

**Uneven Ground?: Exploring the Steve Smith Bike Park Pump Tracks as an Inclusive
Leisure Space**

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Abstract

As advocacy for *inclusion* has become more prevalent, there has been a growing expectation for leisure spaces to be welcoming and accessible to all populations. Concurrently, there has been a substantial increase in the development and use of pump tracks as urban leisure spaces. Pump tracks are bicycle riding surfaces designed as loops or multi-looped tracks consisting of rollers and berms. Creators of promotional materials for pump track builds and contributors to online forums have identified pump tracks as sustainable and *inclusive* leisure spaces for diverse user groups. Yet, despite their popularity and proliferation, no empirical research has been published about pump tracks, who uses them, and why. Exploring claims of inclusion must be conducted with members of equity-owed populations. As such, I conducted 34 interviews with self-identifying Indigenous and newcomer Peoples (Indigenous = 10, newcomer = 16) and pump track planners, builders, and leisure professionals (n = 8), and over six months of participant observation at the Steve Smith Bike Park pump tracks.

I addressed three topics in three separate papers in this dissertation. First, I explored my observations of what inclusion did (or did not) look like at the Steve Smith Bike Park. Second, I explored Indigenous Peoples' relationship(s) to the pump tracks at the Steve Smith Bike Park, which is located on Snuneymuxw First Nation ancestral and unceded territory. Third, I explored newcomers' experiences of inclusion at the pump tracks at the Steve Smith Bike Park. I used intersectional and settler colonial theories to inform my approaches to this research and conducted reflexive thematic analysis in all three papers. Within the first study, I asserted that while the pump tracks at the Steve Smith Bike Park were observed to facilitate inclusion for some individuals of various ages, genders, and skill levels, they are not inherently inclusive by design. Ultimately, I argued that meaningful inclusion requires an intersectional approach,

involving constant effort and ongoing attention. In the second study, participants expressed concerns of limited representation and engagement of and with Indigenous Peoples at the pump tracks, noting a reflection of broader settler colonial structures within the space. Interestingly, participants simultaneously described the pump tracks as sites of resistance and resurgence, where embodied, land-based practices asserted Indigenous presence and (re)defined the space. In the third study, participants underscored that factors including language, migration history, and cultural background intersected to shape their engagement with and at the Steve Smith Bike Park. Importantly, a significant barrier to participants' engagement at the pump tracks identified was not *how* to participate, but rather the *awareness* that participation was possible, pointing to an overarching gap in leisure education and participation services.

Collectively, I argue that inclusion at the Steve Smith Bike Park is neither neutral nor guaranteed but is experienced as negotiated and uneven, and shaped by intersecting identities and power relations, including settler colonial logics, racism, and classism. Overall, my research underscores the need for ongoing, intersectional and decolonial approaches to the design and implementation of pump tracks.

Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to anyone who just wants to “ride [their] f#&king bike”
(Marcus, 2017).

Marcus, R. (Director). (2017, April 4). *Ride your f#%king bike! powered by Chainsaw* [Film].
Fox Racing Digital Cinema.

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“If research doesn’t change you as a person, then you haven’t done it right”
(Wilson, 2008, p. 135).

Thank you, Mom and Dad. The paths I have chosen in my life have not always been easy; at times, they have been frightening, uncertain, and uncomfortable. Through it all, your unconditional love and support have been my foundation. Thank you for always giving me the space to pause, gather myself, and catch my breath before diving headfirst into the next adventure. Your love sustains me.

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Steve Smith Bike Park Pump Tracks: A Preamble

In May 2016, Steve Smith, the professional Canadian downhill mountain biker also known as the Canadian Chainsaw Massacre, died from injuries sustained in an enduro motorcycle accident (Spriggs, 2022) on Nanaimo, British Columbia, Canada's, Doumont Mountain. Steve, the 2012 King of Crankworx and 2013 Union Cyclist International (UCI) Downhill Overall Title Champion, lived fast. He rode his bike hard, lived life hard, and, in doing so, influenced many people (Nick, personal communication, September 16, 2024). Days after his passing, Steve's mother, friends, and members of his childhood BMX racing family gathered at the Nanaimo BMX club to honour him (Michelle, personal communication, September 6, 2024; Tianna, personal communication, September 13, 2024). It was at this gathering that the idea of the Steve Smith Bike Park (SSBP) was born. Members of the community (Dana, personal communication, September 16, 2024; Michelle, personal communication, September 6, 2024; Tianna, personal communication, September 13, 2024) recounted how, before his passing, Steve had shared dreams of building a bike park where the next generation of world champions could hone their skills. Organized by family, friends, and members of the Nanaimo BMX community, the idea for a bike park began to gain momentum. It didn't take long for members of the biking community to come on board to actualize Steve's vision.

In November 2016, Nanaimo City Council approved plans for the park, including \$200,000 in city funding (City of Nanaimo, 2016). The newly formed Steve Smith Legacy Foundation, created by Tianna Smith, Michelle Corfield, Randy Little, Gabe Fox, and Bill Monahan, received an additional nearly \$300,000 in cash and in-kind donations in Steve's name to fund the initial project (Michelle, personal communication, September 6, 2024). The Legacy Foundation fundraised through monetary donations to a GoFundMe page, by selling t-shirts, stickers, bike socks, and bracelets, and by hosting beer-and-burger events (Michelle, personal

communication, September 6, 2024). Construction on the park started in early December 2016. Friends and fans from around the world, as well as members of local service clubs and companies, continued to contribute to the park with (literal) blood, sweat, and tears, clearing land, moving dirt, and pouring asphalt.

On August 9, 2017, hundreds of people attended the opening of the SSBP, which housed dirt and mulch jumps, a return trail, and two asphalt pump tracks designed and built by Swiss pump track designer, builder, and Steve's friend, Claudio Caluori. Interestingly, while donations largely funded the park, it is owned and operated by the City of Nanaimo and, as such, is a municipal park, free for use and covered under the city's civic insurance (Michelle, personal communication, September 6, 2024). While no official use analyses have been conducted, the park appears to be consistently used as a community recreation space by patrons of all ages using a variety of wheeled equipment (Dana, personal communication, September 16, 2024; Tianna, personal communication, September 13, 2024). In September 2020, a bike skills course was opened within the SSBP. In October 2024, nearly a dozen light poles were installed at a cost of \$350,000, paid for, again, through in-kind and cash donations (Dana, personal communication, September 16, 2024). The poles illuminate the park at the push of a publicly available button, extending park use into the early evening and enhancing patron safety.

Since its opening, the SSBP has been a hub for riders in the Nanaimo community, supporting both novice riders as they develop their skills and some of the world's most talented racers, including international competitors. For example, organizers have planned both community pump track events, including the "Chainsaw Challenge," a local all-ages pump track race (The SSBP, 2019), and the Red Bull Pump Track World Championship Qualifiers (McKall, 2018), hosting local and international talent seeking to qualify for the opportunity to advance to

compete at the highest level in pump track racing. Freeride mountain bikers have also used the dirt jumps at the SSBP during a recurring stage of the Freeride Mountain Bike World Tour (Marshall, 2024). Through its history, the SSBP has become a space of deep, layered meaning. The park is a special space, not only for the people who knew “Stevie,” but also for those who have been introduced to him through stories, labour, and the development of the community around the park.

I didn’t know Steve Smith well. We had several mutual connections and had met a few times in passing. We were Facebook friends – if that carries any weight. While I do not claim any responsibility for or ownership of the SSBP, my relationship with the park is far from neutral. I personally sold hundreds of t-shirts and consumed several burgers and beers in support of its construction. When the SSBP opened, I was responsible for the coordination of the Park’s international events, chaperoned youth involved in park community projects, blistered my hands during park maintenance, and wrote grant proposals to sustain its programming. I rode my bike many times within the space, and I have stood on its periphery with friends, watching their children learn to navigate the asphalt rollers with their run bikes and scooters. This proximity has shaped my experiences and how I interpret them. Over the last two and a half years of this study, I have sat on the concrete benches at the SSBP, drinking countless iced coffees and observing people engaging with the space. I have met many people and heard numerous stories about Steve and his adventures travelling the world, representing Canada, and riding his bike. I have also met many individuals who had never heard of Steve but, through the park, fell in love with riding their bikes. It is, in large part, due to these people, their diverse experiences of the space, and their willingness to share their stories that I feel so connected to Steve and his park. This

connection also led me to question if all members of the community experience the same sense of inclusion and meaningful connection to the SSBP.

