture and fit in while trying to perform at their potential. In their work looking at transnational migration and career transition in professional sports, cultural sport psychology researchers, Agergaard and Ryba (2014) looked at the stories of 18 migrant athletes from Africa and North America playing in the soccer premier league in Sweden, Denmark, and Norway. The athletes indicated that to make the transition successfully and to grow and become established athletes in their new environment, their initial

experiences involved acclimating to the style of play and the weather conditions, overcoming language barriers, and adapting to the new culture.

Understanding processes involved in transitioning and adjusting to a new cultural environment has been the cornerstone of the field of cross-cultural psychology research (Ward & Kennedy, 1994). Acculturation is one such process that cross-cultural psychology researchers (Berry, 2005; Ward & Kennedy, 1994) identified that can determine how well a person thrives in a new cultural context. Acculturation is the cultural and psychological changes that an individual undergoes as a result of interacting with individuals and groups from different cultures (Berry, 2005). Acculturation includes behavioural changes such as style of dress, learning the language, adjusting to the food, and making changes to one's cultural identity. The continuous cultural contact of different groups over a period of time results in individuals adapting to each other's culture (Berry, 2005). Adaptation, the end result of the acculturation process, entails gaining a sense of well-being and becoming successfully immersed into the host environment (Berry, 2005; Ryba et al., 2012).

The adaptation process begins with appraisal of the environment, followed by effective actions, and ends with an adaptive response (Schinke et al., 2012). To successfully adapt in a new environment, two outcomes must be achieved: psychological adaptation and sociocultural adaptation. These outcomes are derived from the Cultural Adaptation Model developed by Searle and Ward (1990) to understand the different forms that cultural adjustment takes. Psychological adaptation refers to positive affective responses such as feelings of well-being and satisfaction, while sociocultural adaptation refers to an individual's ability to "fit-in" and navigate one's way assuredly in a new cultural context (Ryba et al., 2012; Searle & Ward, 1990). Berry's (2005) model of understanding cultural migration and transition has been criticized for

taking a colonized and linear approach to explaining human behaviour (Bhatia, 2002; Rudmin, Wang & Castro, 2015).

Acculturation, according to cross-cultural psychology researcher Bhatia (2002), is not a simple linear process. Rather, it is a complex process that requires deliberate, active, and ongoing practices to comparatively understand the norms, values, and worldview of one's home community and the new cultural context in which an individual is being hosted (Blodgett et al., 2014). To explain the psychological complexities and cultural negotiations at play when persons relocate to a new country or cultural environment, Bhatia put forward a dialogic model for acculturation. Taking a post-colonial view, Bhatia's model for acculturation suggests that acculturation is not a universalistic perspective; adjusting to new cultural environment involves an interplay of the "cultural and political issues of race, gender, colonization and power between the host environment and the home community" (p. 59). The linear models suggest that successful acculturation involves integrating the ideology of a dominant mainstream culture. The dialogic model, however, suggests that acculturation entails forming a new identity (diasporic identity) which is in constant negotiation with the new culture and the home culture (Bhatia, 2002).

Social psychology researchers Rudmin et al. (2015), have also criticized modern research for the lack of understanding of the historical context of acculturation. The term acculturation originated from a colonial and discriminatory lens (Rudmin et al. 2015). In their critique of acculturation research, Rudmin et al. (2015) noted "the concept of acculturation arose in an era of ethnocentric arrogance, such that acculturation described inferior people being improved by acquiring the cultures of superior people" (p. 9). They further went on to argue that contemporary research into acculturation are faulty based on the limited attention that is given to

disempowering role that acculturation plays. Indigenous scholars have also posited that the decay of Indigenous peoples' culture is in part attributed to the process of acculturation (Tuhiwia Smith, 2016). Some research fields, health for example, have moved away from using acculturation and adaptation and have opted for more culturally inclusive terms such as cultural safety (Poudrier & Mac-Lean, 2009). A large body of the contemporary research in psychology remains influenced by the colonial meanings of acculturation and adaptation. For the purpose of this current research however I have opted to use the term cultural adjustment in exploring the experiences of Indigenous athletes relocating to play sports. My review of literature in this domain will, however, include bodies of work that used the terms acculturation and adaptation as they were the predominant terms used in those literature.

In reviewing some of the previous work on acculturation and adaptation, it was observed that that the body of research available to a large extent used the traditional linear and colonial models to explain cross-cultural adjustment. For example, there has been extensive literature indicating the importance and the effects of adapting to the cultural environment in which one is situated. Some of the positive effects of successfully adapting to a new culture include: being more psychologically adjusted and therefore experiencing lower levels of stress and depression; having a wider perspective and being more insightful; having increased cognitive flexibility such as being more empowered to problem solve; and, acquiring requisite social competencies (Baker, Soto, Perez & Lee, 2012; Jitmanowan, 2016). Psychology scholar Jitmanowan's (2016) work examining the effects of acculturation and adaptation on the psychological well-being of Thai migrants to the United States, showed that the perceptions of well-being for Thai migrants varied based on how well adapted the individuals were to the new culture. The Thai migrants who had acculturated in the United States environment were better psychologically adjusted and

experienced less psychological distress suggesting that a migrant person's psychological well-being in a multicultural context is associated with how well they adapt to the host culture.

There are contrary perspectives, however, suggesting that adapting to a second culture can have negative effects. In his study examining the history of theories on acculturation, Rudmin (2003) pointed out that there have been several theories put forward showing the negative impacts of acculturation. These negative impacts include: experiencing distress from having to compromise one's home culture and masking one's core personality; psychological conflicts when attempting to merge different social behaviours and norms; and, having feelings of guilt because of perceiving one's self as being inauthentic. Becoming bicultural also entails forming a new identity that sometimes can result in conflicts with values of family members and traditional home culture. What this means is that persons who move across cultures must engage in a balancing act to preserve their home cultural identity while adapting to the host culture to achieve healthy psychological functioning.

In the context of sports, having a balance between the negative and positive psychological effects of adaptation is also important to the psychological well-being of athletes who relocate. When athletes move across cultural and physical borders they engage in constant cultural negotiations (Blodgett et al., 2014). The changing dynamics of sports resulting from professionalization of sport, the known health benefits derived from sport participation, and emerging globalized sporting culture have made the area of sport one that has received extensive scholarly attention. Few studies have been done however, on cultural diversity in sport and developing insight into how the careers of marginalized sports participants can be enhanced (Blodgett & Schinke, 2015). Research on the adjustment experiences of athletes whose identities

are not within the dominant culture can help to facilitate a more inclusive sport context that does not marginalize participants with diverse cultural identities (Blodgett & Schinke, 2014).

When athletes move to a new context, the initial transition period normally brings with it a myriad of challenges for the athletes, especially for athletes with marginalized identities who have to adapt to a mainstream culture (Schinke et al., 2010). In their study examining the adaptation struggles of one of the marginalized groups in Canada, Indigenous athletes, cultural sports psychologists and coresearchers from the Indigenous sports community Schinke et al. (2010) identified challenges and strategies of Indigenous athletes from the community of Wikwemikong Unceded Indian Reserve as they pursued mainstream sport. Three themes were identified that captured the adaptation challenges experienced by the athletes from this community. The first theme was challenges pursuing sports outside of the community of Wikwemikong in advance of bicultural encounters. The distance the athletes in Schinke et al.'s study were from their home community impacted their sense of belonging, as the support the athletes received from family, friends, and their community was limited. The athletes also indicated that their pursuit of sport instilled a sense of pride in the community, with the home community being very encouraging of the athletes. The conflicting relationship with the home community when athletes leave may create anxiety for athletes who do not want to let down their community if they fail in their sport aspirations while at the same time feeling isolated from the community.

The second theme identified by Schinke et al. (2010) reflecting the adaptation experiences faced by Indigenous athletes from Wikwemikong was the challenging bicultural encounters in Canadian mainstream sports contexts. Within the context of mainstream sports, the athletes had to navigate through the politics governing mainstream sport that tend to favour

mainstream athletes. The political agendas of mainstream sports organizations sometimes impact the selection process and talented Indigenous athletes are overlooked because they are from outside the political district (Schinke et al., 2010). It is also taxing financially on athletes who had to travel long distances off the reserve to urban centres. The final theme captured by Schinke et al. was how the athletes responded to racism and discrimination. The athletes' adaptation challenges were compounded by racism from opponents, fans, and sport administrators. The athletes employed both passive responses (which included avoidance and ignoring of persons who were acting in a racist or discriminatory manner towards them) and active responses (which included confronting the persons and situation) to their racism encounters. Overall when Indigenous athletes relocate to pursue sports in the mainstream setting, adapting to the new environment is a challenging period for the athletes (Schinke et al., 2010).

A more recent study by Blodgett and Schinke (2015) further highlighted some of the challenges faced by Indigenous athletes when they relocate. Blodgett and Schinke explored the experiences of Indigenous athletes who leave their home reserves to pursue sport and academic careers in mainstream culture. The participants were 13 Indigenous athletes, ages 14-22 years, who had relocated from reserves across Canada and were playing mainstream hockey as well as pursuing education at secondary and post-secondary levels. Some of the struggles highlighted by athletes in this study included being around unfamiliar faces, dealing with a new culture, being far away from family, and facing backlash from their Indigenous community as they were seen as betraying the community by leaving. At the same time the athletes spoke of having to deal with negative stereotypes and culturally oppressing attitudes from the Euro-Canadian community. The prevailing perceived attitudes of the Euro-Canadian community members were

that Indigenous athletes were not capable of succeeding in the mainstream context (Blodgett & Schinke, 2015). One athlete in their study noted that the oppressing attitudes she encountered affected her self-confidence and how she performed in the initial stages of both her studies and in playing hockey. Her low self-confidence resulted in her grades declining, and she also got deselected from the team at tryouts because she did not perform to her potential. To overcome adaptation struggles and persist with mainstream sport, this particular athlete indicated that she focused her energies on working to challenge and disprove the negative stereotypes of Indigenous athletes. Adaptation experiences may leave athletes feeling like a failure, embarrassed, stressed, and depressed (Blodgett & Schinke, 2015). Athletes who persist despite challenging adaptation experiences do so mainly by being self-motivated to disprove negative stereotypes and thrive in the mainstream environment (Blodgett & Schinke, 2015).

Successfully adapting to a new environment is pivotal for athletes to achieve their goals and flourish in sport. Athletes can use five core strategies to successfully adapt to a new environment as identified by Fiske (2004). These adaptation strategies are: (1) *Understanding*, which is the knowledge athletes have of contextual or career challenges and appropriate responses for the given context; (2) *Controlling*, which is how athletes manage and respond to stressors by using effective coping and self-regulating techniques; (3) *Self-enhancement*, which is the athletes' commitment to continuously learn how to develop their skills and respond to the demands of their environment in order to accomplish their career goals; (4) *Belonging*, which entails building dependable relationships and positive social support within the context; and (5) *Trusting*, which involves having confidence in supportive others such as teammates and coaches to help with managing stressful situations (Fiske, 2004). The fourth and fifth adaptation strategies of belonging and trusting can be quite complex and emotionally intricate, and therefore

require a collaborative approach among many stakeholders invested in the environment such as athletes, coaches, teammates, sport scientists, and sport organizers (Schinke et al., 2012).

In their research looking at the strategies employed by the athletes from Wikwemikong community, Schinke et al. (2010), found that the athletes used the core adaptation strategies identified by Fiske (2004) to adjust to the mainstream environment. For example, by being assertive and not responding with anger to the racism they encountered, the athletes of Wikwemikong demonstrated the adaptation strategy of *control* over their environment. By remaining focused on their goals and personal development despite the challenges they encountered, the athletes also demonstrated the strategy of *self-enhancement*. Schinke et al.'s study indicate that the strategies Indigenous athletes use to adapt and overcome challenges faced when pursuing sports in mainstream were critical to the athletes' well-being and how well they adjusted in their new environment.

1.2.5 Indigenous Athletes and Psychological Well-being

“Aboriginal health” means not just the physical well-being of an individual but refers to the social, emotional and cultural well-being of the whole Community in which each individual is able to achieve their full potential as a human being thereby bringing about the total well-being of their Community”.

National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organization, 2006

The concept of well-being can be traced as far back to the great philosopher Aristotle articulated in his writings in 350 B.C. that a person's fundamental life goal is to achieve one's true potential (Ryff & Singer, 2008). According to Ryff (1989), striving to achieve one's true potential is essential to obtaining psychological well-being. Psychological well-being, also referred to as psychological flourishing according to Ryan and Deci (2001), has historically been defined along two differing traditions, hedonic well-being and eudaimonic well-being. Hedonic

well-being is reflective of positive affect, happiness, and satisfaction with life. Eudaimonic well-being is reflective of self-actualization and achieving one's full potential (Ryan & Deci, 2001; Ryff, 1989). There are six dimensions encompassing eudaimonic well-being representing what it means to be healthy, well, fully functioning, and flourishing: (1) Being autonomous, (2) Mastering one's environment, (3) Having continued feelings of growth and development, (4) Experiencing positive relations with others, (5) Having purpose and direction, and (6) Accepting of oneself (Ryff, 1989; Ryff & Singer, 2008). A person's self-evaluation of his or her well-being is situational, based on the person's current life situation and can be influenced by factors such as relationships, work, and social activities (Lundqvist, 2010; Ryff & Singer, 2008). This suggests that the definition of well-being or flourishing varies across contexts. Therefore, athletes may define well-being within the context of sports, which may differ from the general population's definition of well-being.

Understanding psychological well-being within the sport context has become increasingly important as it has the potential to address issues that are inhibitors to athletes performing to their highest potential (Lundqvist, 2010). In her work looking at the conceptual definitions of well-being in competitive athletes, Lundqvist (2010) found that the definitions were ambiguous and mainly derived from research looking at well-being in the general population. A suggestion from her review is that more qualitative studies need to be done to gain in-depth insight into well-being within the context of sport.

In their study exploring eudaimonic (psychological) well-being in young women athletes, Ferguson et al. (2014) highlighted athletes' reflections of what it means to flourish in sport. For the qualitative aspect of this mixed methods study, Ferguson et al. interviewed 11 women athletes (10 European-descent and one South Asian) from a variety of sports such as basketball,

hockey, rugby, softball, and volleyball who had competed at either local, provincial, national, regional, or international levels. The athletes identified aspects of flourishing in sport as being confident, being driven to improve oneself, and being goal-oriented. These aspects share resemblances with Ryff's (1989) dimensions of eudaimonic well-being (i.e., being autonomous, mastering one's environment, having continued feelings of growth and development, enjoying positive relations with others, having a sense of purpose and direction, and accepting oneself). The athletes expressed some reservations about environmental mastery as an aspect of flourishing in sport, as they felt they were not always in control of their sport environment (e.g., weather conditions, behaviours of their teammates or opponents); however, they noted that they always strive to achieve control and mastery over their behaviours in sport. Overall, the athletes agreed with the dimensions of eudaimonic well-being identified by Ryff (1989) as indicative of flourishing in sport.

Support for the framework of psychological flourishing in sport as including Ryff's (1989) six dimensions of eudaimonic well-being has been derived from the perspectives of Euro-Canadian athletes (Ferguson et al., 2014). Cultural psychology researchers Becker and Marecek (2008) have criticized the prevailing concepts of flourishing and its parent field, positive psychology, for being ideals based on North American middle-class values. The American individualistic concept of flourishing discounts cultural values that defers from the American ideology as well as overlooks the social inequalities and injustices that are perpetuated by this dominant culture (Becker & Marecek, 2008). This concept of flourishing and a large body of the research in this area have therefore been derived from a colonial lens. Well-being, according to Ryan and Deci (2001), is culturally rooted and cross-cultural studies have shown variations in the perception of well-being based on differences in cultural norms and values. Researchers are

beginning to explore what it means to flourish in sport from Indigenous athletes' perspective. In their research, Ferguson et al. (2018) looked at Indigenous women athletes' meanings and experiences of flourishing in sport. The study included 16 Indigenous women athletes from urban, rural, and reserve communities in a mid-Western province in Canada who have competed at varying levels of competition. The researchers created five themes, four deemed essential components and one considered to be a facilitator, of what it means to flourish in sport for Indigenous women athletes.

The first essential theme is multidimensional community support, which includes support from one's family, sport community, and the physical community in which they reside. Giving back and returning to support one's community was expressed as a unique element in the athletes' definition of flourishing in sport. The reciprocal support from these various facets of their community helps to create a sense of belonging for the athletes, which ties back to the importance of relationships to positive psychological functioning identified by Ryff (1989).

The second essential theme created by Ferguson et al. (2018) describing what flourishing in sport means to Indigenous women athletes is personal accomplishments. The athletes explained that they felt they were flourishing when they were setting and attaining individual and private goals. A clear distinction made by the athletes in Ferguson et al.'s study is that the athletes' meaning of personal accomplishment is based on achieving personal goals they sometimes kept privately and not according to objective standards that are set by coaches or competitions.

Flourishing in sport also means persistent growth for Indigenous women athletes, which is the third essential theme identified by the athletes in Ferguson et al.'s (2018) research. This entails persistently pursuing self-betterment and self-improvement, working hard, being focused

and committed, taking control, and persevering through adversity. Even though this can be loosely tied to the dimension of autonomy identified by Ryff (1989), the Indigenous athletes' constant pursuit of growth and development opportunities was a defining aspect of their meaning of flourishing. Self-betterment set the Indigenous athletes' meanings of flourishing apart from Ryff's model, as a unique feature was that the Indigenous athletes strove to be better even when they were doing well.

The fourth essential theme emerging from the Indigenous women athletes' meanings of flourishing in sport is achieving wholistic athletic excellence (Ferguson et al., 2018). Here, flourishing is based on the tenets of the medicine wheel and excelling means that all aspects of the person as a whole is being nurtured and doing well (i.e., the physical, intellectual, spiritual, and emotional). Flourishing in this instance may have a connection with the Indigenous athletes' overall satisfaction with life.

The final theme, observed as a facilitating component in Ferguson et al. (2018) of what it means to flourish from Indigenous women athletes' perspective, is receiving humble recognition. The recognitions included being acknowledged in sport, standing out as an athlete, making others proud, and being seen as a role model in their community. Tangible evidence of excellence such as trophies, banners, and medals were other forms of recognition identified by the athletes that reinforced their concepts of flourishing in sport. The Indigenous athletes accepted these recognitions with great humility and felt honored to be able share their achievements with their community.

The themes created describing what it means to flourish in sport from Indigenous women athletes' perspectives supported and built on the dimensions of psychological well-being identified by Ryff (1989). The themes also build on the meanings of flourishing in sport from

Euro-Canadian athletes' perspectives seen in Ferguson et al.'s (2014) work on eudaimonic well-being in sport. While there are some similarities in the meanings of flourishing identified by both Euro-Canadian and Indigenous athletes such as being driven and goal-oriented, there appear to be distinct and important differences. For example, being goal-oriented for the Indigenous athletes meant pursuing highly personal goals that onlookers may not be able to readily recognize. Interdependent community support is another unique aspect of flourishing in sport for Indigenous athletes that incorporates multiple forms of community as well as the receiving and giving of support. The qualities identified by the Indigenous women athletes suggest that their definition of flourishing is unique to them. Therefore, findings from research done looking at flourishing within non-Indigenous populations should not be generalized to Indigenous athletes.

1.2.6 Summary and Purpose

Previous researchers have examined the role of culture in sports and in achieving psychological well-being, as well as the adaptation challenges encountered by athletes when sport is played in a new cultural context. These bodies of literature highlight the challenges of Indigenous athletes pursuant of sporting careers in the mainstream. Furthermore, there is emerging research exploring what it means to flourish in sport for Indigenous athletes. Factors such as having multidimensional community support, achieving personal goals, persistent growth, realizing wholistic athletic excellence, and receiving humble recognitions have been identified as essential to Indigenous athletes' definition of psychological well-being in sport. When Indigenous athletes pursue sport in an unfamiliar cultural context, factors deemed as vital to the athletes' psychological well-being may impact as well as be impacted by how well they adjust to their new environment. To the best of my knowledge there has not been any research

specifically at how Indigenous athletes' flourishing in sport is influenced by their adjustment experiences in mainstream context.

The extent to which the experiences and well-being of Indigenous athletes pursuing mainstream sports are hindered or enhanced by adjusting to that cultural context is worth exploring. Factors such as Indigenous athletes being one of the marginalized and underrepresented groups in the Canadian sport context and the challenges faced by Indigenous athletes navigating the mainstream cultural environment suggest that Indigenous athletes are currently at a disadvantage to flourish in sport. There is a need to build on the work started by Schinke and colleagues (2010), Blodgett and Schinke (2015), and Ferguson and colleagues (2018) to gain further insight into the experiences of Indigenous athletes adapting to mainstream culture and how these experiences may impact their flourishing in sports.

The purpose of this study was to take an Indigenous research and cultural sports psychology approach to explore the psychological well-being and multicultural adjustment experiences of Indigenous athletes who relocated to pursue sport in mainstream context. Working to inform that purpose, this research had two primary aims. First, the research aimed to explore how the lives of Indigenous athletes have been shaped by their multicultural adjustment experiences. Hearing the stories of Indigenous athletes pursuing sports in mainstream will develop further understanding of the approaches that are required to help Indigenous athletes successfully adjust to mainstream contexts. Second, the research aimed to explore how adjusting to mainstream culture influences Indigenous athletes attaining their full potential in sport.

