



Building sustainable sport programs for Indigenous Youth: Perceived Strengths and Challenges of the PLAY Program

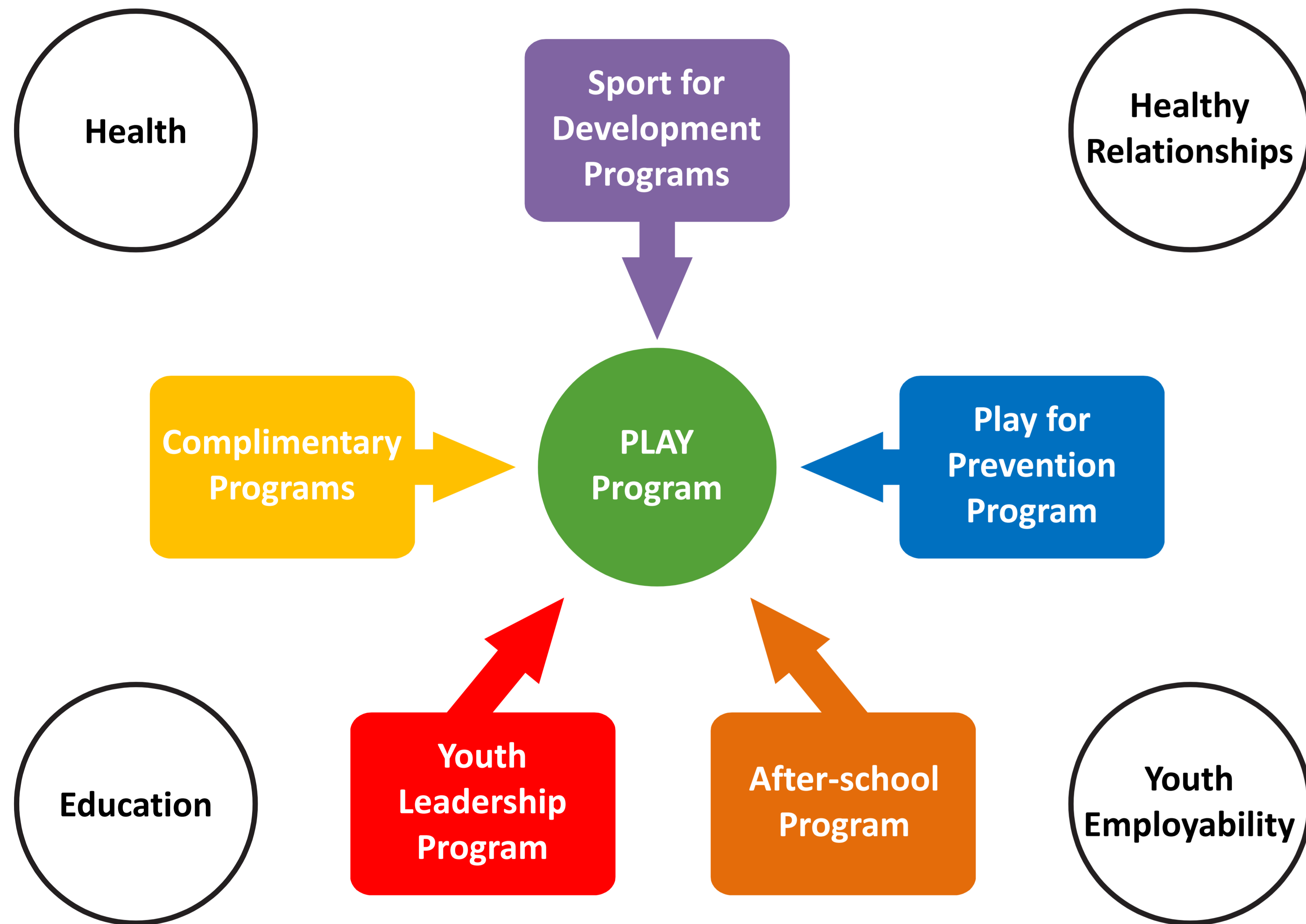


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INTRODUCTION

Right to Play's "Promoting Life-skills in Aboriginal Youth" (PLAY) program explores how to build sustainable sport programs for Indigenous youth. PLAY uses the transformative power of sport and play to educate and empower Aboriginal children to become leaders and active participants in their communities. However, there is currently a lack of evaluation in sport programming involving Aboriginal youth (Danish, Forneris, Hodge, & Heke, 2004). Thus, the University of Ottawa has collaborated with Right to Play to perform an evaluation of the PLAY program. The evaluation of the PLAY program assessed: (1) community engagement, (2) youth development, (3) stakeholder perceptions of the program to evaluate objective alignment, and (4) results related to the program's success factors. This data was useful in enhancing sustainability and informing future evaluation practices. In particular, this study explored the perceptions and personal views of 10 PLAY staff members on the perceived strengths and challenges of the program.