Chapter One: Introduction

Uneven Ground?: Exploring the Steve Smith Bike Park Pump Tracks as an Inclusive Leisure Space

In recent years, pump tracks have proliferated worldwide, emerging in urban parks, rural communities, and backyard spaces. Yet, despite their growth, their exact number remains unknown. The user-generated database pumptrack.com (n.d.) currently maps 1,357 tracks across 64 countries, a figure that excludes many community-built and private developments (McCormack, 2019). Pump tracks are specially designed circuits featuring rollers and banked turns (berms) that create a riding experience unique to conventional bike paths and trails (McCormack, 2019). Unlike traditional cycling styles, riders generate momentum by shifting their body weight in a pumping motion, rather than pedalling. They are increasingly being promoted as multi-use spaces for people of all ages, genders, skills, and abilities with a range of wheeled equipment such as bicycles, skateboards, scooters, and wheelchairs (Alliance ASE, n.d.-a).

Despite their growing popularity and widespread investment by communities and municipalities around the world, pump tracks remain an underexamined leisure phenomenon. Specifically, no scholarly attention has been paid to who uses pump tracks and how different groups experience them. Pump tracks are promoted not only as popular leisure infrastructure (e.g., Arnold, 2023) but also as gathering places for active participation for all members of the community (e.g., Duncan, 2025). As such, throughout this dissertation, I refer to pump tracks as both leisure infrastructure and leisure spaces. I use *infrastructure* to foreground their material presence as a built environment and *leisure space* and to emphasize the social practices and experiences within them. Although these concepts highlight different dimensions of pump tracks, I do not view them as separate analytical categories; rather, I acknowledge the dual material and

social nature of pump tracks. Building on this conceptualization, it is important to consider how diverse users experience these spaces.

The concept of inclusion, despite being used across many disciplines, is highly context-dependent. Critically exploring the concept of inclusion requires attention to the experiences of members of equity-owed populations, whose access to and participation in leisure have historically been marginalized. Notably, within the context of what is now known as Canada, Indigenous Peoples (e.g., Miles et al., 2025) and new immigrants and refugees (e.g., Özgider & Koch, 2026) are often marginalized in leisure spaces or opportunities to experience them due to structural barriers and systemic inequities.

It is imperative to acknowledge that leisure spaces within communities are not neutral; rather, they reflect power dynamics that enable or constrain inclusion (Glover, 2017; Long et al., 2011; Susen, 2021) through social constructs and power (Long et al., 2011). Scholars have argued that the rhetoric of inclusion in leisure discourses can perpetuate the dominance of some groups in public leisure spaces who “benevolently” include Others (Tink et al., 2020). Pump tracks provide a compelling context for examining these dynamics. Exploring this topic is particularly interesting at pump tracks located within a traditional Indigenous territory experiencing demographic change due to immigration. As such, in this dissertation, I explore how inclusion is experienced at pump tracks, with particular attention to Indigenous Peoples, defined in what is now known as Canada as First Nations, Métis, and Inuit (Statistics Canada, 2021), and newcomers, broadly defined as individuals who have relocated to Canada within the previous five years (Statistics Canada, 2017).

I conducted the research for this dissertation at the Steve Smith Bike Park (SSBP). The SSBP is situated in Nanaimo, British Columbia (BC), Canada, on the ancestral lands of the

Snuneymuxw First Nation. Given the large Indigenous and newcomer populations reported in the city of Nanaimo (Manhas, 2023), the established community pump tracks (City of Nanaimo, 2024), and my pre-existing relationships within the community in which I grew up, I deemed this park a suitable location for this work.

For this dissertation, I used the publishable paper format. It consists of this introductory chapter, three independent yet interconnected papers through which I examined experiences of inclusion (or lack thereof) at the SSBP pump tracks, and, finally, a conclusion chapter. In this introductory chapter, I review key literature that informs my dissertation, and I discuss the theories, methodology, methods, and analysis used to provide a foundation for the three papers. In the first paper, which was guided by the research question, “What does inclusion look like (or not) at the SSBP?,” I explored my observations of inclusion enacted through everyday experiences within the space. This paper has been published in the *Annals of Leisure Research* (Peterson et al., 2025). In the second paper, which was guided by the research question, “What are Indigenous Peoples’ experiences of inclusion at the SSBP pump tracks?,” I explored Indigenous Peoples’ relationships to the pump tracks at the Park, situating their experiences within broader conversations of leisure, land, and settler colonialism. This paper has been resubmitted to the *Journal of Leisure Sciences* with minor revisions. In the third paper, which was guided by the research question, “What are newcomers’ experiences of inclusion at the SSBP pump tracks?,” I explored newcomers’ relationship(s) to the pump tracks at the Park, while remaining attentive to intersecting social positions and broader structural conditions that extend beyond the pump tracks themselves. It is currently under review with *Leisure/Loisir*. To situate these studies, in the following section I review key literature that informed this work.

Literature Review

Below, I introduce pump tracks by outlining their development, physical design, and their presentation in industry and media discourses. I then present current literature on leisure-related inclusion and highlight the conceptual gap between inclusion in leisure services and in leisure infrastructure.

Pump Tracks

The history of pump tracks has not been captured in the academic literature to date. As such, much of the available documentation of their origins comes from industry publications and personal accounts posted online. By some accounts, early pump tracks are credited to BMX racers in the 1970s (Duncan, 2025; McCormack, 2019; Staff, 2009). Other accounts attribute the first pump tracks to Australian downhill mountain bike racers in the early 2000s (Bermstyle, n.d.). The first pump track in North America is believed to have been built in 2004 by professional cyclist, Steve Wentz, behind a Boulder, Colorado, bike shop (Bermstyle, n.d.). Originally constructed of packed dirt, the first documented concrete pump track was built in 2009 by Velosolutions, a Swiss pump track and bike park development company (Kirschbaum, n.d.). In 2012, construction materials switched to asphalt to increase durability (Velosolutions Global, 2023). Regardless of contested origin, over the last two decades, pump track development has proliferated. While definitive counts are difficult to obtain, McCormack (2019) estimated that there are currently thousands of pump tracks worldwide.

Pump tracks are built as a “continuous circuit of banked turns interspaced by rollers and other features” (Bermstyle, n.d.) designed for riders to navigate using the movements of their body up and down to generate momentum, rather than by pedalling (Bermstyle, n.d.; McCormack, 2019; Velosolutions, 2025). Golembiewski and colleagues (2024) described this

movement as a “reciprocal motion between rider and bicycle called pumping” (p. 1). Pump tracks are identified as being beginner-friendly; however, “as riders advance and acquire bike control, they are able to generate and maintain increased momentum, flow through the track at higher speeds, and eventually learn to connect features by utilizing advanced techniques such as manualing and jumping” (Bermstyle, n.d., para. 2). Ontrack (n.d.) identified that “the process of generating speed and momentum through pumping means that the risk involved with a pump track is self-regulating” (para. 3). While most often framed as community spaces, pump tracks have also gained notoriety within professional cycling. In 2018, the Union Cycliste Internationale, the international governing body for cycling, formally recognized pump track racing as a sanctioned discipline, setting governing rules and organizing international competition structures (UCI, n.d.). Together, these developments highlight the increasing prominence of pump tracks in both recreational and competitive contexts.

Pump tracks are frequently framed as multi-use leisure spaces accessible to a wide variety of users. Media coverage (e.g., Feinberg, 2020; Kaisar, 2023) and promotional materials (e.g., Canadian Ramp Company, 2025; Velosolutions, 2025) have emphasized pump tracks as suitable for people of all ages and skill levels. Ontrack (n.d.) noted this feature as unique from other leisure spaces, suggesting that it is “unusual to find professional riders riding alongside a four-year-old on their balance bike” (para. 4). Their use is not exclusive to bicycles but is promoted as being compatible with multiple types of wheeled equipment, including bicycles, skateboards, scooters, in-line skates, and wheelchairs. Accordingly, pump tracks are often framed as *inclusive* leisure spaces for all community members (e.g., Eco Pump Track, 2025; Park N Play Design, 2024; Velosolutions, 2025). For example, one promotional blog published by Parkiteck (n.d.) explicitly identified that “inclusivity is an important element of [pump tracks’] success”

(para. 18), noting that they “are often included in the designs of urban bike parks that serve underserved communities, thus expanding recreational access” (para. 19).