CHAPTER 2

2.1 METHODOLOGY

2.1.1 Research Design

This study was a qualitative case study grounded in an Indigenous research framework. The use of a case study as a strategy of inquiry is ideally suited for providing in-depth exploration of issues or individuals within specific settings or contexts (Creswell, 2007, 2009). As this research focused specifically on the psychological well-being of Indigenous athletes in the mainstream context and their adjustment experiences, qualitative case studies are suited as the appropriate strategy of inquiry. The research was also informed using an Indigenous philosophical worldview. Indigenous worldview is derived from Indigenous knowledges, ways of knowing, and understanding, and takes a decolonizing approach to research (Kovach, 2009). Indigenous epistemology (ways of knowing) considers all aspects of an individual; that is, the mind, body, spirit, and emotions and how they are interconnected with all things in the universe (Lavallée, 2009). Historically, research has often been known to cause more harm than good to Indigenous communities as research was done using Western approaches (e.g., post-positivist), which tend to favour a colonial worldview that sometimes discredits, misinterprets, or distorts Indigenous knowledges (Coburn, 2013; Wilson, 2008). The Western approaches were partial to Western ways of knowing, and data were interpreted through a lens that sought to advance Western ideals (Coburn, 2013). To address this problem, decolonizing methodologies that are wholly Indigenous have been developed as perspectives to drive research with Indigenous peoples so as not to have any negative impact on Indigenous peoples and communities, and to accurately reflect Indigenous ways of knowing and experiences (Kovach, 2009). Indigenous research holds the understanding that research is ceremony, whereby knowledge is derived from

respecting all things as animate, related, and interconnected (Wilson, 2008). This current research was informed using Indigenous knowledges, Indigenous data generating methods, and incorporating an Indigenous lens to the interpretation of the data gathered.

From a theoretical standpoint, this research used a cultural sports psychology approach to explore and understand the adjustment experiences and psychological well-being of Indigenous athletes in mainstream cultural context. Cultural sports psychology brings a culture-centred lens to research by embracing the role that cultural differences play in shaping the sport experiences and psychological realities of sport participants (Blodgett et al., 2014). A cultural sports psychology theoretical perspective is ideally suited for research that aims to get an in-depth understanding of issues impacting marginalized cultural groups in sport (Blodgett et al., 2014). For this research, cultural sports psychology was a relevant theoretical approach that facilitated in-depth exploration of the experiences of Indigenous athletes in mainstream context through a culturally informed manner.

2.1.2 The Indigenous Research Framework

According to Maori scholar Tuhiwai Smith (2016), Indigenous research is an emerging field that privileges Indigenous peoples' ways of knowing, concerns, cultural traditions and Indigenous peoples' participation in the research process. As a non-Indigenous researcher collaborating with Indigenous peoples, it was imperative that the methodological framework I used would respectfully and ethically illustrate the Indigenous participants' experiences in culturally responsive ways. Embarking on this research I was very keen on grounding this research in an Indigenous research framework. As such, this research process was guided extensively by the framework as illustrated by Kovach (2009) in Figure 1. Centred around an Indigenous epistemology, the components of an Indigenous framework include: having a

decolonizing and ethical aim, preparing researchers about cultural protocols, having a research plan with a standard research design, gathering and interpreting knowledges, and giving back to the Indigenous community (Kovach, 2009). One key issue for striving toward an authentic honouring of Indigenous way of knowing, was the inclusion of community advisors in the research process. I sought guidance on how to respectfully and authentically carry out this research from two Indigenous community advisors who held varying roles that included athlete, coach, sport administrator, researcher and youth mentors. I have documented extensively in research literature my efforts to make this research authentic by using this Indigenous research framework (see Johnson, Poudrier, Foulds, & Ferguson, in press).

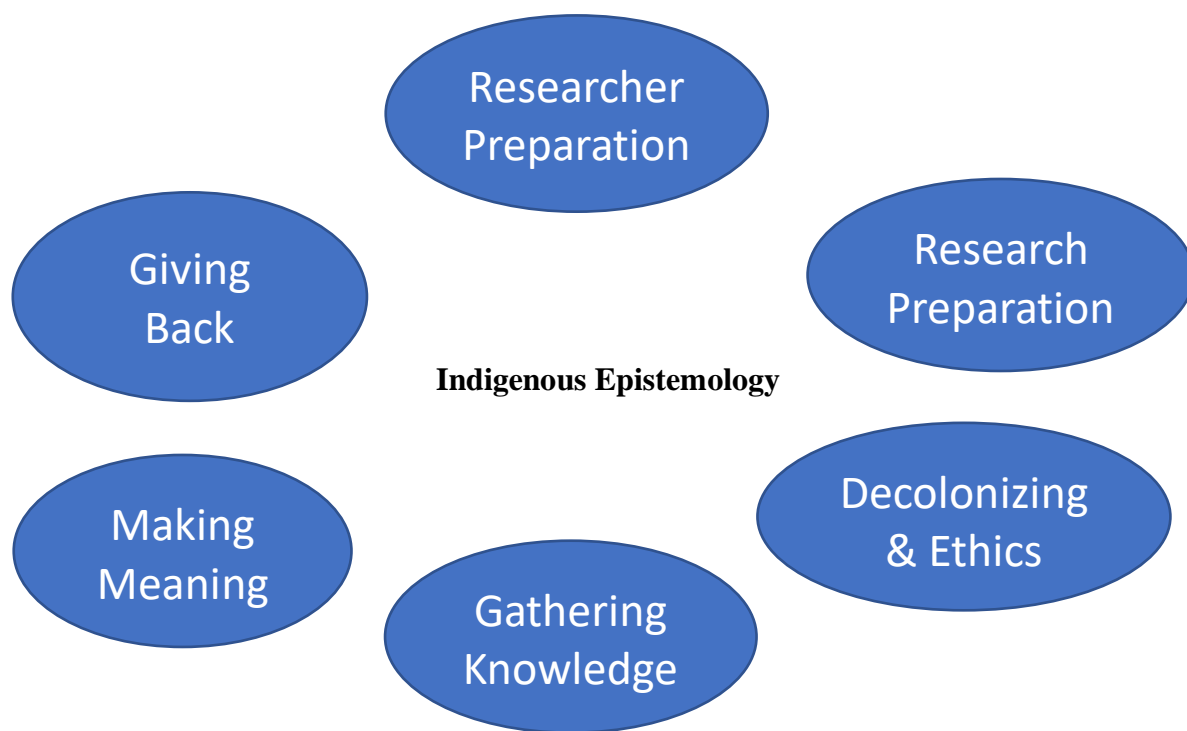


Figure 2.1. Indigenous research framework. Adapted from *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts* (p. 45), by M. Kovach, 2009, Toronto: University of Toronto Press. Copyright 2009 by University of Toronto Press.

2.1.3 Research Participants

Case study research does not aim to generalize or be a representation of other cases (Stake, 1995). Cases are chosen for their uniqueness with the first objective being to understand the case (Stake, 1995). The intent of this study therefore, was not to generalize to a wide range of people, but to provide in-depth insight and understanding of the cultural adjustment experiences and psychological flourishing of Indigenous athletes pursuing sports in the mainstream. When doing case study research, a smaller sample size permits more in-depth data generation and analysis, with a typical sample size consisting of four or five participants (Creswell, 2007). As this research set out to explore a topic area in which little is known I was more interested in generating depth and not breadth from the data. Therefore, a small sample size was ideally suited to do this in-depth exploration. As participants in qualitative research should be selected for what they can bring to the study (Creswell, 2007; Kovach, 2009; Sparkes & Smith, 2014), participants were purposefully selected based on their ability to provide in-depth information that could inform this research purpose. Initially, I planned to use a criterion-based sampling method (Sparkes & Smith, 2014) to recruit five Indigenous athletes who met the following criteria: 1) Self-identification as a female Indigenous athlete living in Canada; First Nations, Métis, or Inuit, (2) Minimum age of 16 years to ensure the athlete has reached a developmental stage of being able to self-reflect on sports history, experiences, and meaning, (3) Relocated from their home community to play sport in an urban mainstream setting within the last two years as they would still be adapting to their new environment, and (4) Minimum of one season experience playing individual or team sport at least at the provincial level to ensure adequate mainstream experience. In doing Indigenous research relationships is a key factor to consider when selecting people for the research (Kovach, 2009). It is important to have a

relationship or connections with the research participants as it helps to establish trustworthiness of the researcher. Through the collaborative assistance of Dr. Leah Ferguson, we started out by recruiting athletes from her previous study (Ferguson et al., 2018) who met the inclusions criteria for this study. All the athletes were contacted and two showed interest in continuing to engage in the research. The athletes were teenage siblings who had recently relocated from a rural First Nation reserve in a mid-Western province in Canada to pursue hockey in an urban centre.

An urban centre is defined by Statistics Canada (2016) as having a population of at least 1000 with a density of 400 or more people per square kilometre. Even though the term “urban areas” is still widely used to classify communities, Statistic Canada has now adopted the term “population centres” when referring to urban areas with populations centres comprising of three categories, small, medium and large (Statistics Canada, 2016). Using the definition of “urban areas”, the city that the athletes in the current study relocated to is categorized as an urban centre or a small population centre. According to Statistics Canada (2016), any area that falls outside the categories of the population centres are referred to as rural. In the context of reserves, a rural reserve is one that is not adjacent to or within an urban centre (Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, 2017). Using this categorization of reserves, the reserve that the athletes relocated from is classified as a rural reserve.

Our first contact with the two athletes who agreed to participate in the research was done through the athletes’ mother. Through a telephone conversation with the athletes’ mother we explained what the project was about, and she expressed an interest in the project. The athletes’ mother then discussed the project with the athletes and advised that they would be interested in participating. Invitation letters (see Appendix A) highlighting the study’s focus, context, and objectives were then emailed to the athletes inviting them to participate in the research. The

athletes' mother further reviewed the details of the research with the athletes and agreed for her daughters to participate in the research.

Coming out of conversations with community advisors, interacting with the parents of the first two athletes recruited, and through the initial stories shared by the athletes, it was later suggested that to comprehensively explore this research topic it might also be worth considering the stories of key support persons for the athletes. As a result, the participant group evolved to include the athletes' parents and billet family. A billet family is a host family that junior athletes live with when they move away from their parents to play sport at elite levels (Hockey Canada, 2018). The billet family in this study was of Euro-Canadian descent and this was their first experience hosting Indigenous athletes. This was the second time billeting for this family. The family had an 'empty nest' but were very sports-oriented as both billet parents had been coaches for their children. The billeting arrangement was a long-term one where the athletes lived with the family throughout the hockey season.

The final participant group for the case study consisted of six persons: the two athletes, the athletes' two parents and the two billet parents. Expanding the participant group beyond the athletes added to the complexity and layered richness of the knowledges gathered. This change in the participant group is supported by Sparks and Smith (2014) who noted that in qualitative research selecting the participant group is not a fixed process as the participant group evolves based on ideas emerging throughout the research process. Even though the athletes identified other support persons such as team members and their coach, the stories shared by athletes highlighted more so the critical roles their parents and billet family played throughout the relocation and adjustment process. The stories shared by the athletes therefore helped to guide the composition of the final participant group. Consent and assent forms (Appendix B) were

emailed to all participants prior to meetings and participants provided informed consent by reading and signing the forms.

2.1.4 Data Generation

The methods used to gather knowledge were consistent with an Indigenous framework that facilitated hearing stories and obtaining meaningful data to inform this research purpose. Stories are an essential feature of Indigenous culture as stories are means by which Indigenous peoples can share their experiences, help with the co-construction of knowledges, and inform research that can benefit the community (Kovach, 2009). For research involving Indigenous peoples to reflect cultural relevance, the methods used to generate data need to be culturally appropriate and should be in keeping with cultural traditions that allow for storytelling (Kovach, 2009). Research by Schinke et al. (2010), for example, applied a culturally relevant approach to gathering stories, as the researchers used methodologies that embraced Indigenous cultural and ethical protocols including community meetings, talking circles, Indigenous coding, and Indigenous coauthoring. Blodgett and Schinke (2015) also embraced an Indigenous methodological approach, by combining a cultural sport psychology initiative with an Indigenous decolonizing methodology. More specifically, Mandala drawings and conversational interviews were used as means of data generation, and stories were presented in the form of vignettes to maintain continuity with Indigenous traditions of storytelling (Blodgett & Schinke, 2015). In their study looking at what flourishing means to Indigenous athletes, Ferguson et al. (2018) used culturally appropriate methods such as sharing circles and symbol-based reflection to gather stories from athlete participants. Cultural validity was also achieved in the study by Ferguson et al. (2018) with the engagement of Indigenous community advisors throughout the research process as well as the inclusion of the Indigenous athletes in the meaning-making process. These

studies highlight the importance of applying an Indigenous lens to contextually reflect and make meaning of stories shared by Indigenous people and to obtain novel insight into research involving Indigenous peoples.

The data for this study was generated in five phases using two culturally appropriate methods, which are detailed below. These methods were conducive to hearing the stories and reflecting the experiences of Indigenous athletes pursuing sport in the mainstream context. The data generating methods that were used are conversational group interviews and photovoice reflection. The initial data generation plan was to use sharing circles and photovoice reflections. As a result of interacting with community advisors, changes were made to the knowledge generation methods. One community advisor (Community Advisor 2) noted that the sanctity of sharing circles allows for openness with the intent that what is discussed in the circle remains in the circle. The community advisor recommended not using sharing circles as a knowledge generation method so as to honour the sacredness of the circle. Instead, he taught me that the use of sharing circles in research may be as a means of building relationships. Taking his advice, I substituted the sharing circles with conversational group interviews. Conversational interviews are considered to be the most open-ended knowledge generation method and allow for authentic uncovering of unique perspectives (Blodgett et al., 2010; Johnson et al., in press). Furthermore, conversational interviews are culturally appropriate, as conversations are Indigenous knowledge gathering methods that combine storytelling, reflection, and dialogue (Kovach, 2009). The open structure of conversational interviews maintains Indigenous oral traditions by giving participants more flexibility and control over the sharing process (Kovach, 2009).

Group interviews were chosen over individual interviews to honour Indigenous cultural traditions of collectivism. Indigenous methodologies and Indigenous ways of knowing privilege

a collective “we” concept of knowledge creation and knowledge sharing that is different from the traditional western concept of individualized ownership of knowledge (Tachine, Bird & Cabrera, 2016). Indigenous ways of knowing and Indigenous oral traditions value the interrelatedness and interdependence of all things and stories are created through interconnected sharing (Kovach, 2009; Tachine et al., 2016). As Indigenous knowledges values the collective, conversational group interviews were further seen as ideal substitutes for the initially planned sharing circles. The conversational interviews were done in three groupings: the athletes, the parents and the billet family. Small group sizes have been recommended for doing qualitative research particularly with Indigenous participants, where building rapport is essential for building trust between the participants, allowing for free sharing. Also, Indigenous participants are more comfortable sharing when they are among persons they are familiar with (Tachine et al., 2016).

Photovoice is a qualitative research method whereby photographs are used by people to depict, reflect, and improve their community (Wang & Burris, 1997). This research method aims to empower people to represent their community’s strengths and challenges; encourage dialogue and knowledge generation about issues affecting the community; and to reach policymakers (Wang & Burris, 1997). First developed from a feminist theoretical approach as a participatory research method to assess the health experiences and needs of women living in Chinese villages (Wang & Burris, 1997), this method is ideally suited to voice the experiences and challenges of marginalized groups. This method is useful for giving insight into the lives of people whose viewpoint differs from those who traditionally control the means of reflecting the world (Wang & Burris, 1997). Photographs are also seen as a form of visual diaries and an unobtrusive method of gathering data from the participants’ perspective (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2004).

For this research, the stories from the parents and billet parents were gathered using conversational group interviews. The athletes on the other hand used both conversational group interviews and photovoice reflections to share their stories. Using multiple methods to generate data is particularly important for case studies as it facilitates generating an in-depth illustration of the issue (Creswell, 2007).

Phase 1: Conversational Group Interview with Athletes

The first meeting was a conversational group interview with the athletes. This group interview took place in the lounge of a hockey arena located in a city in a mid-Western province in Canada. This was the city the athletes had relocated to and the athletes had played a league hockey game at the arena earlier that day. The first conversational group interview was an opportunity for athletes to: (1) Consider Ferguson et al.'s (2018) structure of flourishing in sport and discuss any personal differences in their own meaning; (2) Share their multicultural adjustment experiences in pursuing sports in mainstream context; and (3) Identify how these experiences hindered or enhanced them flourishing in sports (see Appendix C for complete list of questions). The athletes were provided with gifts of food during the conversational interviews, which is a customary aspect of doing Indigenous research (Kovach, 2009). Even though this initial interview was to gather stories from the athletes, the athletes' parents were present. This first interview was also an opportunity for me to build relationship with the participants. This was with the understanding that relationships are central when using an Indigenous research framework to engender trust, allowing for story to surface (Kovach, 2009). When no prior relationship exists between the researcher and the research participants, the process of building relationship starts by locating oneself in the research (Kovach, 2009). Before starting the interviews, I self-located in the research by sharing my personal story about my background and

what motivated me to do this research. This was intended for the participants to see me as trustworthy and be more open to sharing their stories.

Prior to the start of the conversational group interview, the consent and assent forms which were emailed to the athletes and parents when the invitation letter was sent, were reviewed, signed, and collected. To protect the identity of the participants, the athletes were asked to select pseudonyms which were used to identify them throughout the research process. The athletes were also given a demographic questionnaire to complete prior to the start of the conversational interview in order to obtain some descriptive information about each athlete, including: (1) What is the primary sport you are participating in as an athlete, and (2) What is the highest level you are currently competing at in your primary sport? (see Appendix D for complete questionnaire). Permission was obtained from the participants to audio-record the conversational interview and this was supplemented with note-taking done by a colleague from the University of Saskatchewan. The purpose of the audio-recording was to ensure that stories shared were captured accurately and completely. While the interviews were semi-structured, taking a conversational style and allowing for more flexibility in the questions and responses, I used an interview guide to help stay on focus with the research questions. This conversational interview with the athletes lasted for 45 minutes. In order to respectfully appreciate their knowledge-sharing, participants were honoured with a \$50 gift card for a place of their choosing. The athletes were then given instructions about Phase Two; the photovoice exercise.

Phase 2: Photovoice Exercise

Reviewing previous research done using decolonizing methodologies, I observed that photovoice was a culturally responsive data generation method. There is evidence of photovoice being used previously in research involving Indigenous participants. Cross-cultural sociology

researchers Brooks, Poudrier and Thomas-Mclean (2008), in exploring the experiences of Indigenous breast cancer survivors, found that photovoice was a culturally appropriate, decolonizing, and empowering methodology for health research involving Indigenous people. In their study exploring the health and body image of First Nation girls, research scholars Shea, Poudrier, Thomas, Jeffrey, and Kiskotagan (2013) found that using a visual storytelling method was integral in engaging the girls in the research, fostering creative expressions, and facilitating the co-creation of knowledge. Human geography researchers Maclean and Woodward (2012) also used a photovoice methodology in their research with Australian Aboriginals on water resource management, and also concluded that photovoice is a culturally appropriate methodology for research involving Indigenous peoples as it reflects the visual and oral traditions of Indigenous culture. Similar conclusions were drawn by sport psychology researchers McHugh, Coppola, and Sinclair (2013) in their research exploring the meanings of sport for Indigenous youth where a photovoice approach was used to carry out the research. I therefore considered photovoice to be a relevant and applicable method to generate data to reliably reflect the multicultural adjustment experiences and psychological flourishing of Indigenous athletes in mainstream context.

For this research, the athletes were given two weeks after the first conversational group interview to take pictures. The pictures were to represent some of their experiences adjusting to mainstream culture, and also reflecting how the experiences influenced their flourishing in sport. The athletes were told to only take pictures of things they were comfortable sharing as they will be invited to show some of their pictures and the stories behind them in the second group interview. The athletes inquired about using photographs they had previously taken that they would like to include as part of the story. In keeping with the decolonizing aim of this research

to have the participants shape the research direction, this request was embraced, and participants were permitted to include photographs that were previously taken. The athletes were informed about important ethical considerations with photovoice, such as respecting someone's privacy and provided with photo release forms (see Appendix E). The athletes were instructed to select five to six photographs that they would to share and email to me at least two days prior to the scheduled date for the second conversational interview. An email reminder (see Appendix F) regarding the photovoice exercise was sent two days following the first group interview.

Phase 3: Photovoice Reflection

The photovoice reflection took the form of conversational group sharing. Similar to the group interview during Phase One, the reflection took place in the lounge of a hockey arena after one of the athletes' hockey games. Present at the sharing were the athletes, their mom, me as facilitator, and a colleague as notetaker. Prior to the start of the photovoice reflection, I placed the photographs emailed to me by the athletes on a PowerPoint presentation for discussing in the interview. The presentation was saved to my password protected laptop computer. At the start of the reflection athletes were given the opportunity to verbally re-assent to continue participating in the study and reminded that they could withdraw at any time without penalty. Athletes were also reminded of the pseudonyms they used in Phase One and informed that those pseudonyms would also be used to identify throughout the duration of the study. Being siblings, experiencing the relocating and adjusting journey together, the pictures selected by the athletes reflected some experiences they shared together and also some experiences they had separately from each other. Thirteen photographs were chosen by the athletes to be used as part of their story. The sharing took place over fourteen rounds of discussion, with the first round used to reflect on the photovoice exercise and the next thirteen rounds to reflect on each photograph

selected (see Appendix G for complete photovoice reflection guide). Each athlete spoke about the meaning behind each photograph. Some of the prompting questions that were asked about the photographs include: (1) How did you feel doing this photovoice exercise? (2) What is this photograph about? and (3) What does this photograph tell about your adaptation experiences and psychological well-being playing sports in a mainstream context? The photovoice reflection was also audio-recorded with permission from the athletes. The photovoice reflection lasted for 45 minutes. At the end of the reflections, athletes were thanked for their time and effort in being a part of the study and as a show of appreciation participants were each given a \$50 gift card. The athletes were given information about the next stages in the research process which entailed me transcribing verbatim the information shared in the group interview and photovoice reflection and emailing the transcripts to them for vetting and approval. The athletes were provided with transcript release forms (see Appendix H) and debrief forms (see Appendix I) that summarized what the study is about and when the final results would be available.