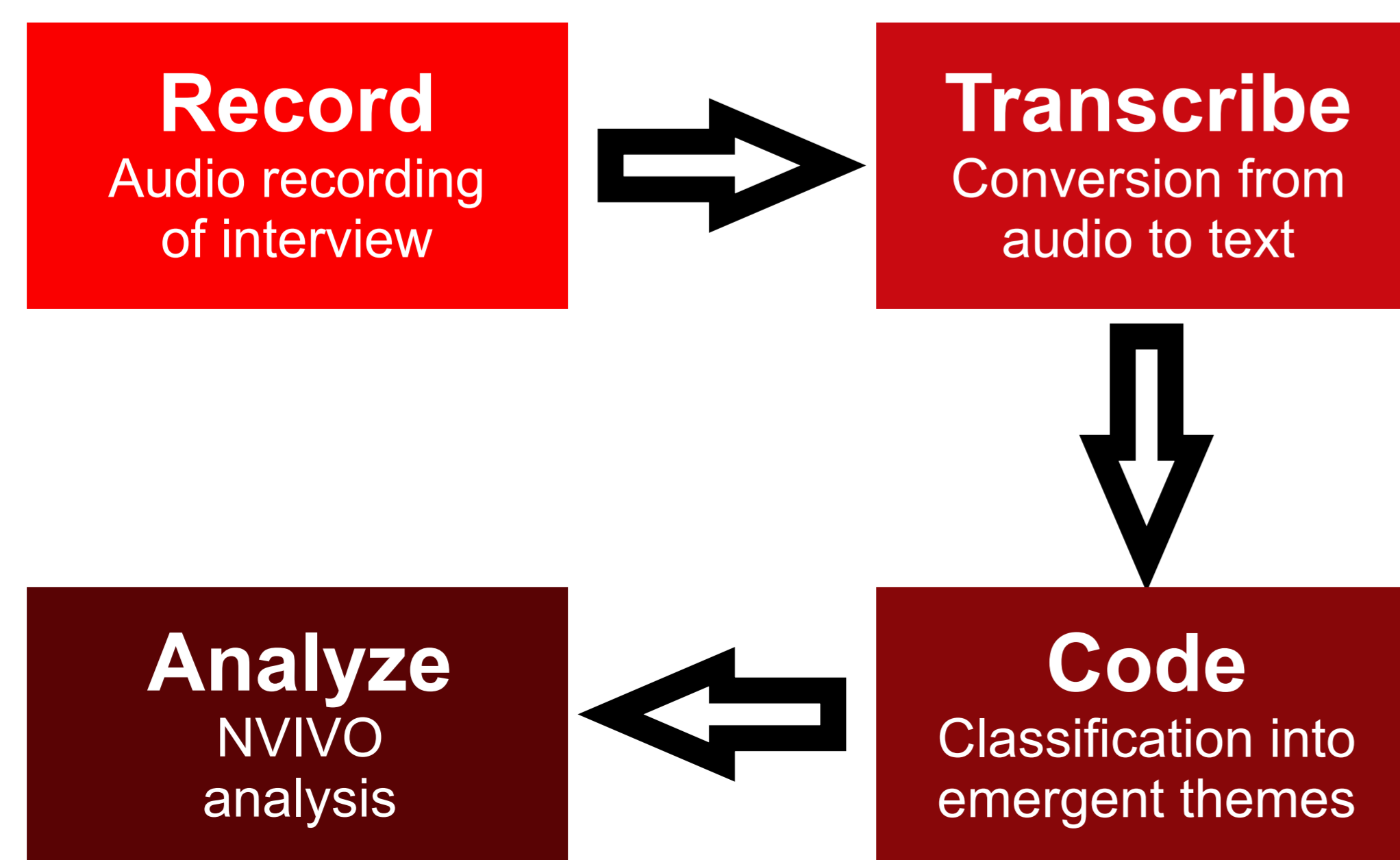
METHODS

To address the research objectives, a utilization-focused evaluation was used to analyze 10 semi-structured interviews with PLAY staff members. The interviews were conducted by a trained sociologist using a formal interview guide. Interviews lasted from 20-120 minutes.

Respondents were asked about:

- Their history and role in the PLAY program
- The strengths and challenges of the PLAY program
- Recommendations for future directions and improvements

Data Analysis:



RESULTS

Strengths	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Flexible - Multifaceted - Involves team-based activities - Culturally sensitive - Promotes youth empowerment - Fosters community leadership and ownership - Provides training opportunities - Skilled and competent staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Neglects community accountability - Incorporates minimal community involvement - Rapid, uncontrollable growth - Inadequate communication channels - Colonial power relations - Universal logic

CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall, the program should work slowly and gradually to build stronger relationships and commit to embracing Indigenous culture. This would facilitate a deeper understanding of the social issues in the communities and would favour grounded, respectful and meaningful community programming.

The following are recommendations for the program's perceived challenges:

Growth and Pace

- Engage in a process of consultation with the PLAY staff around issues of growth, expansion and accountability to the communities.
- Express concerns and recommendations to senior leadership.
- Reduce the pace of work and emphasize self-care, better employment conditions and lower levels of stress.

Accountability and Voice of Communities

- Engage in a process of consultation with community leadership on "what is working and what is not working."
- Reconsider expansion by focusing on the meaningfulness of experiences.
- Hire First Nation team members and non-Indigenous members who have significant experience working with the Indigenous community.

Universal Logic and Colonial Power Relations

- Endorse and embrace Indigenous culture within the program.
- Support and fund activities that are generated and run by the community.

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