Beyond their leisure function, pump tracks have also been promoted by municipal planners and developers as efficient forms of leisure infrastructure. Promotional materials have suggested that pump tracks can make sustainable use of underused or vacant urban spaces (Parkitech, n.d.). Compared with traditional facilities, such as sport fields, pump tracks typically require less land and can be constructed at a lower cost (Alliance ASE, n.d.-b; Kirschbaum, n.d.). Asphalt tracks require minimal ongoing maintenance compared with other leisure facilities, thereby reducing long-term operational costs for owners and operators (Alliance ASE, n.d.-b; Parkitech, n.d.). Additionally, pump tracks are typically used as unstructured, unsupervised spaces; therefore, staffing and formal programming are not required (Alliance ASE, n.d.-b). Beyond economic considerations, pump tracks have been promoted as a way of enhancing community safety. For example, a 2009 pump track (referred to as “bike track” in the article) development in Porth, Wales, was credited as reducing the number of bicycle-related incidents by half (BBC, 2013) and “reduc[ing]anti-social behaviour in the local community by 70%” (ontrack, 2023, para. 5), securing pump tracks a spot on the 2014 list of best and promising practices in EU Community Policing (BBC, 2013; ontrack, 2023).

Pump tracks have also been promoted as tools for community development and social justice initiatives. In a Red Bull article, Zietsman (2020) asserted that “pump tracks have the power to unite communities, instil passion, make cycling more accessible, and promote a healthy and active lifestyle” (para. 2). For example, Claudio Caluori, owner of Velosolutions, founded the non-profit organization Pump for Peace, which focuses on constructing pump tracks in underserved communities to expand access to cycling and action sports (Pump for Peace, 2025).

According to the organization's website, the initiative seeks to "make cycling and action sports more accessible than ever before" (Pump for Peace, 2025, para. 1). Reid (2021) suggested that pump tracks can bring peace "where diplomatic missions and peace conferences have failed" (para. 6). He further elaborated by stating, "not overnight, of course, and not directly, but bonding on bicycles could bring dividends down the line, especially for communities that don't traditionally mix and certainly don't usually play together" (para. 6). As of 2025, Pump for Peace reported donating 16 asphalt pump tracks across eight countries: Rwanda, Uganda, Nepal, Armenia, Israel, Lesotho, Kenya, and South Africa. Such initiatives further reinforce the widespread narrative that pump tracks function as inclusive leisure infrastructure and spaces. However, despite these claims, there remains no empirical literature on whether pump tracks are indeed experienced as inclusive by diverse users.

Inclusion

Inclusion is a widely used but highly context-dependent concept, interpreted differently by scholars and practitioners across many fields. Notably, the diversity of interpretations of the term reflects conceptual ambiguity, rendering its meaning and use often unclear in research and practice (O'Donnell et al., 2018). According to Artiles and colleagues (2006), inclusion within an educational context refers to the "placement of students with specialized needs in mainstream programs" (p. 65). Within an occupational context, Mor Barak (2014) defined inclusion as an individual's sense of being a part of the organizational system in both the formal processes, such as access to information and decision-making channels, and the informal processes, such as "water cooler" and lunch meetings, where information exchange and decisions informally take place (p. 155).

From a (dis)ability perspective, the Government of Canada's *Disability Inclusion Action Plan* (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2022) described inclusion as the removal of barriers, including mitigating “negative perceptions about what a person with disabilities is able to do,” adapting “buildings, workplaces, and work tools that are not accessible,” and addressing “systemic barriers like rules and practices that exclude and discriminate” (p. 7). From a (dis)ability justice perspective, Carmel et al. (2025) defined inclusion as the provision of “equal access, opportunities, and resources for those who are marginalized” (p. 6). Across these varied definitions, common themes are produced regarding the removal of barriers, such as accommodation, access, and environmental adaptation. Importantly, a participant in Dunn's (1999) study described inclusion as “somewhere to live, something to do, and someone to love. It's as simple – and as complicated – as that” (p. viii), noting a broad social component to definitions of inclusion. Taken together, these interpretations reveal a tension between access-based and socially oriented understandings of inclusion.

Definitions of inclusion are often rooted in access, overlooking the social component of it. As such, the concept of *social inclusion* has become increasingly popular. The World Bank (2013) defined social inclusion as “the process of improving the ability, opportunity, and dignity of people, disadvantaged on the basis of their identity, to take part in society” (p. 4). Further, the World Bank (2013) argued that members of excluded groups, namely “Indigenous Peoples, new immigrants, people with disabilities, people with different skin tones, [and] people who spoke the official language imperfectly” (p. 1) are excluded from fully engaging within society. Notably, the terms inclusion and social inclusion are commonly used synonymously, particularly in leisure literature.

Inclusion in Leisure Studies

Inclusion in leisure studies is often discussed in relation to individuals' participation in leisure activities and the provision of leisure services. The concept of leisure largely involves people engaging in both structured and unstructured activities in community settings (Dattilo et al., 2019). However, it has been well documented that participation in leisure is not equally distributed, with participation shaped by numerous factors (e.g., Dattilo et al., 2019; Lopez Frias & Dattilo, 2021), including ability (e.g., Harrison et al., 2022), economic status (e.g., Oncescu et al., 2024; Oncescu & Loewen, 2020), age (e.g., Dergance et al., 2003), gender (e.g., Wegner et al., 2025), religion (e.g., Lennis & Pfister, 2017), ethnicity/race (e.g., McDonald et al., 2023), and sexuality (e.g., Storr et al., 2021). Notably, leisure scholars have increasingly called for leisure environments and services to become more inclusive (e.g., Long, 2011; Trussell & Mair, 2010).

Despite the growing emphasis, inclusion is inconsistently conceptualized in leisure studies, often overlapping with social inclusion and accessibility. For example, according to Dattilo and colleagues (2019), inclusive leisure services

contain necessary support and flexibility to provide opportunities for people having diverse backgrounds, cultures, life experiences, as well as innate and acquired characteristics, to have choices on ways to experience leisure that contribute to their overall happiness and ability to flourish. (p. 3)

While Carbonneau et al. (2021) identified inclusive leisure as “providing access to places and facilities related to practices that are meaningful” (p. 138). Participant attachment to place and their sense of inclusion are interconnected, shaped not only by the physical characteristics of the space, but also the social relationships, meanings, and experiences associated with them (Madgin

et al., 2016). Therefore, definitions that emphasize access alone risk conflating inclusion with mere participation, thus overlooking the quality of individuals' experiences. Definitions that focus on accommodating differences may fail to acknowledge the conditions that give rise to the exclusionary factors. Moreover, the failure to interrogate individuals' lived experiences of inclusion (and exclusion) within leisure spaces may serve to reproduce dominant cultural norms and to make assumptions about whether and, if so, how people wish to engage in leisure activities and environments (Fawaz & Peers, 2022; Peers et al., 2023; Tink et al., 2020). Examining inclusion within leisure contexts requires considering not only physical access to infrastructure, but also whether engagement within the space fosters a connection to the place. Ultimately, conceptualizations of inclusion in leisure must address deeper issues of power and inequity.

The operationalization of inclusion within leisure studies has largely focused on service provision. Dattilo and colleagues (2019) identified the seven key elements of inclusive leisure services: participation, social connections, enjoyment, choice, competence, social responsibility, and learning. Notably, the concept of access was not identified, despite being highlighted by scholars as a key factor of inclusion in disability spaces (e.g., Stumbo et al., 2011). More broadly, inclusive leisure is typically conceptualized as structured programs supported by staff and policy. While these approaches are valuable, this framing assumes the presence of formal services and raises questions about its applicability to unstructured leisure environments, where such supports are typically absent.

In contrast to leisure service-based frameworks, scholars who have examined leisure infrastructure and built environments, such as parks, playgrounds, skateparks, and pump tracks, which have often conceptualized inclusion as something embedded within design features,

focusing on factors such as accessibility and universal design (UD). UD has been supported by leisure researchers, some of whom have noted its ability to provide “conceptual guidance for designing environments that are inclusive of all” (Moore et al., 2023, p. 1454). Notably, UD was founded in the fields of architecture and environmental design (Moore et al., 2023) and has been criticized for being too idealistic and for failing to account for factors of inclusion (Imrie, 2012; Imrie & Hall, 2001; Sandhu, 2011). As such, while UD offers guidance on the design of inclusive leisure infrastructure, it does not address how all aspects of inclusion are operationalized in unstructured leisure spaces.