Phase 4: Conversational Group Interview with Parents

Following the first three study phases, as well as based on suggestions from one of the community advisors, I decided the research would be even more richly informed by hearing the parents' stories. At the end of Phase Three, I spoke with the athlete's mom to see if she and her husband would be interested in being interviewed as well. She agreed, and we made plans to meet at a later date for that interview. The athletes' mom informed me that the athletes would be participating in a hockey tournament that was being held in the city I was located. She noted that the family would be travelling with the athletes for the tournament and we could meet when they were in town for the games. We decided to meet at the hotel where they would be staying for the interview with the parents.

The interview took place in the lounge of the hotel where the family was staying. The interview included the athletes' mom, dad and me. I also got a chance to briefly greet the athletes and met one of their other siblings. The interview with the parents started off by us reviewing and signing the consent forms. Similar to the interview with the athletes, both parents were asked to choose a pseudonym. The purpose of this group interview was for the parents to reflect on their experiences as a parent of Indigenous athletes who relocated from their home community to playing sports in a mainstream cultural environment and their role as parents in the process. Some of the interview questions included: (1) Describe what it has been like for you since your child/children left home to play sport in a larger urban city, (2) As a parent of children who have relocated to play sport, describe how you have been able to support them on their journey? (3) How do you think the experiences of your child/children having to relocate to playing sport in a big city have enhanced their flourishing in sport? (see Appendix J for complete interview guide). This interview was also audio-recorded with permission from the parents, and I took field notes to supplement the recordings. The interview lasted for 45 minutes.

At the end of the conversational interview, the parents were given information about the next stages in the research process which entailed me transcribing verbatim the information shared in the group interview and emailing the transcripts to them for vetting and approval. The parents were provided with the transcript release forms and debrief forms that summarized what the study is about and when the final results would be available. Parents were reminded about the \$50 gift cards that were being offered as a token of my appreciation and given the autonomy to choose the outlet. The cards were mailed to the parents at a later date at an address provided.

Phase 5: Conversational Group Interview with Billet Parents

During the interview with the parents I had inquired about the possibility of the billet parents doing an interview with me as well. The mom had indicated that she would discuss it with the billet parents and let me know. I was subsequently informed by the athletes' mom that the billet parents would be interested in doing an interview as well and she provided me with the billet parents' contact information. I contacted the billet mom, introduced myself and gave a brief overview of the project. In arranging the meeting, the billet mom suggested us doing a Skype interview as it would be easier instead of me having to drive there. We arranged an interview date and time that was convenient for all of us. Prior to the interview, I emailed the consent forms to the billet parents for their review. At the start of the interview the billet parents emailed me the signed consent forms. We then did brief introductions and I recapped what the project was about and why they were being interviewed. The billet parents were asked to choose pseudonyms and permission was obtained to audio-record the interviews.

Similar to the parents' interview, the purpose of the billet parents' interview was for the billet parents to reflect on their experiences as billet parents for Indigenous athletes who have relocated from their home community to playing sports in a mainstream cultural environment and their role as billet parents in the process. Interview questions included: (1) What do you think it has been like for your billet child/children since leaving home to play sport in a larger urban city? (2) As a billet parent of children who have relocated to play sport, describe how you have been able to support them on their journey? (3) How do you think the experiences of your billet child/children having to relocate to playing sport in a big city have challenged or restricted their flourishing in sport? (See Appendix K for complete interview guide). The interview lasted for 42 minutes.

At the end of the conversational group interview, the billet parents were given information about the next stages in the research process which entailed me transcribing verbatim the information shared in the group interview and emailing the transcripts to them for review and approval. The billet parents were emailed the transcript release forms and debrief forms that summarized what the study is about and when the final results would be available. The billet parents were each offered gift cards \$50 and given autonomy to indicate their outlet preference. The cards were mailed to them at a later date at an address provided.

2.1.5 Making Meaning Process

In qualitative research the data analysis process entails interpreting the data generated through texts and visuals (Creswell, 2009). The amount of available literature to guide the meaning making process from an Indigenous research perspective is currently limited (Kovach, 2009). According to Kovach (2009), researchers using an Indigenous research framework have had to rely on a mixed method approach to data analysis. This mixed method approach includes presenting story, self-in-relation interpretation, and including some form of thematic analysis. The meaning making process for this research was informed by this mixed method approach identified by Kovach (2009). In presenting the story and the thematic analysis I relied on Stake's (1995) categorical aggregation method for analyzing case studies. To present self-in-relation in the meaning making process, I identified how I self-situated in this research, as well as shared my personal reflections during the research process. There were six steps involved in the meaning making process. I will outline in more details how I incorporated this mixed method approach in each step of the data analysis. It is important to note that the meaning making process was a fluid in nature, with some steps happening simultaneously as well as ongoing throughout the research process.

The first step in the meaning making process was to work on presenting the stories. After each conversational group interview, I organized and prepared the data for analysis by transcribing the audio-recordings verbatim. Photographs shared during the photovoice reflections were included in the transcripts along with accompanying stories for each photograph. Transcripts were then emailed to the participants for review. Participants were asked to review, and reflect on what was shared, explore gaps in experiences shared, and make changes or additions where they deemed necessary. This transcript review process is referred to as member checking (Creswell, 2009). After completing the member checking, participants were asked to email their reviewed transcripts back to me along with the signed transcript release form.

The second step in the meaning making process entailed reading and re-reading the transcripts in their entirety to become intimately familiar with the information. I waited until I had completed all the interviews and I was in receipt of all the reviewed transcripts before starting this step. During this step of becoming familiar with the stories, I also engaged in the process of deep thinking and reflecting on the stories to gain contextual understanding (Stake, 1995). The familiarity process also involved me making general notes in the margins of the printed transcripts as I began to reflect on the participants' shared experiences. In addition to making notes, I used different colour highlighters to indicate key points that appeared to be meaningful in understanding the case as I read through the transcripts.

For the third step in the meaning making process I used the strategy of categorical aggregation that Stake (1995) identified as one of the key ways researchers arrive at new meanings about a case. Categorical aggregation entails intuitively piecing together of meaningful instances that appeared in the data in order to gain an understanding of the case

(Stake, 1995). The primary objective of a case study such as mine, according to Stake (1995) is to understand the complexity of the case. Therefore, aggregating the meaningful instances into categories that best defined these instances was paramount for me to understand the stories that were shared. Following through on step two, I then used the method of coding to organize the highlighted quotes or blocks from the stories into meaningful categories. Coding is organizing qualitative data into meaningful categories that helps to later create themes (Saldana, 2013). The meanings the athletes shared behind each photograph during the photograph reflections also helped to inform the interpretations and categories created. I then grouped all the codes into broader categories based on similarities and then assigned a descriptive label to each category. At this stage, I shared the categories and accompanying codes that I had created with my supervisor, Dr. Ferguson, to permit critical peer review and receive feedback to enhance the accuracy of the categories formed. By engaging Dr. Ferguson in this capacity of a peer debriefer, I was striving to achieve rigour in this research (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Schinke et al., 2010).

The next step in the meaning making process was to create a representation of the categories formed and present them as the findings. In presenting the findings, the data was organized by the categories created, with each category represented by photographs and direct quotes from the participants. I tried to ensure that that the stories were presented as much as possible in the voice of the participants. For instance, even in labelling each photograph I used direct quotes taken from interview transcripts that had been vetted by the participants. Presenting as much of the participants' voices as possible is one way researchers doing Indigenous research aim to authentically share the stories (Kovach, 2009). Readers are also able to make their own interpretations of the story when the participants' voices are presented in

detail (Kovach, 2009). Indigenous epistemology values subjective interpretation and presenting as much of the participants' stories helps others to form their own interpretations.

According to Tuhiwai Smith (2016), for Indigenous knowledges to flourish, researchers doing Indigenous research are tasked with “getting the story right and telling the story well” (p.357). To honour the collaborative and reflexive nature of this research, as well as striving to ensure that the interpretations are correct, and stories are represented well, the next step in the meaning making process was to involve the participants once more. During this stage, the participants were asked to member check the themes created (Kowalski, McHugh, Sabiston & Ferguson, 2018). Here, the participants were given the opportunity to review the themes, make changes or suggestions and indicate if they agreed with the findings. This step began with me preparing an overview of the five themes that were created, accompanied by supporting photographs for each theme, and then emailing the themes to the participants. This email was followed by a telephone text message letting the participants know they can contact me via telephone or email if they needed any clarification. This process is still ongoing as not all participants have provided their feedback on the themes as yet. I am also aware that not all research participants may desire to be actively involved in the meaning making process (Kowalski et al., 2018), however, I wanted to ensure that the participants had an opportunity to do so if they so desired. This was with the intention of having the meanings created from the stories gathered be an authentic reflection of the stories and experiences shared.

The final step in the meaning making process involved presenting my self-reflections and bringing my personal lens to the interpretation process. In doing Indigenous research it is important to have an awareness of one's self and how this impacts the knowledge creation process (Kovach, 2009). This self-awareness within the research process is oftentimes referred

to as self-reflection or reflexivity (Kovach, 2009). Even though this self-reflection is presented as the final step in the meaning making process, the self-reflection was an ongoing process for me. I kept a reflective journal throughout the research process that helped me be aware of and track my thoughts, emotions being experienced, and my personal insights along the way. I was also aware of my personal background and motivations throughout the research process. Therefore, in this final stage of the meaning making process I identified how I self-situated in this research throughout the research project, which was presented in the introductory chapter of this thesis. Excerpts from my personal journal are presented as examples of my as self-reflections in Chapter Three.

2.2 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical Approval was obtained from the University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board prior to the beginning of the study. As the research evolved and changes were made to the participant group further approval was obtained from the Behavioural Research Ethics Board. This research adhered to the expectations outlined in the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCP2), with special focus on Chapter 9: Research Involving the First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples of Canada. In doing research involving Indigenous people, relationship building and locating oneself in the research are key facets to ensuring that research is conducted in an ethical manner (Lavallée, 2009). As a non-Indigenous researcher, I was mindful of the importance of building mutually beneficial relationships with the Indigenous community and being respectful of Indigenous ways of knowing. By volunteering with community-based initiatives such as an Indigenous sporting event and Indigenous science education programming, as well as assisting with an Indigenous

youth mentorship program, I established meaningful relationships with Indigenous peoples as well as extended my understanding of Indigenous knowledges.

In preparing to undertake this research I also took a graduate-level course in Indigenous methodologies offered by the University of Saskatchewan, instructed by Margaret Kovach who identifies as a First Nations person and authored the book “Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, conversations, and contexts”. My supervisory committee includes three Indigenous researchers who have collectively done extensive work within Indigenous communities. This was very helpful in providing guidance to myself as a student researcher, managing my expectations about emerging directions the research may take, and learning best practices for engaging in Indigenous research. This study belongs to a larger research program led by my supervisor who has developed and maintains relationships with the Indigenous community through her affiliations with Indigenous health programs and the Indigenous sporting community. The larger research program included advisors from the Indigenous community which further supported the research being done in a respectful and culturally-appropriate manner.

Given the unique nature of the photovoice method of data generation, further ethical considerations were required. Wang and Redwood-Jones (2001) suggested that researchers using photovoice methodology should be guided by some best practices that can prevent ethical dilemmas such as invasion of privacy and misrepresentation. The recommended best practices included having open discussion with participants about ethical standards of conduct, issuing photo release forms to participants for permission to use photographs from persons photographed, and sharing of photographs with persons who have been photographed. To ensure that the ethical standards of the proposed research were maintained, the best practices

recommended by Wang and Redwood-Jones (2001) were implemented. Informed consent, was obtained from participants and participants were aware of any risks involved in the research, informed that participation was voluntary, and they could withdraw at any time without penalty.

Two ethical concerns arose in doing the study and guidance was sought from the University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board. The first ethical concern was that some of the photographs the athlete chose to include as a part of their story were self-identifying. The self-identifying photographs were either omitted or edited to protect the identity of the participants and maintain the confidentiality that was promised. The second ethical concern that arose was that the athletes' father initially wanted to use his real name rather than a pseudonym. Even though I would have liked to honour and respect his preference, this would have compromised the confidentiality of other study participants. As such, I thoroughly explained the confidentiality concern to the father and kindly requested that he choose a pseudonym (which he did).

CHAPTER 3

3.1 RESULTS

Opening Vignette – A Mother’s perspective:

I can see why it is a struggle for First Nations girls to move away home because if you don’t have that support or financially you can’t afford it. We are lucky, we both have jobs. Not everybody does. And there are some amazingly talented First Nations, not just girls but the kids who don’t go anywhere because they don’t have the financial support. I know when our son played for (team name omitted) they brought in a young boy and they got to the camp and he had no runners for the off-ice testing. So, my son gave him his runners to do the off-ice testing. And my son phoned home crying. He was like “mom this boy he is so talented, but mom he came here with nothing. He didn’t even have shoes to work out with. He had all the talent in the world”. And it’s like those that you really look at and you are like man no wonder, they don’t go anywhere. Because off the reserve it is tough. It is really tough and not everybody is as welcoming. And I find that about First Nations people, they are welcoming and very helpful. Outside of the reserve you don’t see that, they are viewed differently. So, I can see why a lot of First Nations, not just girls but kids they just don’t take the chance, it’s just easier to stay home.

Michelle

3.1.1 Introducing the Participants

This case study explored the experiences of two Indigenous female athletes who relocated from a rural First Nations community to pursue hockey in an urban centre. The relocation experience of the two teenage athletes involved moving to a new city, starting a new school, joining a new team, and living with billet parents. This meant that the athletes had to adjust to multiple new situations and contexts. Stories were heard from the athletes who were siblings, their parents and their billet parents, to help explore the complexities involved in the relocation and adjustment experiences of these two athletes to mainstream environment. Below

are excerpts of self- descriptors used by the participants, which will help contextualize this case study.

Jay (athlete):

When I was four my mom put me on the ice and all my brothers and sister were on ice before me. So, we were like a hockey family and my mom is goalie, my dad is defense. I am like the only centreman in our family, so it was just passed on. And so ever since I started since, I was four I liked it, and I've always wanted to go farther in life.

Alfredo (athlete):

I started skating around four, I started playing on my home reserve with my best friends and Jay. I got the inspiration from my dad and my older brothers. I just loved hockey ever since I got to play it and have fun with my friends. I like track and volleyball as well. I went the North American Indigenous Games in Toronto and I got two silver medals, both through relays.

Michelle (mom):

From a young age the girls were interested in hockey because their brothers were interested in it. And it's really just taking them to the rink and making sure that their equipment fits them and make them meals, being there for each practice. I coached the girls through Pre-novice, Novice, Atom and Peewee. So, I was on the bench with them as well. It's just supporting them, letting them know too that at any point they didn't want to continue that they didn't have to. It was their choice and just seeing them have fun with their friends. I grew up like that as well, where we are busy in sports and it keeps you out of trouble and it keeps them out of trouble and physically active too.

Bearman (dad):

My name is Bearman, one of the leaderships on the Nation. I have been married 16 years with four beautiful children.... As a father, some days I feel like they are just pushed too hard and they just don't have the time to just be home and just sleep 24hrs. You know just be girls right. Sometimes as a father you don't like seeing them committed that much at a young age right. You know that's a tough one. So as parents you do whatever you can to make sure that they are fully equipped. That they have equipment that's going

to protect them, the food side of it, the travel, the gas, the vehicle, that they don't go without anything.

Liz (billet mom):

First of all, we are Canadians. Our family is a blended family. I have a son and a daughter, grown up and Blair (billet dad) has four daughters. Two of the daughters are twins and one is older, and one is younger. So, we have six kids between us now. We are from different backgrounds, but we have blended together to make one big family. We both coached our kids in sports. We are just sports-minded, and family-minded and blended together.

Blair (billet dad):

I have always loved sports and my kids were into ringette, big time quite a bit. Also, I coached for I think about 20 years or so. I am very into sports and family. You are looking after kids when you are coaching too. I have always had four kids. We weren't looking for billets too hard. But it's great, both sets were just great. We'll be friends for life.

3.1.2 Contextualizing the Stories

The findings from this research exploring the psychological well-being of Indigenous athletes who have relocated to pursue sport in mainstream context will be presented using both photographs and verbatim quotes from the participants. The stories will be organized into categories I created based on my interpretation of the knowledges gathered, supported mainly by the direct quotes and pictures from the participants. Stake's (1995) case study analysis method of categorical aggregation was used in the meaning making process.

In this study there are five key findings and five interrelated categories were developed: (1) Having an interconnected web of support; (2) Managing emotional challenges; (3) Progressing while dealing with setbacks; (4) Being comfortable in the new environment; and (5) Maintaining a cultural connection to their home community. Each category will be presented in detail below.

Having an interconnected web of support

It was different moving away from home. I liked it though because I got to feel what it was like to move out on my own and how it felt to leave home for the first time. It was hard at times, but I got through it because my mom was a phone call away and I had like support from my friends and coaches.... At first, I didn't know a lot of people like Alfredo did. I had no friends, so I stuck by her and so it was difficult at times and then I started to fit in with people in my class and my billets helped me out a lot. They were like second parents to me. So, I know I have their support and my team's support and everyone else's support. It was hard but easy moving. (Jay)

Coming out of the stories from the athletes and their support groups (i.e., parents and billet parents), it was evident that the psychological well-being of athletes was influenced by the network of support the athletes received. Critical support groups that emerged and developed for the athletes included family, friends, billet parents, team members, home community and each other. The different groups worked collectively to create a strong and cohesive network of support for the athletes. Support was available for all aspects of the athletes' lives; school, hockey, home, and their social lives, which helped to make the athletes' relocation and adjustment experiences easier. Alfredo, similar to Jay, acknowledged the role different support groups, such as their family and home community, played in helping them make the transition to living in the new environment. Alfredo recalled an exhibition game they played in their home community where she was overcome with joy and pride seeing the level of support her family and community gave her:

I feel good about what I do when I see some of my family in the stands. I feel pride and joy when I see some of the community coming out to support us while we play. And then like back when we played at home there was so much people there. When we were honoured with the blankets I just feel thankful that I have my community behind me.

Jay, in reflecting on a picture taken while being honoured with a blanket ceremony by the reserve also shared how important the support of her home community has been to her:

It's what we do back on the reserve when someone who plays move on to another level and leaves home. They will always bring them in and announce their names in front of everyone and honour them with the blanket. It made me feel pretty good about myself because I know I have accomplished something in my life that I wanted to. They have supported me through it.

Bearman also supported the athletes view that the home community was very important to the girls' progress:

The support our Nation gives to our youth is extraordinary. It's not something that goes on in every community. I have to say our community played a big role in the girls' development. Like the coaches, they always had a positive influence on them. It was never to knock them down but always give them that development to get to the next level.

For the athletes, their friends and team members also played an integral role in the network of support the athletes received. Alfredo acknowledged the role friends and team members played in her adjustment experience when discussing a portrait picture of the team:

Every girl on the team played a role in my life. A bunch of them were some of my best friends, a bunch of them were carrying my back in other roles, some carrying my back when I needed help with homework and all that. It was pretty good.

For the athletes, parental support also emerged as having a strong impact on how well the athletes adjusted. Both parents were actively engaged in the relocation and adjustment experience of the athletes. The parents' involvement included doing their own background checks on billets, being present at all the games, maintaining communication and, setting rules.

With me, it's more the food you're eating, right? You know. We go check, make sure they both have a bed. You know, how the house is. We visit the billets and there are some criteria that we follow when it comes to the billet part of it. We really do our

background check. We asked other parents, like “who are these people?”, you know. Like I said, but that’s the scary part of billeting these days, there’s none of these checks that they do. (Bearman)

Strong parenting continued with the billet parents enforcing rules set by the athletes’ parents, ensuring the girls were comfortable in their new home, and providing healthy meals for them.

Michelle in reflecting on the partnership shared with the billets in parenting the athletes remarked:

We had some pretty strict rules. She [Liz] was pretty good at enforcing those. The girls knew they had to-text and touch base and stuff like that. So, the billet family was key for us, because that’s where they are staying. It’s their safety, their nutrition, their sleep, how comfortable they are in the community. The billet family was super important to me.

It was evident that parenting was pivotal in the process and there were deliberate efforts on the part of the parents and billets to be collaborative and consistent.

There was good communication between us and their parents, which is really good. Like good communication, because they know where we stand, and we know where they stand. We just talked about issues from time to time. (Blair)

The billets also shared similar sentiments with the athletes in acknowledging that they saw themselves as second parents. A big part of the support the billets provided to the athletes was by taking on that parenting role in the absence of their parents. The billets were keen to note that they integrated the athletes as a member of their family and treated the athletes as they would their own kids. Blair noted, “the biggest thing was just making them comfortable, and if they are comfortable they are going to do better. I don’t know, we just do everything like they were one of our kids.” In acknowledging how they tried to play that role as second parents the billets also highlighted some of the things they would do as a family to make the athletes feel like a part of the family. The billets’ kids are all grown and no longer lived with the billets, so the athletes helped the billets to no longer have an empty nest. Liz in reflecting on some of the

family-oriented activities they did shared, “we took them to my daughter’s birthday party. I took them there and they got to meet everybody.... They played puzzles. We taught them how to play card games”. Liz went on to acknowledge how involved the athletes were in the house by doing chores, “they did the dishwasher. I miss them, they always did the dishwasher”. Blair supported Liz in acknowledging how the athletes would willingly help out around the house, “they care about you besides us caring about them. And they would do things to please us without us asking them to. They would just do things that they knew we would like”. The comments shared by the billets suggested that they strove to create a family environment for the athletes. The comments from the athletes as well their actions in turn indicated that the athletes felt like a member of the family.

Bearman also acknowledged how important having the extended family support was in the girls’ relocation and adjustment experiences:

The biggest thing I always say is when one of us is sitting up in crowd or the kokums, when there is a family member cheering them on, it seems to push them that much. And that’s much harder [for them to be there] so we try always either my wife or myself try to be in the stand, so they know we are there.

Michelle in support noted “yea, we try to never miss a game, and if the boys are playing, one of us goes one way and one of us goes the other way. Yea, we are always there for games.”

Being siblings embarking on this journey together also saw the emergence of a unique form of support, each other. Both the athletes and the parents acknowledged that having each other was very helpful in the adjustment process. Even though it was challenging, experiencing it together really helped. The importance of siblings was acknowledged by Michelle who noted “I think that they finally realized that this year. When they first moved away, they finally realized that they had one another”. Jay and Alfredo shared how experiencing the journey with

each other helped in managing difficult times and this belief was particularly highlighted in the next category, “managing emotional challenges”.

What has been evident from the stories shared by the athletes, the parents, and the billets was that the support network that was available for the athletes played a vital role in the athletes’ relocation and adjustment experiences. Having an interconnected support web ensured that the athletes were able to have all aspects of their lives enriched in a wholistic way during the transition period.

Managing emotional challenges

The stories shared by the participants suggested that the relocation and adjustment experience of the athletes was an emotional journey for everyone involved. Handling the different emotional states proved to be a critical part of the experience. Two categories were formed to explain how the emotional challenges were managed: (1) Balancing positive and negative emotions, and (2) Handling emotional drainage.

Balancing positive and negative emotions

“Even though we are getting pushed to our limits and we are out of breath, everyone would still laugh, and giggle and we would still have fun.” (Jay)

The athletes spoke about how working out with the new team was more challenging than with their previous team. Jay’s experience adjusting to the new workout routine showed how she tried to balance her emotions by not just focusing on the negatives of that particular situation but was also able to make light of the moment. The stories shared by both athletes and support persons indicated that the relocation and adjustment experiences of the athletes were filled with varying emotions at different stages. The athletes explained how at times they experienced both positive and negative emotions in the same situation. How the athletes navigated these different emotions appeared critical to their adjustment and psychological well-being. Jay, in describing

one of the photographs taken to help depict her relocation experience (see Figure 3.1), spoke about how she felt when she just started the new school and was experiencing contrasting emotions. Jay stated, “I was lost and scared. But now half way through the season I am like: ‘I know my way. I am confident. I found friends.’ They helped me. They made sure I got to class”. Jay went on to share how she found the positive in the situation of feeling lost and scared: “It was good because even though she was lost, I was lost, we’d be lost together. We would just follow our classmates and see where it takes us”. This point by Jay also emphasized how important having the support of her sister was in helping her experience some positive emotions during an emotionally challenging situation.



Figure 3.1. “Lost and scared together” (Alfredo)

Alfredo also had a similar perspective about her experience with being lost in the new school and how having her sister for support helped with a challenging emotional time. Alfredo’s comment also suggested that she was able to make light of being lost:

Like if we were late our parents would get a phone call saying that both your kids are late for class (laughs). We were like well we probably got lost somewhere (laughing continues).

Evidence of experiencing different emotions in the same situation was also seen when the athletes were discussing a picture of their first day they were moving in with the billets. This was a picture of both the athletes standing in front of the billets' house with their dog. Here Jay spoke about the anxiety she felt moving in with the billets, but also acknowledged being excited about her new experience:

It was nerve racking. I wanted to go home in the car, but my mom told me you are here for a reason. So, I told myself 'I am here for a reason and I must stay here to pursue my goals'. It was fun.

Alfredo shared experiencing similar variations in her emotions on moving in day:

I felt nervous and disappointed that my parents were leaving me. But it was also a good time. I'm glad I did it. Our billets are like great billets, I would choose them again in a heartbeat.

In the related picture the girls were smiling, it was later revealed by their mom though how emotional that day was for them as prior to making the trip for the billets' house their other dog was hit by a motor vehicle. Michelle shared, "it was a really hard day because the other dog got hit by a vehicle and was at a vet. It was a super hard day.... That was like the worst day for that to happen". Jay added, "yea, and we were like, I don't think I want to go anymore. I just want to stay with my dog" (group sighed, aww). It was clear that the moving in day was very challenging emotionally for the girls and the parents. Even when the athletes started to have second thoughts about moving, they were able to balance this by having a positive outlook on why relocating was important.

Balancing both positive and negative emotions simultaneously was also observed when Alfredo recalled a moment in one of their hockey games. Alfredo articulated the conflicting

emotions she felt in a game where she was happy for her sister scoring a goal and the team going up, but also feeling disappointed that the game ended before she got a chance to take her penalty shot. Alfredo shared:

It feels good because knowing she scored, I am out there, we are in a circle giving each other pats on the head. It's pretty good. I think when we were going on the shoot out there he put me on like the third person shoot out, and then they scored, and I was like dang it maybe next time (laughs).

Life changing situations such as the athletes relocating to live in a new environment to pursue their goals comes with its fair share of emotional challenges. A key feature to the athletes' adjusting and progressing seems to be how well the accompanying emotions are regulated. It appears that the athletes engaged in a lot of positive reframing as a way to balance these varying emotions they experienced in order to cope with their new situation. Being open and expressing emotions that were experienced can also be seen coping mechanisms used by the athletes to adjust to the new environment. Bearman noted that he felt his daughters were adjusting and doing well when the girls vocalized the emotions they were experiencing. In response to when he thought the girls were flourishing Bearman stated, "when they are pissed off (laughing)".

Handling emotional drainage

Managing emotional challenges was not limited to the athletes; both parents spoke about how emotionally draining the experience of their daughters leaving home was for them as well. Whereas the athletes used a lot of positive reframing to assist them coping with the emotional challenges it appears that the parents relied mainly on rationalization and distractions to help manage their emotions. The parents spoke about how they tried to cope by keeping themselves

distracted and busy with other things during the emotionally challenging experience. Bearman shared:

It was emotionally draining you know. It took a toll on us as parents. Because for me it was always a question of if they are safe. You know, always in the back of my mind was the benefit of the decision we made. You know, trying to wave that off. Luckily, we had dogs (everyone laughed). But I am always on the road so much.

Similar sentiments were shared by Michelle about how emotionally draining it was for her dealing with the girls leaving home, while being criticized by others for the decision they made as parents:

Well, the first week to be honest, it was kind of awful. Like it was so quiet at home. And I was like, oh my God, what did we do? Did we do the right thing? It was like you're questioning everything. Our house went from being so busy-busy and then not busy. It took a while to get used to it. Because honestly some people look at us like "why did you send your kids away". Because we did it for the boys and the girls. And people would say "don't you want to experience it" Some people that's just not for them. But if my kids have goals and dreams in hockey then I want to be able to help them to that. But not everybody understands that. So emotionally, he's right, it's kind of draining.... I have been staying late at school. And then I take classes you know. So, I just kind of throw myself into something else. (Michelle)

In reflecting on that initial experience of his daughters leaving home Bearman also shared the positive side of the journey which helped with balancing the emotional drainage experienced. Bearman rationalized that it was satisfying for him as a parent to be able to support his daughters with their goals and allowing them to experience a different environment that living on the reserve would not prepare them for.

With this current city we can be there within half an hour if needed. So, it's just where you put your kids. At the end of the day you want what's best for them right. You want them to be safe, you want them to be happy, you want them moving forward in a positive

direction. Because it is a big adjustment coming from the reserve to living in a totally different society. You can never prepare them. (Bearman)

The athletes also spoke about how having a hectic schedule was quite challenging and emotionally taxing at times. When asked if at any time in their experience they felt like going back home Alfredo shared:

At times yes. When school is getting hard and being tired of the late nights of hockey. Getting home at 1:00 in the morning. Yea and then having to go to school the next morning. Yea, that's hard.... Sometimes I just sleep it off(laughs) or really don't think about it as much.

The athletes appeared to also cope by distracting themselves when it got emotionally draining. Jay shared how she tried to avoid thinking about the situation, "just talking to mom on the phone, talk to the other girls on the bus, and like sleep with them on the chair. We'd always blast music, so we really don't have time to think". Using different coping strategies to manage the emotional challenges experienced during the relocation and adjustment experience of the athletes seemed critical to how the athletes flourished in the new environment.

Progressing while dealing with setbacks

The stories shared by the athletes, their parents and billets suggested that transitioning to a new environment was not a seamless process as there were challenges along the way. What stood out though as playing an important role in the psychological well-being of the athletes was how well they progressed while handling setbacks that came during the athletes' relocation experience. Alfredo, for example, recalled experiencing an injury she got while snowboarding as one of her most challenging experiences since relocating and how it impacted her progress:

When I broke my wrist and was told I couldn't play for 4-6 weeks that kind of hurt. But I'm practicing now. I am on the ice. I can kind of shoot but knowing that moment you did something and it's kind of there for a couple of weeks, that kind of hurt more.

Despite suffering an injury that hindered her playing hockey, Alfredo expressed feeling proud of other accomplishments during that period of setback. Alfredo expressed, “I went to the North American Indigenous games in Toronto and I got two silver medals, both through relays, with a broken wrist.”

The girls also felt encouraged and motivated as they made progress on their new journey which seemed to drive them even more to continue. Each progress made appeared to push them to go harder and helped with overcoming setbacks. Jay in reflecting on improvements she observed with her game shared, “I have improved with my score, I feel like I am on another path that’s going upwards instead of downwards. So, I feel like I am on the right track to success.” Insight into the athletes’ positive attitude was seen in Jay’s reflection of the photograph in Figure 3.2 of a charity game they played for breast cancer survivors:

My family has breast cancer in it, so I played for them.... I know scientists haven’t found a cure for it, so I play for people who have cancer or breast cancer. I tried to play my best. It felt good to play for a great cause, because not everyone gets it. If you get it, then it’s unlikely that you can really do anything about it. You just have to keep fighting, do what you can do and try your best.



Figure 3.2. "... and I just fought to play harder" (Alfredo)

Conversations with the athletes indicated how goal oriented and focused they were. The athletes spoke extensively about wanting to go farther in life and having constant reminders of what they were working towards. Jay, in reflecting on the photograph of their workout area (see Figure 3.3), noted, "this one is important to me because it reminds me of what I need to do every day and what things I need to accomplish". The athletes spoke a lot about focusing on their goals and how they are guided by their positive attitude when faced with adversity. Jay went on share about working towards her goals, "I know why I am here, to move forward and to become a better player. Because I have goals I have set for myself and this is one of them. So, I am

moving towards my goals so it's the right way right now". Having these ambitions and drive helped pushed the athletes forward even when experiencing challenging situations.

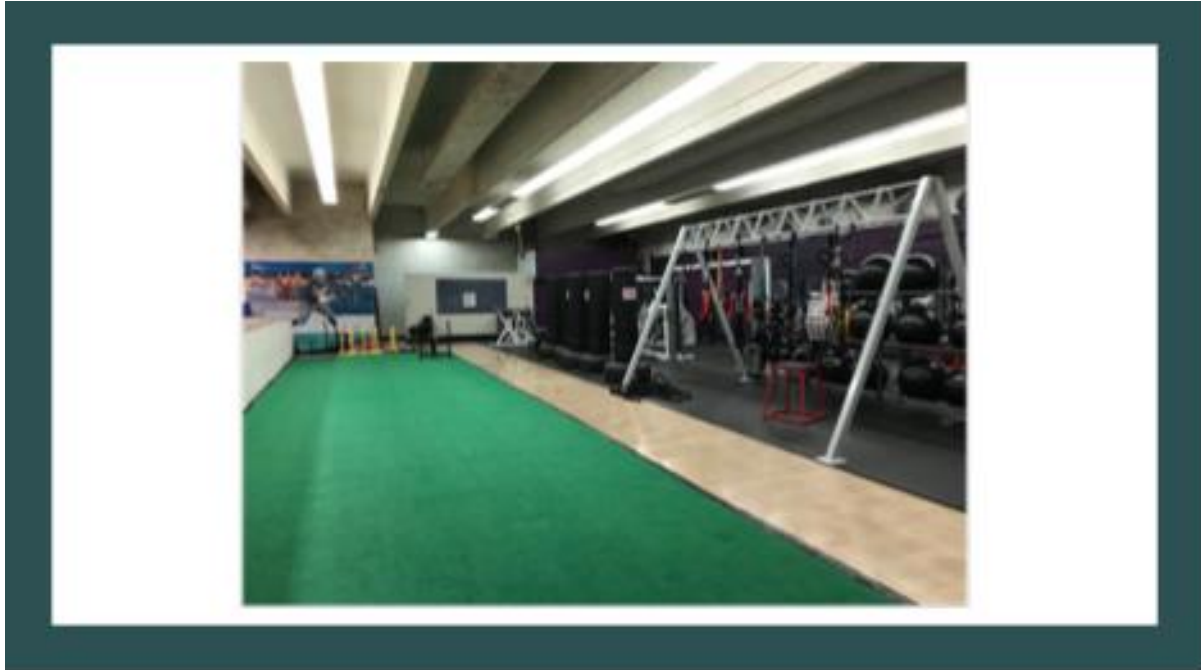


Figure 3.3. "It reminds me of what I need to do every day" (Jay)

The athletes' parents gave insight into why these reminders of their goals were so important to the girls' relocation experience and psychological well-being. Tim, in reflecting on some of the adversities the girls encountered shared:

Just making them understand that sports isn't always fun, especially when you leave the reserve. You are going to go through the emotional abuse, being a girl on a boys' team, being a First Nation on a non-First Nation team. There is always that stigma when it comes to these teams.... Once they got off the reserve to play on these elite teams the boys would more or less try and hurt them, try bringing them down.

Michelle also agreed with Tim on how the girls had to persevere in the face of difficulties experienced on the journey:

I think honestly, it's like when they get called "you girls suck". That happened to them this weekend. They were playing on a team and they were better than probably half the boys, one of the boys had said something and they didn't want to go back Sunday. So, they didn't. I think one of the most challenging times was probably a couple of years ago one of the girls got hit in a boy's hockey game and she didn't want to go back the next day and it was tryouts. And she was crying, and we just told her you are not going to let that boy who hit you beat you. You are going to get up and you are going to face this. I think just seeing that emotion because they love the game of hockey so much. Some of the kids can really say mean things and parents don't think it's going on, but it is. It is. I think for us to try and teach them to be the bigger persons and skate away, I think that's the hardest thing. Because you don't want your kid to go through those comments or being picked on.

Despite the challenges the girls experienced, they continued to excel both at hockey as well as with their school work. Blair acknowledged this in stating, "their grades were well in school. Their marks were good with the amount of time they were on the road, practicing and out of town. They did pretty well". This was also supported by Liz:

Really after a couple of months I thought they were flourishing because they were coming home with as good grades as they would probably get. They started to brag about it. Like one would get better and then the other get better. They both basically were averaging the same.

The stories shared by the mom suggested that school initially was not a seamless transition for the girls. The girls had a difficult time in the beginning moving from schooling on the reserve to the new city. Michelle shared how she helped the girls adjust during this time:

They were super stressed about if they would be able to handle the schooling from the reserve to the town and how it would affect their marks. They were on the honour roll. They struggled a little bit with Math, but we did a bunch of Facetime homework. So, we were able Facetime and I was able to help them as much as we could. They were worried about the schooling portion of it. Initially I think they were worried about the hockey

portion but once they got on the ice the girls knew they were just as good as the other girls so that kind of eased them.

It appears that despite experiencing adversities along the way the athletes flourished by remaining focused on their goals and accomplishments. The athletes persisted even when dealing with difficult situations. The progress made was evident in all aspects of their lives: school, hockey, the new city, and the new home. When asked what in her opinion helped with the progress made Jay responded, “practicing and support”. It was therefore acknowledged by all the participants that despite challenges the athletes encountered along the way the athletes persisted.

Being Comfortable in the New Environment

The importance of being comfortable in the new environment also emerged as playing a critical role in the psychological well-being of the athletes during their relocation and adjustment experiences. Having both psychological comfort and physical comfort were seen a vital to the well-being of the athletes.

Psychological comfort

In the stories shared by the athletes it was important for them that the new environment felt like home and so they looked for things in the new environment that would create that homely feeling for them. Jay, in reflecting on the picture she had taken of the rink (see Figure 3.4), commented:

My brother used to play here before us for the (team name omitted). That was a while ago. I thought we would never go back to this city, but since our careers took off my mom was like you have places that want you and so we came here because it was 45 minutes from home. It was close but yet far and the rink made me feel at home. Because I’m always in a rink. I’m like a rink rat.... I felt connected to my brother because I play on the same ice as him and he still comes to watch me.



Figure 3.4. “The rink made me feel at home” (Jay)

Alfredo also reflected on how the billets helped to make them feel comfortable when they were feeling homesick. Alfredo noted, “every time I felt homesick, they would come down and like comfort us. We’d go upstairs and have like a bond, we’d play board games and play with the cat that they have”.

A critical component for the girls with being comfortable in the new environment also extended to their comfort level with the new team. The athletes spoke about feeling welcomed and accepted by the team. Having that sense of belonging and identifying with the team was important to how well the athletes adjusted and flourished in the new environment. Jay shared:

My best moment is just with the girls. They are like so much fun. If I didn't have these girls on my team there would be strangers and stuff. I bonded with them right away and they are like easy to talk to. This is probably one of my best moments of making a team. Alfredo also gave insight into her relationship with the other team members which suggested that she feel comfortable being a part of the team:

I am having fun. I love hanging out with the girls and doing workouts. The workouts are fun and on the ice sometimes we play games and it's always fun.... I will probably always remember these girls. It's a great group of girls that I love to play with and I would do it again in a heartbeat.

Understanding the challenges that come with living with strangers, the billets were mindful of the need to make the girls feel welcomed as part of their family. For the billets it was not just about providing room and board but being a second family to the athletes. Liz, in reflecting on her efforts to make the girls comfortable in their new home shared:

In our home we welcomed them, and they were living in a positive environment. We tried to help them grow and flourish and provide proper nourishment also. We just tried to give them positive energy I guess since they are here, and their family isn't here we are their second family.

Liz also shared specific times where the girls needed comforting and how she responded playing her role as second parents:

Jay, a few days in was quite homesick, and she was crying. So, I went downstairs, to talk to them and gave them a big hug. And you know every time you give somebody a hug they cried more.... They were worried about school being so big. And I told them once you get there and you walk around you will be fine. It's smaller than you think it is.

They were worried about school, so I tried talking to them to get them more comfortable about it.

For Blair, an important part of the athletes' adjusting to the new environment was reflected in how comfortable the girls were opening up to them and confiding in them as second parents. He stated:

Yea they were never afraid to talk to us about anything. They didn't get into too much, but they weren't afraid to talk to us about anything and we would listen and do our best to rectify the situation or call their mom or dad or solve it if we could.

For the billets, seeing the athletes opening up and trusting them were indications that they were becoming more comfortable in the new environment and adjusting positively.

Bearman believed that a major part of the girls' success in their new environment was their ability to adjust to different situations. He also further emphasized the point that having the support of each other was important in the adjustment experience of the athletes. Reflecting on the girls' adaptability Bearman noted:

They are outgoing and know how to deal in both worlds. What I mean by both worlds is out there versus on the Nation. How they adjust to the different areas.... You put them on their own, but by the time they walk out they have three, four friends out of that group. But the biggest thing is that they always have each other you know. As siblings they always shared that bond. They are not walking into somewhere alone.

Physical Comfort

Having a comfortable physical space was also seen as vital to the athletes' adjustment experience. The stories shared suggested that great effort was taken on the part of the parents and billets to ensure the athletes were comfortable with the physical environment. Blair shared how important it was for the girls to feel comfortable living in their new home:

We have a pretty big house and it worked out well. They had their own space. They had downstairs and it was fully developed. They had their own bathroom, which makes them comfortable I think.... We try to make them comfortable. I think when somebody is comfortable it's always going to help.

Bearman also reflected on how he thought the new environment that his daughters would be moving to had to be comfortable. He recalled their experience with finding a satisfactory home for them to stay:

First when our daughters were going to move there, there was this first billet they were going to put them with. I told my wife right away, they're not going to leave the Nation if that's where they are going to put them. I was pretty black and white. When we visited, it wasn't up to our standards of where our girls were going to stay. So, I think we ended up driving them back and forth for a while.... Billets for me was a big concern. You know with our boy who played in the WHL and our other son living with billets, they weren't always positive.