Unstructured Leisure

Scholars have primarily framed unstructured leisure in relation to risk and delinquency, with limited attention being paid to its role in fostering inclusion. While structured leisure is defined as planned, organized, and rule-based (Abbott & Barber, 2007; Kleiber, 1999), unstructured leisure is generally understood as spontaneous activities (Abbott & Barber, 2007) that occur outside of formal programming. Much of the literature on unstructured leisure activities has focused on their correlation with delinquent behaviour (e.g., Abbott & Barber, 2007; Albertos et al., 2021; Spillane et al., 2020; Svensson et al., 2023). While some scholars have investigated the positive association between unstructured leisure participation and social connections (e.g., Jaredić et al., 2021; McClelland & Giles, 2014), there is a gap in understanding the link between unstructured leisure participation and inclusion. One exception is the body of literature in which scholars have explored skate parks as community spaces for unstructured leisure engagement, focusing on perceived user inclusion. As they are the closest relevant spaces to have received scholarly attention, they warrant examination for their potential to inform my work on pump tracks.

Skateboarding developed as a popular unstructured leisure activity in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Brooke (1999) suggested that skateboarders started building skate parks as their own leisure spaces in the 1960s, in addition to utilizing urban objects as skateboarding features. The 1980s saw the rise of municipally sanctioned skate parks, and in the 1990s and early 2000s, the X Games and other forms of media exposure placed skateboarding into popular culture (Lorr, 2005). The inclusion of skateboarding in the 2020 Summer Olympics solidified the activity as a mainstream sport. Scholars have investigated skateboarding and the use of skate parks for both negative and positive social outcomes. While skateboarders often face negative perceptions and stereotypes, such as being linked to crime, drugs, graffiti, and anti-social behaviours (Taylor & Khan, 2011; Taylor & Marais, 2011), some researchers have challenged these views and argued that skate parks are beneficial for youth socialization and development (Goldenburg & Shooter, 2009; Jones, 2011; Obradovic & Milenkovic, 2021; Weller, 2006). For example, skate parks can be leisure spaces where pro-social behaviours are developed (Wood et al., 2014). At the same time, access to and experiences within these spaces are not equally experienced and may vary depending on social identity and broader structural factors (Atencio et al., 2009). As such, researchers of skate parks have highlighted both the potential and the limitations of unstructured leisure spaces in fostering inclusion. These insights provide a foundation for examining how inclusion is experienced in other unstructured leisure environments, including pump tracks, particularly in relation to equity-owed groups.

Leisure Engagement and Equity-Owed Groups

In the literature, the term leisure is most commonly used to refer to the experience of free time (Kelly, 1996; Neulinger & Breit, 1969; Wilson, 1980). Scholars have broadened the definition to include elements of freedom (Bregha, 1991), physical and metaphysical space

(Wearing, 1996), components of work (Stebbins, 2017), and the notion of choice (Kelly, 1996). However, Juniu and Henderson (2001) argued that “leisure activities are socially structured and shaped by the inequalities of society” (p. 8), and that the concept of freedom in leisure is a matter of personal perception rather than objective standards. It is important to note that all these conceptualizations of leisure are based on Eurocentric contexts and, as such, there is variation in how people from different demographic groups define and engage in leisure pursuits. In the following section, I will briefly describe contemporary understandings of engagement in leisure activities within Indigenous and newcomer populations, the two populations with which I conducted my research, in what is now known as Canada.

Indigenous Peoples

In a Canadian context, the term Indigenous Peoples refers to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit, defined in the *Constitution Act*, 1982 as “Aboriginal peoples” (s 35). While often lumped together into a single term, it is important to recognize that each group is unique, with distinct identities, traditions, and teachings. The Indigenous population in what is now known as Canada comprises approximately 5% of the country’s inhabitants and is growing at a rate nearly double that of non-Indigenous populations (Statistics Canada, 2022).

The history of the land now known as Canada is marked by the invasion and oppression of Indigenous Peoples by European settlers who enforced (and continue to enforce) colonial systems, including the banning of cultural practices (Hedican, 2014; Regan, 2010) such as the potlatch¹ (Gray, 2022) and speaking Indigenous languages (Khawaja, 2021). Subsequently, the legacy of historical oppression has disrupted the connection of Indigenous Peoples with their

¹ Ceremonial gatherings among Indigenous Peoples of the Northwest Coast that mark significant community events and personal milestones (Gray, 2022).

ancestral traditions, principles, and cultures (Lavallée, 2007; MacDonald & Steenbeek, 2015) and altered participation in their previously active lifestyles (Anderson et al., 2016).

The significance of leisure activities in Indigenous cultures is underscored by their spiritual, cultural, social, and physical connections (Fox et al., 1998). For example, many Indigenous teachings consider sport and physical activity as forms of medicine (Giles, 2013). Nevertheless, the relationship between physical activity rates and health outcomes among Indigenous populations in Canada is complex, as disparities in health outcomes persist (e.g., Leclerc et al., 2022), despite Indigenous youth report higher levels of physical activity than their non-Indigenous peers (Sutherland, 2021). Notably, researchers are now advocating that increased physical activity alone cannot prevent health inequities; rather, the facilitation of improved health outcomes requires approaching participation from the perspective of the social determinants of Indigenous health (Reading, 2015; Reading & Wien, 2009), of which community infrastructure, inclusion, and belonging are foundational elements (Reading, 2015). As such, inclusion in leisure spaces is an important factor in Indigenous Peoples' participation in leisure. While scholars have often emphasized disparities in participation and health outcomes, comparatively less attention has been paid to how the leisure spaces themselves may reproduce colonial norms and exclusionary practices. As such, there is a gap in understanding how Indigenous Peoples experience inclusion within unstructured leisure spaces.

Newcomers

In 2021, Statistics Canada reported that more than 8.3 million people, or one in four individuals, identified as landed immigrants, refugees, or permanent residents of Canada (Statistics Canada, 2022). Settlement in a new country is a significant transition (Lauckner et al.,

2022) that affects an individual's physical, socio-cultural, political, and economic environment (Schisler & Polatajko, 2022), including engagement in leisure (Quirke, 2015).

Involvement in leisure activities can support positive settlement outcomes (Campbell et al., 2016; Gallant & Tirone, 2017; Lauckner et al., 2022). Specifically, participation in leisure activities can create increased opportunities for newcomers to interact socially with other newcomers and established community members, develop language and communication skills, and explore the cultural aspects of the new community (Campbell et al., 2016). Further, newcomers' participation in leisure activities has been identified as a positive coping mechanism that can contribute to their psychological adaptations to stress responses associated with significant life changes and transitions (Stack & Iwasaki, 2009). However, settlement often presents barriers to leisure participation (Barrick et al., 2021; Campbell et al., 2016; Tirone, 2010) and, as such, can result in changes to, or abandonment of, previous leisure habits (Lauckner et al., 2022; Schisler & Polatajko, 2002; Suleman & Whiteford, 2013). As a result, newcomers to Canada have reported lower participation in recreation than the general Canadian population (Institute for Canadian Citizenship, 2014).

Much of the leisure research on newcomer well-being focuses on how engagement in leisure pursuits may facilitate positive transitions from newcomers' previous locations to their new environments (Gallant & Tirone, 2017; Kim & Iwasaki, 2016; Lauckner et al., 2022; Suto, 2013). In the *New to Canada Participants' Strategy*, Sport for Life (2023) argued that engagement in both structured and unstructured activities can foster community connections and belonging. Notably, leisure research related to newcomer engagement is often framed in terms of expectations for newcomers to integrate into leisure spaces, rather than emphasizing the role of longer-term residents in fostering an inclusive environment (Long et al., 2011). Collectively, this

body of literature underscores the need to critically examine how inclusion is understood and experienced in unstructured leisure environments, particularly given the diverse leisure understandings and experiences of equity-owed groups.

The Gap in the Literature

Unstructured leisure spaces operate differently from structured recreation services because users' participation is self-directed and socially negotiated. Existing frameworks for inclusion in leisure studies are primarily focused on service provision, offering limited understandings into how inclusion is operationalized in spaces without structured leisure facilitation. Further, discussions of inclusive infrastructure largely focus on UD and accessibility, which do not fully address broader questions of social inclusion. This highlights a gap between current understandings of inclusive leisure services, inclusive infrastructure, and unstructured leisure spaces, particularly in exploring the unique experiences of Indigenous Peoples and newcomers. Indeed, pump tracks offer a valuable and underexplored venue for examining how inclusion is framed and enacted in unstructured leisure spaces.