Physical comfort for the athletes was not limited to living space. The stories shared by the athletes also suggest that them becoming comfortable in the new school was also important in their adjustment experience. The athletes spoke about feeling scared and intimidated by the new school initially. However, as they got more familiar with the environment they started to feel better. In reflecting on the picture taken of the new school (see Figure 3.5), Alfredo shared how she started to feel better about relocating after she became more comfortable with the school:

The first couple of days I was like oh no I am going to get lost again, and then after that it gets better. Then on the outside it looks big, but when you get inside it starts getting smaller because you begin to know where everything is.



Figure 3.5. “I was scared of getting in” (Jay)

The change in the athletes’ perspective of the appearance of the new school shows how they began to adjust positively to the new physical environment. This comfort with the new environment helped with how they progressed.

Maintaining a cultural connection to their home community

A key factor that contributed to the psychological well-being of the athletes during their relocation and adjustment experience was how well they preserved their cultural identity. The athletes acknowledged certain significant differences between their home community and the new community they were now a part of. They noted that while it was important to adjust to the new environment it was just as important to them to maintain a cultural connection with their home community. Jay, in talking about some of the cultural differences between both

communities reflected on a significant difference between the new community and the reserve prior to the start of a hockey game:

Back home we've had a drum every time. So, we would go into the ceremony and there would be a drum and then at ceremonies here there would be no drum, there would be talking. I've always waited for the drum. So, it's pretty different to move in without the drum. We usually have a lot of spiritual stuff back home, but when I move here there was no spiritual. It was weird, but I got used to it.... I like having ceremonies because it helped me to clear my mind. When I don't hear a drum it's hard to clear my mind because the drum usually calms me down, but I have figured out another way to calm myself down. I usually listen to singers, like Powwow singers, they are really nice. It's kind of a replacement.

Alfredo shared similar observations in noting differences between both communities and commented on how she maintained her cultural connection:

Like Jay said, you hardly see a drum in this community and you are used to going to cultural events like Powwows and they don't have those in this community. It's kind of weird because you don't really see a lot of First Nations people at the school or anywhere really. When we get called to the gym usually they would have like a chief speaking, but in this community, they have like a mayor or a principal talking. It's just weird for me... When I moved here I wanted to keep that part of me still alive. When I go home I have my kokum beside me and we talk, and she makes me laugh a lot. It's nice. But it's very important to keep that part of me still alive.... Sometimes I call my mom. Yes, because she is still at home and she is still at my old school. It's always nice hearing how things are going back home. I usually call my mom for that.



Figure 3.6. “Honoured with blankets” (Alfredo)

Reflecting on some of the cultural differences the girls spoke with pride about being a part of a cultural ceremony held on their home reserve in their honour. Figure 3.6 is an edited photograph shared by the girls as part of their story. To maintain the confidentiality of the persons involved the photograph was cropped to remove identifying features. This is a photograph taken of the athletes in their home community being honoured at a ceremony to celebrate them progressing to another level in sport. This ceremony is normally held to honour athletes who leave the reserve to play at another level. Being a part of this ceremony was very meaningful for the girls because it helped them to feel appreciated by their home community, know that they are supported and additionally it allows for the athletes to maintain their sense of belonging with their home community. Ceremonies like this are particularly encouraging for the athletes and help in the athletes wanting to preserve their cultural identity. Speaking about the significance of such a ceremony Alfredo shared:

It made me feel proud being from (community name omitted). When we were honoured with the blankets I just felt thankful that I have my community behind me.... You’ll

always have open arms when you come home. They will always treat you nicely and you will always have someone to look back on and look forward to coming home to.

Bearman's observations of his daughters' abilities to adapt to different cultural contexts supported Jay and Alfredo's comments that maintaining their cultural identity was very important in the relocation experience. The athletes were deliberate in their efforts to keep their culture alive while navigating a new cultural environment. Bearman shared some of the steps taken by the athletes to preserve their culture while adapting to the new cultural environment they were in:

For me, the cultural differences I have seen is they weren't able to really able to understand our beliefs and traditions off the reserve. So, they couldn't practice them, they could speak any other language they know. They got on a little bit with each other and kind of put it in a book while they are away. You know because off reserve people wouldn't understand the different ceremonies we practice. Along with what my wife said, the drum, the smudging, the ceremonies that we practice. You know they had to be more in a "white world" right, practicing the white traditions that are out there... But they adjusted you know and that's the biggest thing I found. My babies adjust well to any situation they are in.

What was evident from the stories shared was that experiencing a new cultural environment highlighted how important culture is in shaping the athletes' identities. Recognizing this importance, the athletes endeavoured to ensure that part of their home culture was kept alive even while adjusting to the new cultural environment.

3.2 PERSONAL REFLECTION

As this research journey progressed from being a conceptual plan to implementation of the plan I was both excited and nervous at the same time. A key piece of advice I received from my supervisor at the onset of this project was to keep a research journal and record my experiences as I went along. To help reflect on my research journey I will use excerpts from my

personal journal. Now that I am approaching the final stages of the research, I am feeling very excited and proud about all the progress I have made with this research. I almost forgot about all the anxiety, doubts and frustration I was experiencing in the initial stages. Luckily, I have the journal entries to remind me:

(November 2017) Feeling anxious, overwhelmed and a little sad. It's been 2 months since I have presented my research proposal to the College. I feel my enthusiasm waning. I thought I would be further ahead by now. I feel like I haven't made much progress with my recruiting efforts. I am now starting to question my research choice. Did I make the right choice in choosing to do Indigenous research? I would be much further ahead if I had done a traditional research project – send out some questionnaires and use a software to analyze the data. So far, I have spent a good portion of my time building relationships with community persons. Even that has proven to be quite a challenging task.

(December 2017) Last Saturday I was finally able to meet (Community advisor 1). Our conflicting schedules had stood in our way since we were connected by one of my lab mates. The meeting was very enriching. He is an Indigenous track and field athlete from Saskatchewan. Unfortunately, he did not meet the criteria for the study as I am looking for Indigenous athletes who have relocated to the city to play sports. (Community Advisor 1) grew up in Saskatchewan and puts on running clinics for Indigenous youth. He is using his clinics to reach children who may be at risk and provide them with hope while unearthing their gifts. In our meeting over coffee (Community advisor 1) gave some insightful things to consider for the research. In sharing his stories about his experience with athletes leaving their home community to travel for

sports, he pointed out important stakeholders such as parents/community and administrators, whose perspectives that could meaningfully inform the research. The research is really focused on the stories of the athletes but hearing the stories of parents and/or coaches might be worth considering as suggested by (Community Advisor 1).

(January 2018) Yesterday I did my first interviews. I drove to a city 3.5 hours away to meet with two siblings who have relocated to that city to play hockey. I went with a group of friends. The athletes had a hockey game that day, so we used the opportunity to get there early so we could see them play before doing the interview. It was interesting to see how involved the parents were. At the game, the mom was filling in for the announcer who couldn't make it that day. I chatted a little with the mom during the period breaks. I learned about the meaning of a billet family from the mom. That was the first time I was hearing that term. When the athletes relocated they were placed with a host family. Both parents sat in on the interview with the girls afterwards. I was just amazed to see how involved the parents were. I am thinking this is a critical factor helping with the girls' transition to this new environment. I am now considering including the story of the parents. I can see where the parents' stories can add value and another perspective to the relocation and adjustment experience of these two athletes. Last month when I met with (Community Advisor 1) this was an element he suggested was important to consider, the role the parents/community also play in the process. I am now seeing where this is coming out as being critical after my first interview. I will discuss this with my supervisor.

(February 2018) Yesterday I had the opportunity to meet with Michelle and Bearman. They were very kind to take a break from their busy schedule to accommodate me. It was nice seeing

this lovely family again. They were in town for the Winter Games. I just looked on in amazement at the support these parents give to their children's athletic pursuits. We sat down in the dining area of the hotel for our chat. As we sat there, and I was listening to their stories I kept thinking to myself how do I share this with the world. It is so rich and insightful. How do I make sure that I remain true to Indigenous research framework and make it not be just about my thesis? At some points in the interview my eyes welled up just listening to their experiences. I kept saying to myself keep it together, keep it together.

The research has taken a completely different direction than it was originally proposed. At first the intention was to interview 5 athletes. I started with two lovely girls and then my focus has shifted to going deeper in their stories. Compared to where I was a few months ago, I am really excited about the direction the study has taken. I don't know what's next for me after completing this Masters, but I keep thinking if I continue into academia, I would love to do a follow up study with these girls. I am excited to see what's next in their story and also see the outcome of having this rich parental and community support.

CHAPTER 4

4.1 DISCUSSION

The purpose of this case study was to explore the psychological well-being and multicultural adjustment experiences of Indigenous athletes who relocated to pursue sport in mainstream context. The stories of the participants were very insightful to understanding and exploring this case. To understand the significance of the findings, this discussion will be organized around: (1) Supporting Indigenous athletes' well-being; (2) Informing the research purpose; and (3) Contributing to cultural sport psychology.

4.1.1 Supporting Indigenous athletes' well-being

Understanding psychological well-being within the context of sport has become increasingly important as it has the potential to address issues that may prevent athletes from performing to their highest potential (Lundqvist, 2010). There is also evidence indicating that concepts of well-being are culturally-rooted and situational based on a person's life circumstances (Lundqvist, 2010; Ryan & Deci, 2001). This knowledge suggests that flourishing may hold different meaning for Indigenous athletes. Researchers Tang and Jardine (2016) explored the role culture plays in physical activity and wellness in a Dene First Nations community and found that the Indigenous community articulated concepts of health and wellness based on the community's values and traditions. The researchers emphasised the importance of having an Indigenous-defined understanding of health and wellness when looking at health promotion within the Indigenous community. There is therefore a need to understand Indigenous athletes' definition of well-being beyond the Westernized concepts widely available in current literature. The current study was significant in contributing to the limited knowledge available in

understanding Indigenous athletes' well-being by building on some of the previous work done in this field.

Ferguson et al. (2018) conducted one of the few known studies that provided insight into what it means to flourish from Indigenous athletes' perspective. Through sharing circles and symbol-based reflections with 16 Indigenous women athletes, Ferguson et al. identified four essential components of the athletes' flourishing in sport: (1) Multidimensional community support, (2) Personal accomplishments, (3) Persistent growth, and (4) Wholistic athletic excellence. A fifth component, humble recognition, perceived to be a facilitator of the athlete's flourishing was also identified. The stories and experiences shared by the participants in this study supported Ferguson et al.'s findings in several ways.

Firstly, the athletes in the current study spoke extensively about their home community and extended family being pillars of support along their journey. The strong support the athletes received from their home community assisted the athletes in maintaining their cultural connections while helping them cope with stressors of adjusting to a new environment. Having an interconnected support network, as identified in the current study, builds on the multidimensional community support Ferguson et al. (2018) found as essential to Indigenous athletes flourishing in sport. Ferguson et al. found that a multidimensional supportive network that included parents, family, coaches, and community was integral to Indigenous women athletes' flourishing. Even though not looking specifically at athletes, the study by Tang and Jardine (2016) also emphasized the importance of community to the well-being of Indigenous peoples. The Dene community in Tang and Jardine's research strove to achieve collective well-being. The Dene community's laws and teachings enabled collective well-being by promoting interconnectedness and inclusiveness (Tang & Jardine, 2016). Supporting the findings from

Ferguson et al. (2018) and Tang and Jardine (2016), the athletes in the current study similarly thrived off the strong network of support they received from their community. The interconnected support group the athletes in this study benefitted from having included: their parents, extended family, community members, team members, billets, and coach. This support group worked collectively to provide emotional, social, and tangible support that has been found to be essential to the well-being of Indigenous youth.

A second way the current study's findings built on Ferguson et al.'s (2018) study was observed in the category "progressing while dealing with setbacks". The athletes in the current study were very goal-oriented and even when faced with adversities they did not lose sight of what they were working towards. Some of the challenging encounters the athletes handled included bullying, injury, and juggling a hectic schedule between school and hockey, while trying to adjust to living in a new environment. The perspective of the experiences being challenging was supported by the athletes' father who acknowledged that he thinks that at times his daughters did not get a chance to be normal teenagers. This category, "progressing while dealing with setbacks," supported the theme "persistent growth" identified as essential to flourishing by the Indigenous athletes in Ferguson et al.'s study. For the athletes in Ferguson et al.'s study, persistent growth meant challenging one's self to be better, overcoming adversities, and seeking opportunities for self-development. The athletes in Ferguson et al.'s study recognized that key to them flourishing was persevering through adversities while looking for opportunities for self-betterment. The athletes in the current study similarly remained focused on pursuing the personal goals they had set for themselves and strove to excel both with school and hockey despite setbacks encountered.

The findings from the current study also supported the component of wholistic athletic excellence that was created by Ferguson et al. (2018) as an essential component to flourishing for Indigenous athletes. Indigenous health and well-being have been previously conceptualized by Lavallee (2009) as an interconnection and balance between the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual realms, representing the four quadrants of the medicine wheel. Flourishing for the athletes in Ferguson et al.'s study meant being healthy physically, emotionally, mentally, spiritually, and socially. Similarly, the stories shared by the athletes and their support groups (i.e. parents and billets) in the current study, showed how the athletes endeavoured to achieve a wholistic balance during their relocation and adjustment experience. The athletes, for example, acknowledged how important their spirituality was to them doing well at sports. They spoke about the ceremonial drums and powwow music being sources of relaxation prior to games. The athletes spoke about the absence of "spiritual stuff" and "ceremonies" in the new environment and how they had to look for cultural replacements to maintain their spirituality in the new environment. One example of a ceremonial substitute the athletes spoke about was listening to powwow music as a replacement for cultural ceremonies they had on the reserve prior to games. For Indigenous peoples, spiritual health is particularly important as it is seen as the gateway for physical, emotional and mental health (Sasakamoose, Bellegarde, Sutherland, Pete, & McKay-McNabb, 2017). The stories from the athletes, parents and billets also emphasized the steps taken by the athletes to maintain their physical, emotional, mental, and social health, supporting Ferguson et al.'s finding that wholistic well-being is essential for Indigenous athletes flourishing in sports.

Overall this current study expanded the limited knowledge available that presents an understanding of Indigenous athletes' well-being. The findings were consistent with previous

findings such as Ferguson et al. (2018) in understanding Indigenous athletes' well-being. It was found that having community support, relentless pursuit of goals, and maintaining wholistic health were essential components of well-being for Indigenous athletes. Looking specifically at the athletes' well-being in the context of relocating to a mainstream environment, this study gave unique insight into how Indigenous athletes define well-being in this context. The findings suggest that the key components identified above need to be present for Indigenous athletes to reach their full potential when they relocate to pursue sports.

4.1.2 Informing the research purpose

The purpose of this case study was to take an Indigenous research and cultural sports psychology approach to explore the psychological well-being and multicultural adjustment experiences of Indigenous athletes who relocated to pursue sport in mainstream context. The findings from the study informed the research purpose in three ways: (1) Coping with the emotional challenges of adjusting to a new environment is a complex process, (2) Developing and maintaining a sense of belonging is critical to the athletes' psychological well-being, and (3) An interconnected web of support is vital to the athletes' well-being and adjustment experiences. I will discuss each of these key points in greater details below.

When athletes relocate to a new cultural context to pursue sports the transition often entails navigating various stressful situations, some of which are quite challenging emotionally. Similar to studies by Blodgett and Schinke (2015) and Schinke et al. (2010), the current study found that when Indigenous athletes relocate from the reserve to pursue sports in a mainstream context it can be an emotionally stressful time for the athletes. The coping strategies employed by athletes to manage the emotionally stressful encounters were critical to how well the athletes adjusted in the new environment.

The first key factor observed in this study was that the athletes' adjustment and flourishing in the new environment was due largely to their ability to cope with emotional stressors and persistently overcome adversities they faced. Some of the emotions the athletes described experiencing included: happy, anxious, disappointed, excited, nervous, fearful, and proud. This array of emotions indicated that the athletes experienced both positive and negative emotions along their journey, sometimes experiencing both the positive and negative emotions simultaneously. Emotion regulation was observed as a prevailing coping strategy used by the participants to manage the range of emotions experienced. "Emotion regulation refers to the processes by which individuals influence which emotions they have, when they have them, and how they experience and express these emotions" (Gross, Salovey, Rosenberg & Fredrickson, 1998, p. 275). What was evident in this current study was that the array of emotions experienced by the athletes created complexities in the coping strategies employed to manage these emotions.

Various techniques, which included positive reframing, rationalization and avoidance/suppression, were used by the participants in this study to regulate their emotions during the relocation and adjustment process. These coping techniques have traditionally been categorized as either being adaptive or maladaptive, with adaptive techniques being identified as facilitating greater psychological well-being than maladaptive responses (Aldao, Nolen-Hoessena & Schweizer 2010). The category "managing emotional challenges" that was created from the stories in this research identified instances where the athletes handled emotionally stressful times by looking for the positives in the situation. An example of this was seen in how the athletes responded to the anxiety they were experiencing on the day they were moving to the billets' house. The athletes were able to reappraise the situation by seeing the positives behind them relocating and reminding themselves of the goals they are pursuing. This positive

reframing helped the athletes balance their anxiety with feelings of excitement about their new journey. It can be suggested that the athletes' psychological well-being was positively impacted by using an adaptive coping strategy of positive reframing.

The relocation and adjustment experience for the Indigenous youth athletes in the current study was at times emotionally challenging for the parents as well. The findings from this current research supported work done by Neely, McHugh, Dunn and Holt (2017) that showed that experiences in sport can be equally stressing on parents as it is for athletes. Neely et al. looking at how youth athletes coped with the stress of de-selection in sports, found that de-selection in sports is a shared stressful experience for both parents and athletes. The parents and athletes in Neely et al.'s study used coping strategies to handle the emotions experienced with de-selection that were similar to the coping strategies used by the parents and athletes used in this study. For instance, the parents and athletes in Neely et al. study used positive reframing and rationalizing as coping strategies.

The category "managing emotional challenges" highlighted how the parents in this study engaged in the adaptive response of rationalizing to manage the anxiety they felt over their decision to relocate their children to a different city to pursue hockey. Both parents spoke about the experience of their children relocating to a different city to pursue sport as being emotionally draining. One way the parents handled this emotional stress was by reassuring themselves that they made the right decision as parents to support the goals of their children and give them opportunities not available on the reserve. This rationalization helped the parents to be more comfortable with their decision to send their children away to pursue their sports goals even when faced with criticisms about this decision. Building on the findings from Neely et al. (2017), the current study's findings suggested that by rationalizing, the parents were also

engaging in an adaptive coping response to the emotional anxiety brought about by their children leaving home. The parents' psychological well-being would have therefore been facilitated by using the adaptive coping response of rationalizing. The well-being of the parents was seen as significant to the athletes' relocation and adjustment experience, as support from the parents played a key role in how well the athletes adjusted and progressed in the new environment.

It is important to note that both parents and athletes also engaged in avoidance as a coping strategy during the transition process. The athletes spoke about feeling overwhelmed sometimes by their hectic schedules but tried not to think about it by using distractions such as listening to music, chatting with friends, or calling home to talk to their mother. The parents also spoke about using distractions such as occupying themselves with work and school so as not to think about the unfavorable emotions they were experiencing as parents. Although Aldao et al. (2010) found avoidance to be a maladaptive coping strategy that can negatively impact psychological well-being, this study suggests the opposite may be possible. This current study suggested that the psychological well-being of the athletes may have been positively impacted by using avoidance as a coping strategy as the athletes appeared to transition and progressed well in the new environment. This finding is consistent with Neely et al. (2017), where distraction was found to be an effective coping strategy used by parents and athletes. The significance of avoidance strategies as a form of coping also builds on previous work by McCarty and Cheng (2013) that looked at how disengagement strategies, such as avoidance, can help or hinder the anxiety of dealing with multiple roles. McCarty and Cheng found that avoidance strategies were adaptive coping responses individuals used to manage conflict with school, work, and home, and overall achieve greater satisfaction in life. What was evident therefore in the findings was that coping with the emotional stressors that accompanied the relocation and adjustment experience

of the athletes is a complex process. It entails using a variety of coping strategies, and some of which have traditionally been classified as maladaptive by past research but have been shown to be effective in this research. This research suggests that athletes' psychological well-being may have been influenced in a positive way by the athletes and parents engaging in positive reframing, rationalizing, and avoidance as strategies to cope with the emotional challenges of relocating and adjustment.

The second key factor that was identified by the research findings that informed the research purpose was that the athletes strove to maintain a sense of belonging with their home community while pursuing a sense of belonging with the new city. The themes "being comfortable in the new environment" and "maintaining a cultural connection to their home community" emphasized that having a sense of belonging with both home and host communities was important to the athletes' well-being during the adjustment and relocation experience. Similar observations were made by Agergaard and Ryba (2014) in their study looking at the migration and transition of elite athletes who relocated from Africa to North America. Agergaard and Ryba found that the athletes' psychological well-being was enhanced by maintaining connections with their home country and practicing their cultural traditions in the new environment. Similarly, Blodgett and Schinke (2015) found that for Indigenous athletes who relocate across cultural borders, having a sense of belonging with home community is particularly important for a successful transition. On the contrary, if the athletes felt isolated, not supported, and had lost a sense belonging with their home community, the athletes found it more difficult to adjust and be successful in the new environment (Blodgett & Schinke, 2015).