Epistemology

The epistemology of a research project reveals the researcher's assumptions about how knowledge is produced and understood. It also reveals the nature of knowledge and how we, as people, "know what we know" (Crotty, 1998, p. 8). I approached this research from a social constructionist epistemological perspective. Social constructionists believe that meaning making is shaped by social interactions among people (Crotty, 1998). A core assumption of social constructionists is that "humans engage with their world and make sense of it based on their historical and social perspective" (Creswell, 2014, p. 9).

Crotty (1998) argued that culture influences how people perceive the world; therefore, different social, historical, and cultural factors affect how we interpret various phenomena. The backgrounds and views of both researchers and participants also affect how they comprehend the meanings that others construct from the world (Crotty, 1998). Accordingly, I recognize that the knowledge shared in and through this research is not objective or neutral but rather co-created through interactions and relationships. Ultimately, it is these interactions and relationships that shape how knowledge is shared, data are analyzed, and conclusions are reached. Thus, the knowledge produced and understood through this study is specific and contextualized within the research process itself (Carter & Little, 2007). As a social constructionist scholar, it is important for me to acknowledge and reflect critically on my positionality within and beyond this study. I understand positionality not as a hollow, performative act, but as an ongoing, reflexive practice that meaningfully shapes all aspects of the research process, including access to and interpretation of the data (Francis, 2025). As such, it is important to situate myself within the social and historical context of the research setting.

My relationship to the City of Nanaimo, the location of this study, is deeply historical and personal. In 1911, Joseph and Helena Jackson immigrated to Nanaimo from Cumbria, England. They built a home at 550 Kennedy Street, Nanaimo. On March 11, 1920, their daughter, Annie, and her husband, John Irving, followed suit, settling in a house at 556 Kennedy Street, Nanaimo. In the kitchen of that house, on February 4, 1928, my late grandfather, Leslie Irving, was born. My mother, Roberta Peterson (nee. Irving), was born three blocks away at the Nanaimo Hospital. The hospital is approximately three kilometres away from the SSBP. While I was not born in Nanaimo, I called the city home for over 20 years. This multi-generational connection informs

my sense of familiarity with the community. However, I am mindful that this history also situates me within long-standing and ongoing settler colonial structures.

I am not Indigenous and, as such, I cannot claim ancestral roots to the land. While I have multi-generational familial and personal connections to Nanaimo, they exist within the context of settler colonialism. I am a fifth-generation settler on the lands of the Snuneymuxw First Nation and the third generation of my family to be born within what is now known as Canada. This positioning creates an ongoing tension as I feel a sense of familial connection to the community while simultaneously being implicated in the historical and contemporary processes that have shaped (and continue to shape) inequitable relations within it. This tension requires deliberate and ongoing consideration of my assumptions of and relationships to other members of the community, and to remain cautious of perceived *legitimacy* operating within it.

My professional experiences further inform my positionality. After completing my undergraduate degree in therapeutic recreation, I spent a decade working as a recreation therapist with Indigenous youth in and from government care, from nine Coast Salish nations, including the Snuneymuxw First Nation. These youth shared much insight with me regarding the complex meanings of community, inclusion, and belonging. Further, experiences from this role informed my master's research, titled *Re-creation through recreation: Exploring contemporary perspectives of Indigenous leisure*, in which I employed Indigenous methodologies and a qualitative approach to explore the *snuw'uy'ulh* (sacred teachings) of *Hul'qumi'num* speakers to investigate the role leisure plays in the development of cultural identity, specifically of the *Snuneymuxw mustimuxw* (the people of Snuneymuxw). Through this work, I was exposed to Indigenous conceptualizations of land, space, and leisure. The lessons I learned through these interactions profoundly influenced the focus of my doctoral research, my relationships with land

and people, and my interpretive lenses. At the same time, I remain mindful that my experiences do not equate to Indigenous ways of knowing and do not position me as an authority on Indigenous perspectives. Instead, they underscore the significance of approaching this work with humility and a commitment to issues of trust, representation, and accountability within community spaces.

I identify as a straight, normative-bodied woman and an active member of the Nanaimo biking community. As such, I recognize that I have the potential to exercise significant social privilege. This privilege shapes how I navigate this world, the research opportunities that I have been afforded, and how participants may perceive me. Through this work, I do not aim to resolve any of these tensions; however, I seek to be accountable to them. I share this history to set the context for how I became familiar with pump tracks and why critical reflexivity was crucial as I navigated this research. As someone whose positionality inherently includes me within both the City of Nanaimo and the pump tracks at the SSBP, I initially found it difficult to suggest that other people might experience inclusion within the space differently than I do. As I dug deeper into newcomers' and Indigenous Peoples' experiences of inclusion at the SSBP, I realized that some people were privileged within the space, some were marginalized, and some were missing altogether. As such, throughout this dissertation, I sought to make explicit the limits of my own understandings and amplify the voices of Indigenous Peoples and newcomers. In this sense, *Uneven ground?* becomes more than the title of this work, but it also serves as a provocation of the pump tracks at the SSBP in both material and metaphorical terms, as I explore the rolling surface of the pump tracks and the unevenness of its use.

Theoretical Framework

According to Lincoln and Guba (1993), there is no such thing as theory-free research. The selection of theory for this work was significant in providing a structured lens through which I explored experiences of inclusion at the pump tracks while remaining attentive to my own positionality. Additionally, the implications of inclusion in a space deeply special to me required theoretical framing to disrupt the perpetuation of historical inequities in research. Ultimately, I selected two theories to underpin this dissertation: intersectionality and settler colonial theory (SCT). Together, the application of these theoretical frameworks provided lenses through which to interrogate experiences of inclusion within the pump tracks at the SSBP.

Intersectionality

Crenshaw (1989) coined the term intersectionality. From her perspective as a Black feminist, lawyer, and scholar, she argued that traditional theoretical frameworks were insufficient for understanding the discrimination women of colour face (Crenshaw, 1989). A main tenet of the theory highlights that siloed analyses of identities obscure how intersecting systems of power operate simultaneously and produce unique forms of discrimination and oppression that cannot be understood through single-axis approaches (Ruiz et al., 2021). As an example of how sexism and racism contribute to the social and structural marginalization of Black women, Crenshaw (1989) shared the metaphor

Consider an analogy to traffic in an intersection... Discrimination, like traffic through an intersection, may flow in one direction, and it may flow in another. If an accident happens in an intersection, it can be caused by cars travelling from any number of directions and sometimes, from all of them. Similarly, if a Black woman is harmed because she is in the

intersection, her injury could result from sex discrimination or race discrimination. (p. 149)

Relatedly, May (2014) stated that the use of intersectionality requires “thinking about social reality as multidimensional, lived identities as intertwined, and systems of oppression as meshed and mutually constitutive” (p. 96). Notably, such factors are “not additive,” but “fundamentally reconstitutive” (Crenshaw, 2020), creating distinct experiences. As such, intersectionality can be applied to examine how social identities, discourses, and power structures influence and shape each other to create systems of privilege, oppression, and identity (Crenshaw, 1989) and to challenge narratives that have silenced the voices of members of some populations in research (Nichols & Stahl, 2019).

Those who use intersectionality acknowledge that oppression occurs through the interplay of multiple factors. Jordan-Zachery (2007) noted that the application of intersectional theory enables researchers “to go beyond simply comparing groups” (p. 209) and, instead, to explore differences within groups. Specifically, intersectionality is a framework for examining socio-political challenges that emerge from race, gender, class, sexuality, (dis)ability (Al-Faham et al., 2019; Harari & Lee, 2021), and other sociopolitical fissures as interlocking “categories of difference” (Hancock, 2013, p. 282). The use of intersectionality foregrounds dismantling social inequality and power dynamics and promoting relationality, social context, and social justice. In doing so, the use of intersectionality becomes an “analytical sensibility” (Cho et al., 2013; Collins, 2015). As an example of this, Cho et al. (2013) argued,

what makes an analysis intersectional is not the use of the term “intersectionality,” nor its being situated in a familiar genealogy, nor its drawing on lists of standard citations.