The athletes in the current study were very mindful of how important their home culture was to their well-being, and they were very deliberate in their efforts to keep their culture alive.

The athletes strove to maintain connection with their home community by engaging in activities such as listening to cultural music, calling home to check up on happenings in the community, and speaking their language with each other. The athletes also spoke about always looking forward to trips back home to connect with their kokums, old friends, and other community members. These activities helped the athletes maintain a sense of belonging with their home culture which seemed to positively impact their well-being in the new environment. The findings from this study also support McHugh et al.'s (2018) meta-analysis of qualitative studies exploring sport and recreation in Indigenous youth. McHugh et al. (2018) found that Indigenous culture and traditions influenced how Indigenous people experienced sports, because maintaining connections with family and community made sports more fun and enjoyable. Maintaining cultural connectedness is seen as key to the well-being of Indigenous people pursuing sports, and conversely, engaging in sports is one avenue through which Indigenous people maintain their cultural connections (McHugh et al., 2018). Cultural connectedness is defined as “the extent to which First Nations youths are integrated within his or her First Nation culture” (Snowshoe, Crooks, Tremblay, Craig & Hinson, 2014, p.249). The athletes in the current study were able to thrive and flourish while pursuing their sports aspiration in a new context partly because of the strong sense of belonging they maintained with their home community.

Even though this study suggested that the athletes' psychological well-being was positively impacted by maintaining a sense of belonging with their home culture, just as important to the athletes' well-being was having a sense of belonging in the new environment. The stories from the participants indicated that the athletes and their support groups placed a great level of importance on the athletes achieving both psychological and physical comfort in the new environment. The athletes spoke about how important it was for them to feel welcomed

by the new team and to feel at home in the new community. The parents and billets shared efforts they made to ensure that the living space for the athletes was very comfortable. These stories indicated how having a sense of belonging in the new environment was just as important to the well-being of the athletes.

This current research supports previous adaptation research that looked at the importance of sense of belonging to the adjustment experiences of athletes who relocate across borders to pursue sports. Agergaard and Ryba (2014), for example, used the term “multiple embeddedness” to describe similar findings of the adaptation experience of African soccer players who transitioned to North America to play soccer. The African players in Agergaard and Ryba’s (2014) study adjusted and progressed better by maintaining their connections with their home countries while working towards achieving belongingness in the new environment. Findings from this study also support similar observations made by Blodgett and Schinke (2015) who looked at the cultural transitions of Indigenous athletes pursuing dual careers. Blodgett and Schinke (2015) observed that Indigenous athletes simultaneously strove to be immersed in the host culture while maintaining their sense of belonging with their home community, which was important to their adjustment. The findings from this current study were therefore consistent with previous literature in emphasizing that when Indigenous athletes relocate to a cultural environment that is different from the home culture, adjusting and doing well in the new environment means simultaneously having a sense of belonging in both environments. The efforts demonstrated by the athletes to maintain their sense of belonging with both their home and host communities indicates the importance of this belongingness to the athletes’ well-being.

The final way the findings from this research informed the research purpose was in showing how the strong support network identified in the category “interconnected web of

support” played a vital role in the adjustment and well-being of the athletes. Relocating to a different environment meant that the athletes had to adjust to various unfamiliar situations: new team, new school, new home, new family, and new city. What was evident was that in each situation the athletes were supported by persons who had varying roles in the athletes’ lives. This support group included parents, extended family, team members, home community, billets, coaches, and each other. This interconnected web of support can be seen as influencing the athletes’ adjustment and flourishing in multiple ways.

Firstly, the support group was one avenue through which the athletes’ cultural connectedness was maintained. As mentioned earlier, cultural connectedness has been found to play a vital role in the health and well-being of Indigenous peoples (McHugh et al., 2018). The family and community are key to maintaining intergenerational connectedness and achieving cultural continuity. Cultural continuity is defined as intergenerational cultural connectedness where families and elders pass on cultural values and traditions from generations to generations (Auger, 2016). Cultural continuity is found to be deeply related to the health and well-being of Indigenous peoples in Canada (Auger, 2016; Oster, Grier, Lightning, Mayan & Toth, 2014). The athletes in this study benefited from the cultural connectedness and cultural continuity that was maintained through the strong support and continued relationship they had with their home community even after moving away from the community. In the category “maintaining connection with home community” the athletes spoke about feeling proud knowing they had their community behind them, how helpful community members were in motivating and encouraging them, and how their cultural values have been important in helping them adjust and progress in the new environment. The athletes embraced the cultural connectedness their support

groups were able to reinforce, and this connectedness and continuity helped with the athletes' well-being in the new environment.

Secondly, the athletes' psychological well-being was positively impacted by using a communal coping strategy to handle the challenges encountered. Communal coping refers to "the pooling of efforts and resources of several individuals (couples, families, communities) to confront adversity" (Lyons, Mickelson, Sullivan & Coyne, 1998, p.580). Neely et al. (2017) used a communal coping perspective to understand how athletes coped with de-selection and found that parents, in addition to athletes, experienced stressors as a result of their children participating in sport. As a result, parents jointly shared the responsibility of coping with de-selection. Even though the study by Neely et al. (2017) looked at non-Indigenous athletes, the current study extends findings of Neely et al. by highlighting that Indigenous athletes also use communal coping as a strategy to manage the stressors the athletes experience in sports. This communal coping strategy supports Schinke et al. (2012) work that emphasized that the complexities involved in athletes adapting to a new environment requires a collaborative approach from key stakeholders. This current study advances the context in which communal coping is understood in sports by showing its relevance to Indigenous athletes' relocation and adjustment experiences. The different support groups in this study such as parents, billets and teammates played an integral role in sharing the experiences, problem-solving, encouraging, and helping the athletes adjust in the new environment. The athletes acknowledged how the strong support they received played a significant role in how well they progressed in the new environment. The athletes saw their parents, family, billets, coaches, teammates, and home community as all playing a part in how well they adjusted and managed the stressors that came with relocating. Furthermore, the athletes also relied on the support they received from each

other. As siblings experiencing the journey together, the sibling-sibling dyad was a unique social network available to the athletes. Neely et al. found that tight knit social networks such as this sibling-sibling dyad, allow for a unique form of communal coping based on shared problems, shared emotions, and shared responsibility. Neely et al. found that social networks enable female youth athletes to better deal with stressors faced in sports. Building on this finding, the psychological well-being of the athletes in this study would have likely been positively impacted by the interconnected support network that the athletes received.

4.1.3 Contributing to cultural sport psychology

One of the aims of this case study was to add to the growing body of research in sport psychology that is culture focused. The call to make research more diversified was emphasized by Henrich, Heine and Norenzayan (2010) in their study reviewing generalizability of research in behavioural sciences to the human population as a whole. Henrich et al. found that research in the behavioural sciences draw conclusions about the larger human population based on findings from a sub-population that is primarily made up of Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich and Democratic (WEIRD) societies. There is however substantial evidence showing psychological and behavioural variations among human populations. For example, Westerners' concept of self is most often defined through psychological attributes such as personality trait and attitudes. Non-Westerners', such as Indigenous peoples', concept of self tends to be very relationship and roles oriented. Henrich et al. (2010) further highlighted that there is a scarcity of research in behavioural sciences that consider cultural factors such as ethnicity, values, and beliefs when trying to understand human conditions. This means that our understanding of humans is currently very limited. To begin to build a more diverse, rich, and in-depth understanding of human conditions, researchers need to go beyond the sub-population of WEIRD (Henrich et al.,

2010). This current research is a direct response to the call to make the literature on sport psychology more culturally inclusive and extend behavioural science research beyond WEIRD populations (American Psychological Association, 2003; Duda & Allison, 1990; Henrich et al., 2010). I responded to the call for research to move beyond the WEIRD population by focusing on the population of Indigenous athletes. I also embraced a cultural sports psychology approach in this research by being culture-focused.

One contribution the current study made to the field of cultural sports psychology was by using a culture-centred approach to explore how the well-being of two First Nations athletes is influenced by the athletes' relocation and adjustment experiences. It was particularly important to apply a cultural lens to this research looking at well-being in First Nations athletes as previous literature has shown that culture is an underpinning to wellness in Indigenous people (Sasakamoose et al., 2017). From an Indigenous perspective, culture is a unifying force for the spiritual, mental, emotional, and physical states, creating a wholistic balance essential to the well-being of Indigenous peoples (Ferguson et al., 2018; Sasakamoose et al., 2017).

The findings from the present research support existing culture-focused literature in showing how sports and culture are intertwined. The athletes in the current study were able to flourish in their new environment by maintaining a sense of belonging with their home culture. The athletes also spoke about striving to keep their culture alive by finding substitutes in the new environment for some of their cultural traditions. According to the athletes in this study, ceremonies and other cultural practices were important to them pursuing and progressing in sports. For example, the athletes spoke about how they relied on the ceremonial drums to relax them for a game. Sports was also important to the Indigenous community as it brought the community together. The athletes in this study spoke about the sense of pride and motivation

they got to pursue their goals when the community came out to the games to support them.

These observations build on the work by McHugh et al. (2015), where it was seen that sport and community were interconnected, as sport kept the Indigenous community connected by bringing community members together, reinforcing community values, and fostering a sense of belonging. This research therefore extends the knowledge available of the role that culture plays in sports, particularly how important culture is to Indigenous athletes' flourishing in sports.

Another key contribution the current study made to the existing cultural sport psychology literature was in highlighting cultural authenticity as a foundation for Indigenous research. I was very mindful of the need to make this research culturally responsive and authentic to Indigenous peoples. To honour Indigenous ways of knowing and make the research an authentic reflection of Indigenous athletes' experiences, I used a qualitative case study grounded in an Indigenous research framework was used. In responding to calls to make research more culturally responsive, I applied a decolonizing lens to research while striving to be culturally authentic. Applying a decolonizing lens to research serves to deconstruct the Western knowledges that dominate research and discount Indigenous peoples' ways of knowing (Tuhiwai Smith, 2016). I wanted the research process and the findings to be an authentic reflection of Indigenous way of knowing, not perpetuating the influences of colonialism on how research has traditionally been conducted. Therefore, I relied on Kovach's (2009) framework for Indigenous research to ensure that the research was done with an Indigenous worldview in mind. This meant that all stages of the research including planning, research design, data generation, meaning making, and interpretation were informed through an Indigenous lens. An example of how this research was culturally responsive was by using data generation methods of conversational interviews and photovoice reflections, which are considered to be ideally suited for Indigenous research as they

foster storytelling and authentic sharing (Kovach, 2009). Overall, this research contributed to the field of cultural sport psychology by expanding the sparsity of work research that acknowledge the significant role culture plays in understanding human behaviours and experiences in sports.

CHAPTER 5

5.1 CONCLUSION

Indigenous athletes who are interested in pursuing sport at elite levels and seeking broader opportunities in Canada often relocate from their home communities to urban mainstream centres. The athletes' reasons for relocating may include seeking elite facilities and coaching expertise as well as accessing more competitive sport environments (Blodgett & Schinke, 2015). Adjusting to a mainstream context may involve navigating challenges such as racism and discrimination, isolation from family, friends, and community, and a dismissed cultural identity (Blodgett et al., 2014). The challenges faced by Indigenous athletes navigating mainstream cultural environments suggest that Indigenous peoples may be at a disadvantage in attaining satisfaction in life and achieving psychological well-being as outcomes of sport. Grounded in an Indigenous research framework, I adopted culturally relevant methods of conversational group interviews and photovoice reflections to hear stories from athletes, parents, and billets. Using Stake's (1995) categorical aggregation method, five main categories were created to explain how the athletes adjusted and strove to flourish in their new environment: (1) Having an interconnected web of support; (2) Managing emotional challenges; (3) Progressing while dealing with setbacks; (4) Being comfortable in the new environment; and, (5) Maintaining a cultural connection to their home community.

The findings from this current research advanced previous work done in understanding the meanings of flourishing to Indigenous women athletes in sports. In looking at the psychological well-being of Indigenous athletes who relocate from a rural reserve, this research showed several factors interplaying in the athletes' relocation and adjustment experience. These factors include the complexities of coping involved with an emotionally challenging experience

of relocating to play sports in a new environment. An important contribution of this research is that it uniquely identified adaptive coping strategies employed by Indigenous athletes to adjust and flourish when they relocate to play sports. This study further highlighted that for Indigenous athletes who relocate from a rural community to pursue sport in an urban mainstream context, coping is a communal process that involves the athletes' key support groups. Another significant contribution of this research is in highlighting that having a strong support group and a sense of belonging in both the home and host communities are critical to the psychological well-being of Indigenous athletes when they relocate. This finding advances previous work that looked at the multicultural adaptation of Indigenous athletes and also the well-being of Indigenous peoples pursuing sports.

5.2 STRENGTHS

A major strength of this research was the authenticity that I strove to achieve by using an Indigenous research framework. The Indigenous research framework used in this research helped with taking a decolonizing aim to research and responded to calls to make research involving Indigenous people an authentic reflection of Indigenous peoples' cultural values and ways of knowing (Kovach, 2009; Tuhiwai Smith, 2016). Essentially, a decolonizing approach lays the foundation for ethical and authentic research by continuously integrating the following key principles: (a) understanding the power dimensions in research and ensuring that participants and their community are fully engaged in the generation of knowledge; (b) ensuring the research benefits and does not harm any Indigenous participants or communities; and, (c) ensuring the research accurately reflects the participants and community values (Johnson et al., in press). In striving to make this research ethically sound and culturally appropriate, it was important to take a relational and reflexive approach. My efforts to take a collaborative approach by (1) including

the participants at various stages throughout this research, (2) building mutually beneficial relationships with Indigenous peoples in Treaty 6 Territory, and (3) seeking guidance from community advisors on how to approach this research, were significant in working towards making this research trustworthy. Trustworthiness, which is one method of evaluating the merits of qualitative research, refers to how valid the research findings are and consists of four aspects: truth value, applicability, consistency, and neutrality (Kowalski et al., 2018). The Indigenous research framework used assisted with establishing the truth value of this research by facilitating authenticity and my aim to accurately reflect the athletes' experiences. The collaborative nature of this research, while also being reflexive throughout the research process, helped with me achieving neutrality in this research.

Neutrality as an aspect of trustworthiness is defined as “the extent to which the findings of a research are based on the participants meanings and experiences and not merely a representation of the researcher's motivations and perspectives” (Kowalski et al., 2018, p.179). From the onset of this research I was very mindful of my positionality as a non-Indigenous, non-Canadian person embarking on research with Indigenous peoples in Canada. This meant that I was an outsider taking on this research. On the other hand, I think the shared experience of colonization between the participants and myself played a role not only in creating trust, but also in my understanding and interpretations of stories shared. I strove to make the findings true to the participants' meanings and not only based on my interpretations and experiences by keeping a reflective journal throughout the research process as well as remaining aware of my positionality throughout the research.

Another strength pertains to the methodological coherence of this research, which is another approach used to evaluate the merits of qualitative research. Methodological coherence

includes having an alignment of the different components of the research process: researcher philosophical worldview, research design, data generation, meaning making, and interpretation (Kowalski et al., 2018). By incorporating the components of the Indigenous research framework recommended by Kovach (2009) I was able to achieve methodological coherence. The research design was conducive to a decolonizing approach to research, the data collection methods facilitated storytelling and authentic sharing, and the data analysis strategy was informed by an Indigenous way of knowing. The Indigenous research framework centred around an Indigenous epistemology, which was used as a guide throughout the research process to help keep the research ethically grounded and the components aligned to achieve methodological coherence.

Doing a qualitative case study also proved to be a significant strength of this research. A case study is ideally suited for providing in-depth exploration of issues or individuals within specific settings or contexts (Creswell, 2007). To the best of my knowledge this is first case study exploring the experiences of Indigenous athletes when they relocate from their reserve to play sport in an urban centre that considered multiple perspectives: the athletes, the athletes' parents, and the billet parents. This diverse lens through which stories were heard provided deep, rich insights to understanding the intricacies impacting the psychological well-being of Indigenous athletes leaving remote or rural communities to play sports in mainstream context. In some instances, the stories shared by all the participants (athletes, parents, and billets) triangulated each other. Triangulation is a process to substantiate the findings of a research by using several data sources, varying perspectives, and multiple data collection methods (Kowalski et al., 2018). Triangulation is another way that trustworthiness can be achieved in qualitative research. An example of how triangulation was demonstrated in this research was seen in how the participants' stories corroborated each other in identifying how important being comfortable

in the new environment was to the athletes adjusting and flourishing. Moreover, having multiple perspectives also helped with highlighting the complexities involved in the case. Some participants provided unique insights about the relocating and adjustment experience that could have only been obtained through hearing their stories. For example, by hearing the stories of the parents we were able to understand the complexities involved with coping as it gave insight into the communal coping process and emotion regulation that the parents engaged in as well. As a result of doing as case that included these multiple perspectives, we gained a deep understanding and rich insight into the athletes' experiences.

Another strength of this research was the data generation methods that were used to gather the stories. Conversational group interviews and photovoice reflections allowed us to gather deep insights and also were culturally relevant as they facilitated storytelling (Kovach, 2009). The conversational group interviews, for example, enabled open and free sharing from participants within a group setting. The group setting allowed people to build on each other's points enriching the stories that were shared. The photovoice reflection was a key strength as it allowed me to explore the athletes' experiences beyond just words by providing a visual representation to help support their shared stories (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2004). Furthermore, by using multiple methods to generate the data and by keeping a reflective journal, I was able to obtain a deep illustration and understanding of the relocation and adjustment experiences of Indigenous athletes while also triangulating the findings (Creswell, 2007; Kowalski et al., 2018).

5.3 LIMITATIONS

Even though this study has many perceived strengths, it was not without its limitations. One such limitation was with the unavailability of a wholly Indigenous data analysis method. One of the aims doing this research was to take a decolonizing approach to the research and

authentically reflect the Indigenous cultural values throughout each stage of the research. I was challenged in finding a wholly Indigenous data analysis method. Data analysis method that I used incorporated Western principles to assist with the meaning making. Data coding and thematic categorizing, which were used in the meaning making process, are traditional Western processes used to analyze qualitative data. Western data analysis methods reduce and fragment data to arrive at meaning which contradicts Indigenous wholistic way of knowing (Kovach, 2009). There is however a lack of wholly Indigenous data analysis methods, which is a challenge for researchers using an Indigenous research framework (Kovach, 2009). According to Kovach (2009), researchers engaging in an Indigenous research framework often have to rely on a mixed method approach which is usually a combination of presenting story, self-in-relation interpretations, and Western thematic analysis. This mixed method approach is what I used; however I tried to ensure that the participants voices were truly represented in the findings by emphasizing the direct quotes and pictures from the participants. Additionally, I ensured that the participants were involved in the meaning making process by giving them an opportunity to member check and reflect on their transcripts and themes created and make changes to the stories shared as they saw fit. Even though I was embracing a decolonizing approach to research, I recognize the limitation of having to incorporate Western methods in the data analysis.

Time constraint was another limiting factor of this research. Research such as mine that aim to have participants collaboratively involved in all stages can be very time and energy consuming (Frisby, Reid, Millar & Hoeber, 2005). Frisby et al. (2005) argue that a participatory research process can be particularly difficult for Masters and Doctoral students who are constrained by University timelines. Given the scope of the project and it being a substantial requirement for completion of my Masters thesis, I was restricted in the amount of time I could

engage in the research process. Therefore, the participant group was limited to the athletes, parents, and billets. However, based on recommendations from community advisors as well as coming out of the stories shared, I believe the research would have been enriched even more if I had the chance to interview additional support groups such as team members, coaches, and home community members. Hearing stories from additional support persons who play distinct roles in the athletes' adjustment and relocation experience could have provided even more unique perspectives or insights to inform the research purpose.

Another limitation of the research was challenges due to the physical distance between participants and myself, which was approximately a 3.5 hour drive. The distance between us made coordinating schedules for interviews quite challenging. This distance restricted the number of contacts and possible follow ups that could have been done. Doing multiple interviews or even adding an extra method of data generation such as observation, could have allowed for even richer insights and understandings into the experiences of the participants. The distance also limited my relationship building efforts with the participants. Relationship building is a key component of using an Indigenous research framework. Indigenous research is very relational and lays the foundation for creating trust between the researcher and the research participants (Kovach, 2009). Unethical research practices in the past have created a lot of mistrust between academia and Indigenous peoples (Tuhiwai Smith, 2016). Trust has therefore become paramount in Indigenous research to facilitate the sharing of story. I was very mindful of the importance of building relationships and was very deliberate in connecting with participants on a relational level. For example, I was deliberate in meeting with the athletes on game days as this gave me an opportunity to watch them play and show my support for them as well. I also built relationship with the athletes' mother by sharing aspects of my personal story

that was relatable to her story as a mother. Being physically closer to the participants may have enriched my relationship building efforts even more and possibly further enhanced the participants familiarity and comfort level with the research process.

Another challenge I encountered was involving the participants collaboratively in the data analysis stage of this research. One of my aims with using an Indigenous research approach was to have the participants collaboratively involved in all aspects of the research. I found it extremely challenging to involve the participants in the data analysis stage of research. This challenge supports previous finding by Frisby et al. (2005) in showing that the data analysis phase of a participatory research is the most challenging to actively engage participants. This phase can be limited by time constraints to do necessary training, time commitment required from participants, and university ethical guidelines (Frisby et al., 2005). Even though the participants in this research were involved in the data analysis stage, as they were able to review and reflect on their transcripts as well as the themes generated and make changes as they saw fit, they were not involved in the data coding and thematic categorization stages. Based on the rigor and requisite training that would have been involved in having the participants input in these aspects of the research I opted to not include them at in these stages. Even though I collaborated with my supervisor as a critical friend throughout the meaning making process, the findings that were arrived at were primarily through my interpretative lens. The participants' contextual lens could have added diverse perspectives that may have led to different conclusions being drawn.

5.4 IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This current research built on the study by Ferguson et al. (2018), which to my knowledge is the only other study exploring Indigenous women athletes' flourishing in sport. This research also built on work by Blodgett and Schinke (2015) and Blodgett et al. (2014) that

explored adaptation strategies for Indigenous athletes when they relocate from reserves to pursue sports. This study went a step further in exploring the Indigenous women athletes' flourishing particularly in the context of relocating and adjusting to a mainstream environment. Given the limited work done so far, there is a need for further qualitative research to deepen the conceptual understanding of Indigenous athletes' well-being when they relocate from remote or rural home communities to pursue sports in an urban mainstream context. Future research could, for example, expand the participant group to hear stories from other key support persons such as team members, community members, and coaching staff. These support groups may provide additional perspectives and factors to consider when looking at ways to support Indigenous athletes reaching their full potential. Future research could also explore the experiences of male Indigenous athletes who relocate from reserves to play sport. This may help to identify if gender differences play a role in athletes experiences and understandings of well-being when they relocate. Research in this area could also be deepened by exploring the impact of proximity from home community on the psychological well-being of Indigenous athletes who relocate from remote or rural communities to pursue sports. The athletes in the current study benefited from relocating to a city that was 45 minutes away from their home community. This meant they were still in relatively close contact to key support groups such as families, friends, and their larger home community. The availability of these key support groups facilitated cultural continuity and connectedness with the home community, which was also found in research by Auger (2016), McHugh et al. (2018), and Oster et al. (2014) to be important to the well-being of Indigenous people. Future research could look at well-being of Indigenous athletes who have relocated to a different province or across the country to pursue sports. Understanding how distance away

from home community impacts the athletes' well-being may be helpful in determining the ideal support mechanism needed for the athletes to flourish in that context.

This research took an important step towards understanding the factors contributing to the well-being of Indigenous athletes when they relocate to pursue sports in mainstream urban context. Some of the factors identified as being important to the athletes' flourishing included: (1) Having a strong support network; (2) Maintaining connections with home community; (3) Developing a sense of belonging in the new environment; and (4) Having a communal coping network. The findings from the current research suggest flourishing for Indigenous athletes who relocate from rural communities to pursue sports in a mainstream environment is not solely up to the athletes. It requires a collaborative effort from various stakeholders such as athletes, parents and family, community members, team members, and sports administrators. There is therefore a need for the development and implementation of programs or initiatives that will facilitate the factors that were identified in this study as critical to Indigenous athletes' flourishing when they relocate to pursue sports. The programs need to focus on promoting wholistic well-being in the athletes, which this study and other researchers such as Ferguson et al. (2018) have indicated is essential for Indigenous athletes to flourish. Future qualitative research could therefore collaboratively engage the stakeholders that make up the support network to identify programs and resources needed to sustain the support group available to athletes. Engaging the key stakeholders as well, future research also needs to create initiatives that will facilitate Indigenous athletes having a sense of belonging in both their home and host communities when the athletes relocate. These research projects may look at informing policies geared towards promoting Indigenous athletes' spiritual, emotional, physical, and mental well-being.

This research was a unique case that explored the stories of two female teenage siblings who were in their first year of relocating to a new environment. The findings from this study are based on a snap-shot of the relocation experiences of these sibling athletes. A person's definition of well-being is situational based on the person's circumstances and evolves according to contexts and experiences (Lundqvist, 2010; Ryff & Singer, 2008). This suggest that the factors the athletes in this study identified as key to their flourishing would have been based on the athletes' context of recently relocating, taking the journey as siblings, and living 45 minutes away from their home community. There is opportunity for future research to explore the psychological well-being of Indigenous athletes in different contexts. For example, future research could longitudinally look at the impact relocating has on the psychological well-being of Indigenous athletes over time. A longitudinal qualitative research study could be beneficial in providing insights and direction that differs from what is presented by cross-sectional data (Grossoehme & Lipstein, 2016).

Another implication from this research is the need for more work to be done to create a comprehensive data analysis model for Indigenous research. This model needs to also provide a blueprint for student researchers on how to collaboratively involve participants in the meaning making and interpretative stages of the Indigenous research process. An Indigenous research framework is still an emerging approach to research in the sense that it is being adapted and applied in academic settings that privilege Western ways of knowing, creating knowledge, and sharing knowledge. This research supports work by Kovach (2009) in emphasizing that Indigenous research continues to be challenged by how to present meaning and interpretations that honour Indigenous epistemologies. The unavailability of a wholly Indigenous data analysis method means that conventional Western data analysis methods are used currently. For

researchers looking to embrace a decolonizing approach to research, more work is needed by Indigenous research scholars to create Indigenous data analysis methods that authentically reflect Indigenous ways of knowing. This Indigenous data analysis method needs to balance cultural authenticity with methodological coherence that is required to make research credible for wider academic audience.

5.5 KNOWLEDGE TRANSLATION

A key consideration when doing Indigenous research is sharing the knowledges obtained through the research process so that others can benefit from the knowledge. This is linked back to the principle of Indigenous knowledges having communal ownership (Tachine et al., 2016). This sharing of knowledges gathered throughout research is done through the process of knowledge translation. Within Indigenous contexts, knowledge translation is defined as “sharing what we know about living a good life” (Estey, Smylie, & Macaulay, 2009, p.3). In a general sense, a goal of this research is to give back to the Indigenous community by articulating the multicultural adjustment experiences of Indigenous athletes when sports are pursued in the mainstream cultural context, and how these experiences impact the athletes’ psychological well-being.

In determining how best to share the knowledges gathered and remaining true to the decolonizing aim of this research, I have sought input from the participants on who they would like to hear their stories. The athletes have indicated that they would like other Indigenous athletes with goals of playing sports be motivated by and benefit from hearing their stories. The experiences the athletes shared was therefore intended to help pave the way for other athletes faced with similar situations and equip them with strategies that will help them to flourish in mainstream context. This process of creating a knowledge translation plan is ongoing and this

phase will continue to honour the collaborative nature of this research. I have started the knowledge sharing process by presenting my learnings at two academic conferences. I have also shared the knowledges gained about using an Indigenous research framework and striving for authenticity in Indigenous research in the form of a book chapter that is currently in the final stages of publication (Johnson et al., in Press). I also plan to submit my research as a manuscript to Indigenous health and/or qualitative research journals (e.g. International Journal of Indigenous Health or Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health). I continue to explore with my participants other avenues that can be utilized to get the stories shared within Indigenous communities so that others can learn from their experiences.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A:
Recruitment Invitation Letter

Invitation Letter

Subject: Invitation to participate in a research project entitled “**Mainstream Sports and Psychological Flourishing**”

Hello _____,

I, **Shara Johnson**, graduate student researcher, from the College of Kinesiology, University of Saskatchewan, invite you to participate in a research project entitled “Mainstream Sports and Psychological Flourishing Study”.

The purpose of this research project is to explore how the psychological well-being of Indigenous athletes pursuing sport in mainstream context is impacted by their multicultural adaptation experiences. Should you choose to participate, you will be asked to participate in three phases:

Phase One: You will be involved in a sharing circle with approximately four other Indigenous athletes, that will be conducted at the College of Kinesiology, at a time is that convenient for you. The sharing circle will allow you to share your multicultural adaptation experiences pursuing sports in mainstream context and indicate how these experiences hindered or enhanced your flourishing in sports. The sharing circle is anticipated to last between 45-60 minutes.

Phase Two: This entails a photovoice exercise, which is a research method whereby photographs are used by people to depict, reflect, and improve their community. You will be asked to take pictures you believe represent some of your adaptation experiences in mainstream culture, and pictures reflecting these experiences influencing your flourishing in sport. You will have 2 weeks to photograph your experiences, and you will be invited to select five photographs and email to the researcher to prepare for discussion in Phase Three.

Phase Three: You will be involved in a second sharing circle that will focus on discussing your five selected photographs. This sharing circle will also be conducted at the College of Kinesiology, at a time that is convenient for you. This sharing circle is also anticipated to last between 45-60 minutes. At the end of the sharing circle information regarding next steps in the research process which includes transcript vetting will be provided.

In appreciation for your time, you will receive a \$25.00 gift certificate to Sport Check after each sharing circle.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me (see below for contact information).

Thank you,

Shara Johnson

Student Researcher: Shara Johnson, Masters Student, College of Kinesiology, University of Saskatchewan, 639- 470-2052, shara.johnson@usask.ca

Supervisor (Primary Investigator): Dr. Leah Ferguson, College of Kinesiology, 306-966-1093, leah.ferguson@usask.ca

This study has been reviewed and received ethics approval through University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board.

Appendix B:
Consent Forms



Participant Consent Form

Project Title: Mainstream Sports and Psychological Flourishing

Student Researcher: Shara Johnson, Master's Student, College of Kinesiology, University of Saskatchewan, 639- 470-2052, shara.johnson@usask.ca

Supervisor: Dr. Leah Ferguson, College of Kinesiology, 306-966-1093, leah.ferguson@usask.ca

Purpose:

The purpose of this study is to explore how the psychological well-being of Indigenous athletes pursuing sport in mainstream context is impacted by their multicultural adaptation experiences.

Procedure:

Your participation is completely voluntary and consists of three phases.

Phase One: You will be involved in a sharing circle with approximately four other Indigenous athletes that will be conducted at the College of Kinesiology, at a time is that convenient for you. The sharing circle will allow you to share your multicultural adaptation experiences pursuing sports in mainstream context and indicate how these experiences hindered or enhanced your flourishing in sports. The sharing circle is anticipated to last between 45-60 minutes. Once the sharing circle is complete instructions regarding Phase Two of the study will be explained.

Phase Two: This entails a photovoice exercise, which is a research method whereby photographs are used by people to depict, reflect, and improve their community. You will be asked to take pictures you believe represent some of your adaptation experiences in mainstream culture, and pictures reflecting these experiences influencing your flourishing in sport. You will have 2 weeks to photograph your experiences, and you will be invited to select five photographs and email to me to prepare for discussion in Phase Three.

Phase Three: You will be involved in a second sharing circle that will focus on discussing your five selected photographs. This sharing circle will also be conducted at the College of Kinesiology, at a time that is convenient for you. The sharing circle is anticipated to last between 45-60 minutes.

Both sharing circles will be audio taped (with permission), and field notes will be taken. The audiotapes will be transcribed (written out) word for word in order for the research team to review what was said and develop a rich narrative of the experiences presented. As a participant, you will be asked to provide feedback on the transcripts by reflecting on what was shared and identifying any gaps in information.

Funding

This study is funded by a 2015 Saskatchewan Health Research Foundation Establishment Grant.

Potential Risks:

There are no known or anticipated physical or psychological risks associated with participating in this study. You have the right to refuse to answer any question. Not answering a question or withdrawing from the study will result in no penalty to you or anyone else. Although we do not expect any psychological risk, the research project may be sensitive in nature for you. If you feel participation is placing you under stress we will discontinue your involvement in the study, again resulting in no penalty. If you wish, any data collected prior to this point will be omitted from the study and destroyed. Below is a resource you can use if you would like professional help dealing with your personal experiences. You can also contact the lead researchers at any time during the study with the information listed above.

Saskatchewan Mental Health Services - services available to the public, no fee
Phone # 306-655-7950

- Youth Mental Health Services (for adolescents 12-19 years old)
- Adult Community Mental Health and Addictions (for adults 19 years and up)

Potential Benefits:

As a participant in this study you will receive a \$25 gift certificate to Sport Chek after each sharing circle as a thank you for participating in the study. Although no additional benefits of participating in this study can be guaranteed, this study has the potential to help researchers develop further understanding of the approaches that are required by Indigenous athletes pursuing sports in mainstream context to successfully adapt to the mainstream. The stories of athletes' experiences will help to pave the way for other athletes faced with similar situations and equip them with strategies that will help them to flourish in mainstream context.

Confidentiality:

The data from the study will be used as part of the student researcher's program, to produce a thesis document towards the completion of the researcher's Master's Degree, and to produce a manuscript in hopes of publishing in a scholarly journal and/or being presented at a conference. However, *your identity* will be kept confidential. Although we might report direct quotations from the sharing circles, you will be asked to choose a pseudonym (made up name) and all identifying information (name, coach, school, address, home community, etc.) will be removed from our report. Although you will be asked to provide an email address, it will only be used to send reminder emails to you about participating in the photovoice exercise, and scheduling a time for the sharing circles. After all data has been collected, your email address will be removed from the data file and replaced with a participant number. Written reports of the data will be reported in summarized form so that it will not be possible to identify individuals.

After your sharing circles, and prior to the data being included in the final report, you will be given the opportunity to review the transcript of your sharing circles, and to add, alter, or delete information from the transcripts as you see fit. Also, it is important that you are aware that there are certain types of information that the researchers may be obliged to report to relevant authorities (e.g., child abuse, intent to do violence, etc.).

Right to Withdraw:

Your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study for any reason, at any time, without penalty of any sort. The decision to withdraw will not affect any of your current or future activities. Your right to withdraw data from the study will apply until data is pooled and analyzed. After this, it is possible that some form of research dissemination will have already occurred and it may not be possible to withdraw your data. You may also refuse to answer individual questions, again without any

penalty. You will be advised of any new information that may have a bearing on your decision to participate. Prior to each sharing circle, you will be asked if you still wish to participate.

Storage of Data:

All research material will be securely stored in the office of Dr. Leah Ferguson at the University of Saskatchewan, for a minimum of five years post publication of the findings.

Questions or Concerns:

- If you have any questions concerning the research project, please feel free to contact the researchers. You are also free to contact the researchers if you have questions at a later time.
- This research project has been approved on ethical grounds by the University of Saskatchewan Research Ethics Board. Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to that committee through the Research Ethics Office ethics.office@usask.ca (306) 966-2975. Out of town participants may call toll free (888) 966-2975.

Consent to participate:

I have read and understand the description of the research study provided above. I have been provided with an opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered satisfactorily. I agree to participate in the study described above, understanding that I may withdraw my consent to participate at any time. A copy of this consent form has been given to me for my records.

I give permission for the photographs to be used under the following conditions only:

___ As raw data, not to be viewed outside the research team,

___ Only those projects that do not reveal my identity may be used for educational purposes (professional and research presentations) and research publications,

___ All projects can be used for educational purposes (professional and research presentations) and research publications

_____ *Name of Participant* _____ *Signature* _____ *Date*

_____ *Researcher's Signature* _____ *Date*

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



Participant Assent Form

Project Title: Mainstream Sports and Psychological Flourishing

Student Researcher: Shara Johnson, Master's Student, College of Kinesiology, University of Saskatchewan, 639- 470-2052, shara.johnson@usask.ca

Supervisor: Dr. Leah Ferguson, College of Kinesiology, 306-966-1093, leah.ferguson@usask.ca

Purpose:

The purpose of this study is to explore how the psychological well-being of Indigenous athletes pursuing sport in mainstream context is impacted by their multicultural adaptation experiences.

Procedure:

Your participation is completely voluntary and consists of three phases.

Phase One: You will be involved in a sharing circle with approximately four other Indigenous athletes that will be conducted at the College of Kinesiology, at a time is that convenient for you. The sharing circle will allow you to share your multicultural adaptation experiences pursuing sports in mainstream context and indicate how these experiences hindered or enhanced your flourishing in sports. The sharing circle is anticipated to last between 45-60 minutes. Once the sharing circle is complete instructions regarding Phase Two of the study will be explained.

Phase Two: This entails a photovoice exercise, which is a research method whereby photographs are used by people to depict, reflect, and improve their community. You will be asked to take pictures you believe represent some of your adaptation experiences in mainstream culture, and pictures reflecting these experiences influencing your flourishing in sport. You will have 2 weeks to photograph your experiences, and you will be invited to select five photographs and email to the researcher to prepare for discussion in Phase Three.

Phase Three: You will be involved in a second sharing circle that will focus on discussing your selected photographs. This sharing circle will also be conducted at the College of Kinesiology, at a time that is convenient for you. The sharing circle is anticipated to last between 45-60 minutes.

Both sharing circles will be audio taped (with permission), and field notes will be taken. The audiotapes will be transcribed (written out) word for word in order for the research team to review what was said and develop a rich narrative of the experiences presented. As a participant, you will be asked to provide feedback on the transcripts by reflecting on what was shared and identifying any gaps in information.

Funding

This study is funded by a 2015 Saskatchewan Health Research Foundation Establishment Grant.

Potential Risks:

There are no known or anticipated physical or psychological risks associated with participating in this study. You have the right to refuse to answer any question. Not answering a question or withdrawing from the study will result in no penalty to you or anyone else. Although we do not expect any psychological risk, the research project may be sensitive in nature for you. If you feel participation is placing you under stress we will discontinue your involvement in the study, again resulting in no penalty. If you wish, any data collected prior to this point will be omitted from the study and destroyed. Below is a resource you can use if you would like professional help dealing with your personal experiences. You can also contact the lead researchers at any time during the study with the information listed above.

Saskatchewan Mental Health Services - services available to the public, no fee
Phone # 306-655-7950

- Youth Mental Health Services (for adolescents 12-19 years old)

Potential Benefits:

As a participant in this study you will receive a \$25 gift certificate to Sport Chek after each sharing circle as a thank you for participating in the study. Although no additional benefits of participating in this study can be guaranteed, this study has the potential to help researchers develop further understanding of the approaches that are required by Indigenous athletes pursuing sports in mainstream context to successfully adapt to the mainstream. The stories of athletes' experiences will help to pave the way for other athletes faced with similar situations and equip them with strategies that will help them to flourish in mainstream context.

Confidentiality:

The data from the study will be used as part of the student researcher's program, to produce a thesis document towards the completion of the researcher's Master's Degree, and to produce a manuscript in hopes of publishing in a scholarly journal and/or being presented at a conference. However, *your identity* will be kept confidential. Although we might report direct quotations from the sharing circles, you will be asked to choose a pseudonym (made up name) and all identifying information (name, coach, school, address, home community, etc.) will be removed from our report. Although you will be asked to provide an email address, it will only be used to send reminder emails to you about participating in the photovoice exercise, and scheduling a time for the sharing circles. After all data has been collected, your email address will be removed from the data file and replaced with a participant number. Written reports of the data will be reported in summarized form so that it will not be possible to identify individuals.

After your sharing circles, and prior to the data being included in the final report, you will be given the opportunity to review the transcript of your sharing circles, and to add, alter, or delete information from the transcripts as you see fit. Also, it is important that you are aware that there are certain types of information that the researchers may be obliged to report to relevant authorities (e.g., child abuse, intent to do violence, etc.).

Right to Withdraw:

Your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study for any reason, at any time, without penalty of any sort. The decision to withdraw will not affect any of your current or future activities. Your right to withdraw data from the study will apply until data is pooled and analyzed. After this, it is possible that some form of research dissemination will have already occurred and it may not be possible to withdraw your data. You may also refuse to answer individual questions, again without any penalty. You will be advised of any new information that may have a bearing on your decision to participate. Prior to each sharing circle, you will be asked if you still wish to participate.



Parent/Guardian Consent Form

Your daughter/son has been invited to participate in a study entitled “**mainstream stream sports and psychological flourishing**”. Please read this form carefully, and feel free to ask questions you might have.

Student Researcher: Shara Johnson, Master’s Student, College of Kinesiology, University of Saskatchewan, 639- 470-2052, shara.johnson@usask.ca

Supervisor: Dr. Leah Ferguson, College of Kinesiology, 306-966-1093, leah.ferguson@usask.ca

Purpose:

The purpose of this study is to explore how the psychological well-being of Indigenous athletes pursuing sport in mainstream context is impacted by their multicultural adaptation experiences.

Procedure:

Your daughter/son’s participation is completely voluntary and consists of three phases.

Phase One: Your daughter/son will be involved in a sharing circle with approximately four other Indigenous athletes that will be conducted at the College of Kinesiology, at a time is that convenient for her/him. The sharing circle will allow your child to share her/his multicultural adaptation experiences pursuing sports in mainstream context and indicate how these experiences hindered or enhanced her/his flourishing in sports. The sharing circle is anticipated to last between 45-60 minutes. Once the sharing circle is complete instructions regarding Phase Two of the study will be explained.

Phase Two: This entails a photovoice exercise, which is a research method whereby photographs are used by people to depict, reflect, and improve their community. Your daughter/son will be asked to take pictures she/he believes represent some of her/his adaptation experiences in mainstream culture, and pictures reflecting these experiences influencing her/his flourishing in sport. Your daughter/son will have 2 weeks to photograph her/his experiences and will be invited to select five photographs and email to the researcher to prepare for discussion in Phase Three.

Phase Three: Your daughter/son will be involved in a second sharing circle that will focus on discussing her/his selected photographs. This sharing circle will also be conducted at the College of Kinesiology, at a time that is convenient for her/him. Your daughter/son will be invited to discuss the five photographs selected from the photovoice exercise with the group. The sharing circle is anticipated to last between 45-60 minutes.

Both sharing circles will be audio taped (with permission), and field notes will be taken. The audiotapes will be transcribed (written out) word for word in order for the research team to review what was said and develop a rich narrative of the experiences presented. As a participant, your daughter/son will be asked to

provide feedback on the transcripts by reflecting on what was shared and identifying any gaps in information.