Rather, what makes an analysis intersectional... is its adoption of an intersectional way of thinking about the problem of sameness and difference and its relation to power. (p. 795)

Highlighting the notion of power, Chun and colleagues (2013) asserted, “[Intersectionality] primarily concerns the way things work rather than who people are” (p. 923). As such, the use of intersectionality allows for a nuanced analysis of how systems of oppression such as colonialism, racism, sexism, militarism, and capitalism interact with one another (Collins et al., 2021). In the context of this study specifically, the use of intersectionality offers a critical framework for exploring how factors of identity and power intersect to influence participants' experiences with and at the SSBP pump tracks.

The application of intersectionality has become valuable in providing new understandings of social issues and inequality; however, it is essential to acknowledge that using this theory has strengths and weaknesses. One significant strength of intersectionality is that its use enables nuanced understandings of oppression. For example, researchers applying intersectional analysis have asserted that individuals experience multiple forms of oppression that intersect in different ways (Collins et al., 2021). This perspective can help researchers unpack the complexities of individuals' lived experiences and the compounding effects of diverse social identities. Second, the use of intersectionality encourages inclusivity in activism, academia (Richter et al., 2020), and policymaking (Hull et al., 2023) by emphasizing diverse social identities.

However, the use of intersectionality is not without criticism. For example, McCall (2005) critiqued intersectionality for its complexity in application. Its use can be particularly challenging when analyzing the interplay among various elements and their effects on a particular person or group in specific situations. Further, Carastathis (2008) argued that discussions that engage with intersectionality may unintentionally reinforce essentialism when

they rely on identity markers to analyze how different forms of oppression and privilege interact. Highlighting this critique, Tomlinson (2013) noted, “if critics think intersectionality is a matter of identity, rather than power, they cannot see which differences make a difference. Yet it is exactly our analyses of power that reveal which differences carry significance” (p. 1012). Such critiques of the application of intersectionality can be dealt with by acknowledging that intersectionality’s complexity makes it no less valuable and by challenging the assumption that each category is homogeneous and fixed. Indeed, despite these critiques, intersectionality served as a valuable framework for this study, as its use supported a nuanced exploration of participants’ lived experiences and the complex ways in which power and identity shaped experiences of inclusion. However, when exploring markers of inequity in settler colonial contexts, such as what is now known as Canada, it is also vital to engage with a decolonial lens.

Settler Colonial Theory

Scholars have traced the origins of SCT through acts of historical resistance to settler colonial practices and structures (Wolfe, 1999). Throughout history, Indigenous, enslaved, and colonized peoples have resisted the conquest, dispossession, and persistent power dynamics associated with colonial forces (Coulthard, 2014; Simpson, 2014). SCT is guided by the key tenets that settler colonialism is a structure, not a historical event (Wolfe, 1999, 2006); land dispossession is central to its operation (Wolfe, 1999, 2006); and Indigenous sovereignty, resistance, and self-determination are fundamental to understanding how settler states remain in power (Coulthard, 2014). A key focus of those who apply this framework is that power is linked to the dispossession and elimination (Wolfe, 2006) of Indigenous Peoples, their territories, and resources, and the imposition of Eurocentric customs and values (Chen & Mason, 2019; Tuck & Yang, 2012; Wolfe, 2006). SCT can be applied to examine how settler colonialism operates in

and with systems of oppression, such as racism, classism, heteropatriarchy (Wolfe, 2006), and capitalism (Coulthard, 2014) that have (and continue to) shape contemporary structures and significantly impact social justice, land rights, and reconciliation efforts (Chen & Mason, 2019; Coulthard & Simpson, 2016; Laurendeau, 2023; Veracini, 2010).

Central to examining power relations through the lens of settler colonialism is the notion of land and advocacy for Indigenous autonomy and self-governance (Coulthard, 2014; Simpson, 2014). As such, using SCT allows scholars to emphasize the distinction between settler states and formally colonized societies. For example, many Indigenous Peoples residing in settler colonial states remain dispossessed from their traditional lands and resources and continue to face ongoing colonial pressures to assimilation, resulting in heterogeneous and intergenerational implications for Indigenous Peoples (Coulthard, 2014). Within this study, the use of SCT allows for a critical lens to situate the pump tracks as located on Indigenous land and embedded in ongoing settler colonial relations. Its use supports the interrogation into how leisure spaces can reproduce and challenge colonial logics through design and spatial control.

SCT has become valuable in exploring and understanding how colonial structures continue to shape Indigenous Peoples' land rights, sovereignty, and self-determination in relation to the ongoing dispossession of Indigenous lands and resources. The use of SCT enables unique contributions to academia that other decolonial and anti-colonial theories do not by acknowledging the agency, resistance, and sovereignty of Indigenous Peoples. A specific strength of SCT is that it can be used to recognize that colonialism is not a historical event but a contemporary and ongoing process that involves the continued dispossession of the land's original inhabitants (Veracini, 2010). Further, using SCT allows scholars to apply a critical,

decolonizing lens to analyze the intersections of power dynamics with race, gender, class, and sexuality (Tuck & Yang, 2012).

Although SCT has been shown to have merits in various contexts, researchers have also noted some limitations in applying this theory. First, Indigenous scholars have challenged the use of SCT within the academy. For example, Indigenous scholars have argued that using SCT can inadvertently reinforce Eurocentric perspectives (Simpson, 2014; Tuck & Wang, 2012; Veracini, 2010; Wolfe, 2006). Specifically, they have argued that the use of SCT perpetuates the continuation of colonial structures that remain essentially unchanged by further emphasizing “academics’ political authority and (re)enact[ing] the foundational settler fantasy that we constitute, comprehend, and control the whole political space of our relationships with Indigenous People[s]” (Macoun & Strakosch, 2013, p. 428). Second, some scholars have critiqued the use of SCT for homogenizing Indigenous Peoples’ experiences, neglecting the diversity amongst communities (Fenelon, 2016; Simpson, 2014) and failing to adequately recognize the diversity, complexity, and heterogeneity of Indigenous teachings, traditions, and experiences (Simpson, 2014). However, rather than focusing on the homogenization of Indigenous histories and struggles, the application of SCT can highlight the common structural features and logics of settler colonialism as a distinct mode of domination that operates across different times and spaces. As such, I argue that SCT remains essential to this work, as it supports the interrogation of power when exploring land use.

Bringing Intersectionality and Settler Colonial Theory into Dialogue

In this dissertation, I engaged with both intersectionality and SCT to examine inclusion at the pump tracks at the SSBP as experienced through varied intersecting social identities and ongoing settler colonial structures. I applied intersectionality in Chapters Two and Four and SCT

in Chapter Three, however, I viewed the two theories as complementary throughout this work. Together, they enabled the investigation of how colonial structures and intersecting social positions shape the experiences of equity-owed people within settler spaces. While SCT was designed to be used to analyze dynamics between settler colonial societies and Indigenous populations, newcomer populations also experience discrimination, marginalization, exploitation, and exclusion based on their ethnicity, culture, language, religion, or legal status. Moreover, the prevailing narrative of immigration into settler colonial states can reinforce concepts of nationhood by suggesting the state has legitimate authority over national and territorial membership (Bauder & Mueller, 2023). Consequently, it obscures the fact that these states were founded on the invasion and ongoing domination of Indigenous lands (Ellermann & O’Heran, 2021). Immigration admissions by settler colonial states presuppose their regulatory authority over territorial belonging (Bauder & Breen, 2022). These actions subsequently further dispossess Indigenous Peoples and subject newcomers to the category of immigrant (Volpp, 2015) or refugee, perpetuating the structural reproduction of othering and exclusion.

Additionally, although migration and Indigenous Peoples’ displacement are intertwined in settler states, it cannot be assumed that all newcomers relocated willingly or shared the benefits of settler colonialism equally (Ellermann & O’Heran, 2021). A shared land base seems to imply that both the original inhabitants and the recent arrivals might harbour anti-colonial aspirations and subsequently have the potential to establish a political bond with each other (Nine, 2022). As such, the foundations of SCT can be applied to unsettle colonial structures at work in migration and to engage with the intersections of power and social factors.

The presence and movement of newcomers on Indigenous lands, whether voluntary or forced, is an essential and systemic requirement of colonization. Dhamoon (2015) argued that

such actions must be addressed by “putting critical anti-racist, feminist, and Indigenous Peoples’ perspectives into conversation with one another” (p. 34). Engaging with both intersectionality and SCT can enable researchers to account for the ways oppression converges and diverges within settler societies, where multiple forms of colonialism, arrival, and displacement intersect (Byrd, 2019). Guided by intersectionality and SCT, I employed ethnographic and community-based participatory research (CBPR) approaches to centre participants' lived experiences and community engagement at the pump tracks.

Methodology

Methodologies are broadly defined as “the strategy” of the research (Crotty, 1998, p. 3). In Chapter Two, I applied an ethnographic approach. This approach allowed me to frame my understanding of inclusion at the SSBP and lay a foundation for my own positionality before exploring others' understandings and experiences. However, when exploring inclusion in a public place, I needed to include voices other than my own. As such, it was paramount to engage community members to fully capture what was happening at the pump tracks; therefore, I applied a CBPR approach in Chapters Three and Four.

Ethnography

Ethnography is often characterized by a commitment to in-depth understanding of social contexts, by studying how people within a particular cultural or social group think, behave, and interact in everyday life (Ryan, 2017; Seligmann & Estes, 2020). The use of ethnography as a formal research methodology emerged within the field of anthropology in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, evolving from travel writing and missionary accounts (Tedlock, 2003). Scholars, including Boas (1911) and Malinowski (1922), are often noted for shaping the use of ethnography, having advocated long-term involvement in the community of study through

detailed fieldnotes (Tedlock, 2003) and emphasizing social relationships as significant to understanding culture. Notably, much early ethnographic work is rooted in positivist orientations emphasizing objective observation and facts. Applications of ethnography have since been adapted to accommodate more interpretive approaches, including the recognition of culture as socially constructed and the prioritization of co-creation of meaning (Tedlock, 2003).

The use of ethnography can be effective in situations “that are not yet clearly understood” (Angrosino, 2011, p. 20). For example, this methodology has been utilized in situations where the research question is not identifiable through predictive relations, or, as Angrosino (2011) wrote, laid out in “a testable format” (p. 22). Unlike the physical sciences, in which scholars emphasize the structures of reality that can be measured, an ethnographic approach allows the researcher to explore intimate interactions *with* research participants, fostering a “better understanding of the beliefs, motivations, and behaviours of their subjects than they can by using any other method” (Tedlock, 2003, p. 190). The researcher must then immerse themselves in the setting under study to “perceive things as they really are” (Ugwu, 2017, p. 65) to “writ[e] about the personal and its relationship to culture” (Ellis, 2004, p. 37). Such features underscore the use of ethnography as a valuable methodology for exploring complex, context-dependent social experiences. Therefore, I deemed the use of ethnography as appropriate for investigating what inclusion looked like (or not) at the pump tracks. To do so, I immersed myself in the Park as a participant and observer of the space for eleven weeks. However, there were methodological challenges to consider.

The use of ethnography is not without its limitations. Questions of representation, researcher bias, and the dynamics of insider/outsider positioning remain central concerns of its use. Because the use of ethnography relies on the researcher’s interpretation of social contexts,

findings are shaped by the researcher's preconceptions and positionality (Ryan, 2017; Tedlock, 2003). As a result, reflexivity is often used as a strategy to critically examine the researcher's influence on the study process and interpretations. However, the concept of reflexivity is often mis-operationalized in research (Townsend & Cushion, 2020) - so much so that reflexivity has been accused of being a "self-indulgent discussion about ethnographers between ethnographers" (Gibson & Atkinson, 2018, p. 446). Sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (2004) articulated that epistemic reflexivity requires researchers to explore and identify their "scholastic posture" by utilizing theory on themselves and the disciplines in which they study. To effectively apply the reflexive process, ethnographers must transparently present the ways in which they have written "themselves and their backgrounds into the text or analysis in order to demonstrate how their social history and identity influence[d] their interpretations" (Townsend & Cushion, 2020, p. 252) of the data collected. These considerations are implicated in the insider/outsider debate (i.e., the researcher's positional relationship to the community being studied; Dwyer & Buckle, 2009), which further complicates how researchers position themselves in relation to the communities they study. The insider/outsider debate is particularly relevant to this work, as I situate myself as oscillating between both identities (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009; Kerr & Sturm, 2019): a person involved in the development of and user of the SSBP (insider) and a non-Indigenous, non-newcomer researcher who no longer lives in Nanaimo (outsider). Importantly, the story of the SSBP is not my own and, as such, engaging with members of the community was paramount to conducting this work (Kovach, 2021; Wilson, 2009).

Community-Based Participatory Research

I employed a CBPR approach in two chapters of this dissertation. In Chapter Three, I employed CBPR to engage with self-identifying Indigenous community members, while in

Chapter Four, I used the same approach to engage with members of the newcomer community. The CBPR approach is grounded in earlier methodological traditions, including action research (AR), participatory action research (PAR), and collaborative inquiry (Darroch & Giles, 2014; Wallerstein & Duran, 2008). The fundamental goal of CBPR users is to “directly or indirectly achieve social transformation and social/ environmental justice” (Amauchi et al., 2022, p. 3). As such, a key tenet of CBPR is the active role of the community in the participatory research process, which serves to legitimize the investigation, sharing, and dissemination of knowledge (Coppola et al., 2020; Funnell et al., 2020). Equitable sharing of research control between the researcher, participants, and community partners is paramount throughout the entire CBPR process (Coppola et al., 2020; Mitchell, 2018).

Often, participatory researchers focus on including key interest holders; however, the use of CBPR is distinguished by community members' ongoing collaborative involvement (Israel et al., 2006; Wallerstein & Duran, 2008). Amauchi et al. (2022) articulated that the praxis of CBPR is “the continuous cycle of action-reflection-action to improve community conditions and to allow for the constantly changing social, economic, cultural, and political fabric that shapes society” (p. 9). As such, community members should be meaningfully engaged in all aspects of the research process, from conceptualization to dissemination of results (Israel et al., 2006; Minkler & Wallerstein, 2008).

The use of CBPR supports the inclusion of community members throughout the research process through democratic decision-making processes (Strand et al., 2003), long-term and sustainable relationships between the researcher and the community (Tremblay et al., 2018), the promotion of the co-creation of knowledge (Jull et al., 2017), and the promotion of community ownership over the research process and outcomes (Tremblay et al., 2018). Importantly,

researchers who engage with CBPR define community as a “unit of identity... characterized by a sense of identification and emotional connection to other members, common symbol systems, shared values and norms, mutual – although not necessarily equal – influence, common interests, and commitment to meeting shared needs” (Israel et al., 1998, p. 178). In Chapter Three, we defined the community as self-identifying Indigenous Peoples. In Chapter Four, we defined the community as self-identifying newcomers to Nanaimo.

A common strategy for engaging community members in CBPR is the creation of a community advisory board (CAB; Yuan et al., 2020). CABs can be vital in guiding the research process through input, recruitment, assessment (D’Alonzo, 2010), and analysis (Lasker & Weiss, 2003) by increasing the cultural and social relevance of the research project (Sandoval et al., 2012). In Chapters Three and Four, I engaged with members of two CABs (one comprised of self-identifying Indigenous community members in Nanaimo, and the other comprised of self-identifying newcomers to Nanaimo), who indeed played significant roles in the foundation and analysis of this work. However, it was important to critically examine broader discussions of the strengths and limitations of using CBPR.

Researchers have discussed the strengths and weaknesses of CBPR at length. One commonly identified strength of CBPR is its usefulness in renouncing historical practices of scientific oppression and dominant relations of power (Amauchi et al., 2022; Coppola et al., 2020; Funnell et al., 2020). For example, CBPR researchers can challenge the power dynamics often exercised in traditional research by including community members at all stages of the research process (i.e., design, planning, and implementation). This action situates community members as partners, or co-owners, of the research (Amauchi et al., 2022) and, as such, redefines and realigns traditional asymmetric power relations between the researcher and the researched by

creating more equitable or reciprocal roles between everyone involved (Amauchi et al., 2022; Brown & Baker, 2019; Israel et al., 2006). The use of CBPR became particularly relevant in my research as I engaged with two groups who have been historically marginalized and/or silenced in and through research: Indigenous Peoples (Canadian Institutes of Health Research et al., 2022) and newcomers (Smith et al., 2023).