Funding

This study is funded by a 2015 Saskatchewan Health Research Foundation Establishment Grant.

Potential Risks:

There are no known or anticipated physical or psychological risks associated with participating in this study. Your daughter/son have the right to refuse to answer any question. Not answering a question or withdrawing from the study will result in no penalty to your daughter/son or anyone else. Although we do not expect any psychological risk, the research project may be sensitive in nature for your daughter/son. If you or your child feels participation is placing your daughter/son under stress we will discontinue her/his involvement in the study, again resulting in no penalty. If you wish, any data collected prior to this point will be omitted from the study and destroyed. Below is a resource your daughter/son can use if you would like professional help dealing with her/his personal experiences. You can also contact the lead researchers at any time during the study with the information listed above.

Saskatchewan Mental Health Services - services available to the public, no fee
Phone # 306-655-7950

- Youth Mental Health Services (for adolescents 12-19 years old)
- Adult Community Mental Health and Addictions (for adults 19 years and up)

Potential Benefits:

As a participant in this study your daughter/son will receive a \$25 gift certificate to Sport Chek after each sharing circle as a thank you for participating in the study. Although no additional benefits of participating in this study can be guaranteed, this study has the potential to help researchers develop further understanding of the approaches that are required by Indigenous athletes pursuing sports in mainstream context to successfully adapt to the mainstream. The stories of athletes' experiences will help to pave the way for other athletes faced with similar situations and equip them with strategies that will help them to flourish in mainstream context.

Confidentiality:

The data from the study will be used as part of the student researcher's program, to produce a thesis document towards the completion of the researcher's Master's Degree, and to produce a manuscript in hopes of publishing in a scholarly journal and/or being presented at a conference. However, *your child's identity* will be kept confidential. Although we might report direct quotations from the sharing circles, your daughter/son will be asked to choose a pseudonym (made up name) and all identifying information (name, coach, school, address, home community, etc.) will be removed from our report. Although your child will be asked to provide an email address, it will only be used to send reminder emails to your child about participating in the photovoice exercise, and scheduling times for the sharing circles. After all data has been collected, the email address will be removed from the data file and replaced with a participant number. Written reports of the data will be reported in summarized form so that it will not be possible to identify individuals.

After the sharing circles, and prior to the data being included in the final report, your daughter/son will be given the opportunity to review the transcript of your sharing circles, and to add, alter, or delete information from the transcripts as you see fit. Also, it is important that you are aware that there are certain types of information that the researchers may be obliged to report to relevant authorities (e.g., child abuse, intent to do violence, etc.).

Right to Withdraw:

Your child’s participation is voluntary, and she/he may withdraw from the study for any reason, at any time, without penalty of any sort. The decision to withdraw will not affect any of you or your child’s current or future activities. Your child’s right to withdraw data from the study will apply until data is pooled and analyzed. After this, it is possible that some form of research dissemination will have already occurred and it may not be possible to withdraw your child’s data. Your daughter/son may also refuse to answer individual questions, again without any penalty. You will be advised of any new information that may have a bearing on your decision to have your child participate. Prior to each sharing circle, your child will be asked if she/he still wishes to participate.

Storage of Data:

All research material will be securely stored in the office of Dr. Leah Ferguson at the University of Saskatchewan, for a minimum of five years post publication of the findings.

Questions or Concerns:

- If you have any questions concerning the research project, please feel free to contact the researchers. You are also free to contact the researchers if you have questions at a later time.
- This research project has been approved on ethical grounds by the University of Saskatchewan Research Ethics Board. Any questions regarding your child’s rights as a participant may be addressed to that committee through the Research Ethics Office ethics.office@usask.ca (306) 966-2975. Out of town participants may call toll free (888) 966-2975.

Consent to participate:

I have read and understand the description of the research study provided above. I have been provided with an opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered satisfactorily. I agree to my daughter/son participating in the study described above, understanding that he/she may withdraw my consent to participate at any time. A copy of this consent form has been given to me for my records.

I give permission for the photographs to be used under the following conditions only:

___ As raw data, not to be viewed outside the research team,

___ Only those projects that do not reveal my daughter/son’s identity may be used for educational purposes (professional and research presentations) and research publications,

___ All projects can be used for educational purposes (professional and research presentations) and research publications

<i>Name of Parent/Guardian</i>	<i>Signature</i>	<i>Date</i>
<i>Researcher’s Signature</i>	<i>Date</i>	

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

Appendix C:
Phase One Conversational Interview Guide

Athletes' Conversational Group Interview Guide

Preparation

- Participants will be provided with the following guiding question and instructions prior to the conversational interview (e.g., one week in advance) to ensure participants have time for thoughtful reflection of their experiences and meanings to share in the sharing circle:
 - *Please take some time before the sharing circle to reflect on your experiences relocating and adjusting to playing sports in a mainstream cultural environment and consider how having to adapt to a mainstream cultural setting may have enhanced or impacted your psychological well-being.*

Introductory Remarks

- Purpose of sharing circle
 - The purpose of this study is to explore how the psychological well-being of Indigenous athletes pursuing sport in mainstream context is impacted by their multicultural adaptation experiences.
- Logistics of sharing circle
 - Persons will be asked to sit where they are comfortable in a circular position.
 - A sharing stick will be circulated clockwise around the circle, and you will be invited, one at a time, to respond to a designated question or topic. You can choose to not initially respond and instead listen to the views of others and contribute later in the discussion. We will make progressive turns around the circle, with only one person speaking at a time. Please respect the circle and everyone who shares by not sharing information with anyone outside of the circle.
- Issues related to consent
 - Participants have opportunity to ask questions, read, and sign consent forms.
 - Have each participant choose a pseudonym.
 - You may choose to not answer any questions that you are not comfortable answering, and you have the right to withdraw from the study without penalty.
 - Take your time and do not feel rushed. There is no right or wrong answer. I am trying to gain insight into your experiences.
- Reminder of Interview Preparation
 - Participants were provided with the following:
Please take some time before the sharing circle to reflect on your experiences relocating and adjusting to playing sports in a mainstream cultural environment and consider how having to adapt to a mainstream cultural setting may have enhanced or impacted your psychological well-being.

Conversational group interview*(note: after each round, the opportunity will be given for each athlete to provide additional insight, perhaps something forgotten to discuss during the round or something that emerged from another athletes' comments, before progressing to the next round)*

- Round 1
 - When we get to the end point of the research process, it is great to have “self-descriptions” of those who participated in our research, so you are represented in ways that you feel comfortable. Knowing that, please introduce who you are, where you are from, and any other “self-description” information you want to provide.
- Round 2
 - Describe your history in sport, and where you currently are.
- Round 3
 - What would say is your best moment playing sport?

- Round 4
 - What would you say is your most challenging moment in sport?
- Round 5
 - In the study done by Ferguson et al. (2017) as part of this larger research project, Indigenous women athletes were asked to share what does it mean to flourish or have psychological well-being? Factors such as having multidimensional community support, achieving personal goals, persistent growth, realizing wholistic athletic excellence, and receiving humble recognitions have been identified as essential to Indigenous athletes' definition of psychological well-being in sport. Consider Ferguson and colleagues' (2017) emerging structure of flourishing in sport and discuss any personal differences in your own meaning.
- Round 6
 - Describe what influence, if any, your home community as had in you being an Indigenous athlete.
- Round 7
 - Describe what it was like relocating from your home community to play sport in an urban mainstream context.
- Round 8
 - What cultural differences, if any, were there between playing sport in your home community and an urban mainstream context?
- Round 9
 - How do you think your experiences of having to adapt to a mainstream culture impacted or enhanced your flourishing in sport?
- Round 10
 - Open for final thoughts

Closing Interview

- Shake hands inside and outside of circle

Final Notes

- Discuss transcript member reflection - inform participants about requirement to sign a transcript release form.
- Distribute honorariums
- Discuss photovoice component for Phase Two
 1. Provide photovoice instructions: Participants will be provided with the following guiding instructions ensure participants have time for thoughtful reflection of their experiences, meanings, taking photographs and selection of photographs that they will share in the second sharing circle:
Please take the next two weeks to take pictures you believe represent some of your adaptation experiences in mainstream culture, and pictures reflecting these experiences influencing your flourishing in sport. Please only take pictures you will be comfortable with sharing to others as you will be invited to choose five of your pictures and share the stories behind them in the second sharing circle. For ease of sharing, please email your selected five photographs to me at shara.johnson@usask.ca at least two days prior to the scheduled meeting date for the second sharing circle.
 2. Explain photograph release– i.e. they have to give me their consent before the photos will be shown to anyone.

3. Explain that consent must be obtained from the third party if he/she appears in the photograph and distribute photo release forms. If the participant in the photograph is under the age of 18, the photo will not be used for presentation or publication purposes.
4. Explain that the participants will not be judged on their photographs. The photographs are simply a means of generating discussion and promote understanding.
5. Ask participants if they have any questions.

Appendix D:
Demographic Questionnaire

Information Questionnaire

This questionnaire contains ten questions and is intended to collect descriptive information about who is participating in this project. We ask that you complete this questionnaire with as much accuracy as possible. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask the researcher.

Section 1: Demographic Information

1. What is your pseudonym (chosen/fake name) in this study? _____
2. What is your email address? _____
(to contact you for scheduling the second sharing circle and reviewing the typed-out audio file)
3. What is your date of birth or age? __ __ / __ __ / ____ __
 M M D D Y Y Y Y
 _____ yrs _____ months
4. How do you self-identify your Aboriginal ancestry? _____
5. What was your original community of residence? _____
6. What is the name of the community you relocated to in order to play sport competitively? _____

Section 2: Sports Participation and Training History

7. What is the primary sport you are participating in as an athlete?

Ice Hockey	<input type="radio"/>
Archery	<input type="radio"/>
Track and Field	<input type="radio"/>
Boxing	<input type="radio"/>
Rowing	<input type="radio"/>
Speed Skating	<input type="radio"/>
Wrestling	<input type="radio"/>
Volleyball	<input type="radio"/>
Basketball	<input type="radio"/>
Gymnastics	<input type="radio"/>
Soccer	<input type="radio"/>
Football	<input type="radio"/>
Golf	<input type="radio"/>

- Swimming
- Field Hockey
- Cross-Country Running
- Rugby
- Tennis
- Swimming
- Downhill Skiing
- Other (please specify) _____

8. What is the highest level of competition you have **ever** competed at in sport in a mainstream urban setting?

- Local
(Competing against athletes from your city/town/community)
- Provincial
(Competing against athletes from around the province)
- Regional
(Competing against athletes from the Western provinces)
- National
(Competing at National Championships)
- Elite for Age
(Competing at an international level against athletes of the same age group)
- International
(Competing for your country of Citizenship at an international level)
- Other (please specify) _____

9. What is the highest level you are **currently** (the past 12 months) competing at in your primary sport?

- Local
(Competing against athletes from your city/town/community)
- Provincial
(Competing against athletes from around the province)
- Regional
(Competing against athletes from the Western provinces)
- National
(Competing at National Championships)

Elite for Age
(Competing at an international level against athletes of the same age group)

International
(Competing for your country of Citizenship at an international level)

Other (please specify) _____

10. How many years have you competed in your sport in a mainstream setting?

≤ 1 year

1 to 2 years

2 to 5 years

5 to 10 years

More than 10 years

Appendix E:
Photograph Release Form

Appendix F:
Email Reminder Script

Email Reminder Script

Subject: Mainstream Sports and Psychological Flourishing Study | Photovoice Reminder

Body:

Hello _____,

Thank you again for completing the first phase of this study.

This is a friendly reminder about the second phase of our study, the photovoice component. Please take the next two weeks to take pictures you believe represent some of your adaptation experiences in mainstream culture, and pictures reflecting these experiences influencing your flourishing in sport. Please only take pictures you will be comfortable with sharing to others as you will be invited to choose five of your pictures and share the stories behind them in the second sharing circle. For ease of sharing, please email your selected five photographs to me at shara.johnson@usask.ca at least two days prior to the scheduled meeting date for the second sharing circle.

The pictures you take are intended to be a visual reflection of your experiences and you can take pictures you believe will represent your story. We appreciate your ongoing involvement in this study. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at Shara.johnson@usask.ca.

Thank you,

Shara Johnson

Appendix G:
Phase Three Photovoice Reflection Guide

Photovoice Reflection Guide

Preparation

- Participants will be provided with an email reminder about the photovoice exercise (see appendix F) and emailing the photographs at least two days prior to the scheduled date for sharing circle # 2. Prior to sharing circle the five photographs emailed to me by each participant will be placed on a PowerPoint presentation. A file will be created for each participant with each discussing one of their photograph in each round.

Introductory Remarks

- Purpose of sharing circle
 - Thank you for completing the photograph phase of the study. The purpose of this sharing circle is to reflect on and discuss the meanings of the photographs taken during your photovoice exercise and to explore how they represent your experiences and as an Indigenous athlete pursuing sport in mainstream context.
- Logistics of sharing circle
 - Persons will be asked to sit where they are comfortable in a circular position.
 - A sharing stick will be circulated clockwise around the circle, and you will be invited, one at a time, to share the story behind the photograph. You can choose to not initially respond and instead listen to the views of others and contribute later in the discussion. We will make progressive turns around the circle, with only one person speaking at a time. Please respect the circle and everyone who shares by not sharing information with anyone outside of the circle.
- Issues related to consent
 - Participants will be asked if they would like to continue participating in the study and reminded of their right to discontinue at any point without any penalty.
 - Participants will use the pseudonym that they had chosen in sharing circle #1.
 - Participants will be told that they may choose to not answer any questions that they are not comfortable answering.
 - Participants will be told to take their time to respond and do not feel rushed. My aim is to gain insight into their experiences.
- Reminder of Sharing Circle Preparation
 - Participants were provided with the following:
Please take the next two weeks to take pictures you believe represent some of your adaptation experiences in mainstream culture, and pictures reflecting these experiences influencing your flourishing in sport. Please only take pictures you will be comfortable with sharing to others as you will be invited to choose five of your pictures and share the stories behind them in the second sharing circle.

Group Interview (*note: after each round, the opportunity will be given for each athlete to provide additional insight, perhaps something forgotten to discuss during the round or something that emerged from another athletes' comments, before progressing to the next round*)

- Rounds 1 (Opening thoughts about the photovoice exercise)
 - To start off I just want to get your thoughts on how you felt about the photovoice exercise?
- Rounds 2 – 6 (Discussing each photograph)

- What is this photograph about?
 - What does this photograph tell about your adaptation experience playing sport in a mainstream culture and your psychological well-being?
 - Why do you think this photograph was important to share with other Indigenous athletes?
 - Would you say you have a better understanding of yourself and your experiences after this photograph taking process?
- Round 7 (Open for final thoughts)
 - Do you have anything else you would like to add regarding your photographs and your experience?

Closing Group Interview

- Shake hands inside and outside of circle

Final Notes

- Discuss member reflections of the transcript (will need to sign a transcript release form) and provide debrief form

- Distribute honorariums

Appendix H:
Transcript Release Form

Appendix I:
Debrief Form



UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN

Debriefing Form

Dear Participant:

Thank you for completing the phases of the research study “Adaptation Experiences and Psychological Flourishing in Indigenous Athletes Pursuing Sports in Mainstream Cultural Context”. Your participation is highly valued. The research being conducted in this study focuses on how the psychological well-being of Indigenous athletes pursuing sport in mainstream context is impacted by their multicultural adaptation experiences. This research will be used to fulfill the requirements of a Master of Science Degree at the University of Saskatchewan. The results from the research will also be prepared for presentation(s) and manuscript(s) for publication in research journal(s).

To formally request the results from this research project please contact Shara Johnson at shara.johnson@usask.ca or Dr. Leah Ferguson at leah.ferguson@usask.ca. The results of this study will be presented in both a written Master of Science thesis and defense. The results of this study will become available in the fall of 2018.

I sincerely hope that you have enjoyed this research process and I am very thankful for your participation.

Sincerely Yours:

Shara Johnson

Appendix J:

Phase 4 Parents Conversational Group Interview Guide

Parents Conversational Group Interview Guide

Preparation

- Participants will be provided with the following guiding question and instructions prior to the interview (e.g., one week in advance) to ensure participants have time for thoughtful reflection of their experiences and meanings to share in the interview:
 - *Please take some time before the interview to reflect on your experiences as a parent of Indigenous athletes who have relocated from their home community to playing sports in a mainstream cultural environment. Also, consider how having to adjust to a mainstream cultural setting may have enhanced or impacted your child/children flourishing.*

Introductory Remarks

- Purpose of conversational group interview
The purpose of this study is to explore how the psychological well-being of Indigenous athletes pursuing sport in mainstream context is impacted by their multicultural adaptation experiences. The roles played by parents and support persons are emerging as critical aspects in understanding the relocation and adaptation experiences of Indigenous athletes and therefore will also be explored.
- Logistics of conversational group interview
 - Participants will be asked to sit where they are comfortable.
 - Participants will be invited to respond to a designated question or topic. They can choose to not respond to a question or come back to it at a later time.
- Issues related to consent
 - Participants have opportunity to ask questions, read, and sign consent forms.
 - Participants will be asked to choose a pseudonym.
 - You may choose to not answer any questions that you are not comfortable answering, and you have the right to withdraw from the study without penalty.
 - Take your time and do not feel rushed. There is no right or wrong answer. I am trying to gain insight into your experiences.
- Reminder of interview preparation
 - Participants were provided with the following:
Please take some time before the interview to reflect on your experience as a parent of Indigenous athletes who have relocated and is adjusting to playing sports in a mainstream cultural environment. Also, consider how them having to adapt to a mainstream cultural setting may have enhanced or impacted their psychological well-being.

Conversational Group Interview (*note: after each round, the opportunity will be given for each parent to provide additional insight, perhaps something forgotten to discuss during the round or something that emerged from the other parent's comments, before progressing to the next round*)

- Round 1
 - When we get to the end point of the research process, it is great to have “self-descriptions” of those who participated in our research, so you are represented in ways that you feel comfortable. Knowing that, please introduce who you are, where you are from, and any other “self-description” information you want to provide.
- Round 2
 - Describe your history as a parent supporting your children's athletic pursuits.
- Round 3
 - What would say is a positive parenting moment in your child/children athletic pursuits?

- Round 4
 - What would you say is a challenging parenting moment in your child/children athletic pursuits?
- Round 5
 - Describe what influence, if any, you think your home community has had on the child/children athletic pursuits.
- Round 6
 - Describe what influence, if any, you think the billet family has had on your child/children athletic pursuits.
- Round 7
 - Describe what it has been like for you since your child/children left home to play sport in a larger urban city.
- Round 8
 - What do you think it has been like for your child/children since leaving home to play sport in a larger urban city?
- Round 9
 - As a parent of children who have relocated to play sport, describe how you have been able to support them on their journey?
- Round 10
 - What cultural differences, if any, have you observed between the girls playing sport in your home community and in an urban mainstream context?
- Round 11
 - When you hear the word flourishing, what comes to mind?
 - When do you think your child/children is/are flourishing?
- Round 12
 - How do you think the experiences of your child/children having to relocate to playing sport in a big city have enhanced their flourishing in sport?
- Round 13
 - How do you think the experiences of your child/children having to relocate to playing sport in a big city have challenged or restricted their flourishing in sport?
- Round 14
 - Open for final thoughts. Would you like to add anything to what we have spoken about or add something that has not been talked about?

Closing Interview

- Shake hands

Final Notes

- Discuss transcript member reflection - inform participants about requirement to sign a transcript release form.

Appendix K:

Phase 5 Billets' Conversational Group Interview Guide

Billets' Conversational Group Interview Guide

The purpose of this study is to explore how the psychological well-being of Indigenous athletes pursuing sport in mainstream context is impacted by their relocation and adjustment experiences. The roles played by parents and support persons are emerging as critical aspects in understanding the relocation and adjustment experiences of Indigenous athletes and therefore will also be explored.

Conversational Interview (*note: after each round, the opportunity will be given for each billet to provide additional insight, perhaps something forgotten to discuss during the round or something that emerged from the other parent's comments, before progressing to the next round*)

- Round 1
 - When we get to the end point of the research process, it is great to have “self-descriptions” of those who participated in our research, so you are represented in ways that you feel comfortable. Knowing that, please introduce who you are, where you are from, and any other “self-description” information you want to provide.
- Round 2
 - Describe your history as a billet supporting the child/children's athletic pursuits.
- Round 3
 - What would you say is a positive billet parenting moment in your child/children athletic pursuits?
- Round 4
 - What would you say is a challenging billet parenting moment in your child/children athletic pursuits?
- Round 5
 - Describe what influence, if any, you think this new city has had on the child/children athletic pursuits.
- Round 6
 - What do you think it has been like for your billet child/children since leaving home to play sport in a larger urban city?
- Round 7
 - As a billet parent of children who have relocated to play sport, describe how you have been able to support them on their journey?
- Round 8
 - When you hear the word flourishing, what comes to mind?
 - When do you think your child/children is/are flourishing?
- Round 09
 - How do you think the experiences of your billet child/children having to relocate to playing sport in a big city have enhanced their flourishing in sport?
- Round 10

- How do you think the experiences of your child/children having to relocate to playing sport in a big city have challenged or restricted their flourishing in sport?
- Round 11
 - Open for final thoughts. Would you like to add anything to what we have spoken about or add something that has not been talked about?

Closing Remarks