The use of CBPR has also been identified as having limitations. For example, a technical limitation of conducting CBPR is that it is a complex process that depends on various societal, political, institutional, and academic structures. Israel et al. (2006) noted that the duration and quality of CBPR can be influenced by finances, resources, and the political and societal contexts in which the research occurs. Amauchi et al. (2022) highlighted that, as a result, this process may exceed usual research timelines due to its collaborative multi-stage nature. These extended timelines and structural dependencies can create tensions within institutional contexts that prioritize standardized outputs and short funding cycles (Khudadad et al., 2025). As such, CBPR may be met with resistance from people within these structures, such as funding agencies, academic institutions, and policymakers, who may not value or accommodate participatory approaches. At the same time, the expectation that community members are engaged throughout all stages of the research can place additional demands on participants, requiring sustained time, emotional labour, and capacity that may not always be feasible or equitably distributed (Khudadad et al., 2025).

Further, the use of CBPR cannot address all issues of power relations in research. Darroch and Giles (2014) suggested that there are instances in which the use of CBPR may reproduce or reinforce power dynamics. Researchers can exercise power through CBPR by perpetuating Western worldviews. For example, Kothari (2001) identified that “the very act of

inclusion, of being drawn in as a participant, can symbolize an exercise of power and control over an individual” (p. 142), resulting in inequitable distributions of power between researchers and community members (Darroch & Giles, 2014). Although CBPR has limitations, I argue that I was better able to address unequal power relationships and facilitate more equitable CBPR by applying an intersectional approach informed by SCT, critical self-reflection, and genuine collaboration with the CABs’ members.

Community Advisory Board

To conduct the research required in Chapters Three and Four, I created two CABs: one comprised of self-identifying Indigenous community members and the other of self-identifying newcomers to Nanaimo. I recruited members by contacting existing networks I had within the Nanaimo biking community and connecting with key community organizations, including the Parks and Recreation Department for the City of Nanaimo, Snuneymuxw First Nation, Tillicum Lelum Friendship Centre, the Vancouver Island University *Su'luqw'a'* (Community Cousins) Program, the Central Vancouver Island Multicultural Society (CVIMS), and the Steve Smith Legacy Foundation to identify interested individuals. Although many individuals expressed interest in the research, several felt they were not suitable to serve as an advisor for the project due to a perceived lack of pump track-specific knowledge or experience. Being mindful of historical researcher-community power dynamics (Smith et al., 2025), I did not feel comfortable trying to persuade each individual that any knowledge and experiences were relevant, and I ultimately respected their decisions not to participate. As a result, and consistent with the self-selection process, the Indigenous CAB had three members, and the newcomer CAB had a single member. Importantly, all four individuals are actively involved in their communities and reported varied experiences with and at the SSBP pump tracks. While I initially anticipated that each CAB

would be comprised of four to six members (Newman et al., 2011), I prioritized depth and quality of engagement over the number of contributors (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Malterud et al., 2016) and acknowledged the expertise and lived experiences of the CAB members as sufficient to provide rich, relevant insight into the research.

Each CAB member provided a unique perspective to the research based on their identities and experiences. The Indigenous CAB consisted of Steven, Chancellor, and Jennifer. *Malidas*², Steven, is an elected council member of Xwkwalthwum First Nation, a competitive snowboarding coach, a recreational mountain biker, and a frequent user of the pump tracks. Chancellor identifies as Nuuchah-nulth, with lineage from the Ehattesaht and Hesquiaht Nations. He is a certified mountain bike coach who promotes mountain biking with Indigenous Peoples across BC and has experience riding many pump tracks across the province. Jennifer is a member of Snuneymuxw First Nation with ancestral ties to Huu-ay-aht First Nation. She is a recreational mountain biker and a new participant at the pump tracks. Jansait was the newcomer advisor for this work. She identifies as cisgender and as a newcomer to Canada, with ancestral roots in the North Caucasus. She was born and raised in Jordan. She had no prior experience with pump tracks until settling in Nanaimo in 2019. She is now an active user of the space. All CAB members are parents and are actively involved in their respective communities.

The CAB members were involved throughout the research process, supporting the development of recruitment and interview materials, seeking participants, and supporting the analysis and publication process. Additionally, the newcomer community advisor attended some of the semi-structured interviews, serving as an interpreter for one of them. The CAB members' involvement in the research process is further elaborated in the following chapters.

² Throughout this dissertation, I included people's *xwulmuxw sne* (Indigenous name in the *Hul'qumi'num'* language) when available.

I gave the CAB members an honorarium of \$75/hour for meetings and reviewing themes and manuscripts. Additionally, I gave each CAB member two pairs of bike socks (approximately \$30 value each) for contributing their time and knowledge to this study. I hired two artists to design the socks specifically for this work and provided them with honoraria. The first artist, *Kwulasultun*, Eliot White-Hill (he/they), is a storyteller and artist from the Snuneymuxw First Nation. His family has roots in Penelakut and in the Nuw-Chah-Nulth world in Hupacasath. His interdisciplinary art practice is rooted in honouring and celebrating the teachings and stories passed down by his family, community, and culture. Eliot designed an orange pair of socks with a white Salish eye on the ankle. Eliot's Salish eye features an ancestor's face design and is inspired by the teaching that, to honour oneself and one's body through exercise and activity, we honour our ancestors and the world around us. Eliot named his sock design *Huwalum*, which means *to play* in the Coast Salish language of *Hul'qumi'num*.

The second sock design was created by Alix Tippie. I learned of Alix's artistic skills from her father, Brett Tippie, an acquaintance of mine who is well known as one of the "founding fathers of freeride" mountain biking (Field, 2024, para. 1). Brett has Métis, Dene, and Cree ancestry and is recognized as the first Indigenous professional action sports athlete in Canada (Davis, 2023). Notably, the first time I met Brett, I was on my way home from fundraising for the SSBP at the 2016 Whistler Crankworx event, wearing a Steve Smith Legacy Foundation t-shirt. Brett pointed to my shirt and said, "Long Live Chainsaw," and he made a shaka (what mountain bikers often refer to as the hand gesture where one extends their thumb and pinky and curls their three middle fingers against their palm) in my direction. Since that day, Brett and I have (re)connected at several bike-related events across B.C. His daughter, Alix, is a 12-year-old budding graphic artist. She loves art, animals, bike riding, and skiing with her family. She has

been featured as the Young Artist of the Week by the AFK Smith Gallery, and, in 2023, she had her first magazine cover with *Craft Mtn*. Alix designed a pair of white socks featuring a cartoon pug dog riding a blue bicycle and wearing an orange helmet. She named her sock design *Puggy Ride*. The socks were made by a locally owned and operated athletic apparel company, Outway.

Methods

Methods are the tools, procedures, techniques, and strategies used to collect data (Smith, 2013). To address my three research questions, I collected data using three qualitative methods: participant observation, go-along interviews, and semi-structured interviews. Employing multiple methods enabled me to develop a more comprehensive understanding of participants' experiences by capturing both observed social dynamics and their personal perspectives. However, each method required distinct and overlapping considerations for sampling, recruitment, and method-related procedures. Sampling in qualitative research is the intentional selection of participants or sites (Creswell, 2014; Leavy, 2017), while recruitment is the process of identifying, approaching, and securing participants to engage in the study (Flick, 2022). In this section, I describe these considerations, organized by chapter. Importantly, before collecting any data, I obtained approval from the University of Ottawa Research Ethics Board (Project H-05-24-10348; Appendix A). Moreover, to engage in relational ethics in and with the community, I met with Richard Harding, City of Nanaimo General Manager of Community Services and Deputy Chief Administrative Officer, prior to submitting my ethics application to discuss this research. He approved of the study and provided a written letter of support for the ethics application.

Chapter Two

In Chapter Two, I employed an ethnographic approach, which informed my application of sampling, recruitment, and participant observation.

Sampling

I employed convenience sampling to address my first research question: “What does inclusion look like (or not) at the SSBP?” The use of convenience sampling is consistent with ethnographic research, which prioritizes rich, contextual observation over statistical representativeness (Golzar et al., 2022). A key strength of this sampling strategy is the ability for researchers to capture authentic behaviours in a real-world setting and reflect variation within a given context. For example, by attending the SSBP at different times (morning, afternoon, and evening) and on weekdays, weekends, and holidays, the participant sample in Chapter Two reflected a diverse representation of SSBP users. However, a limitation of its use is that not all members of the broader population may have an equal chance of representation, which could limit the generalizability of the findings (Meyer & Mayrhofer, 2022). Despite this limitation, the goal of this phase of research was not generalization, but to formulate a rich, situated understanding of what inclusion did (or did not) look like at the SSBP.

Recruitment

I did not formally recruit individuals for participant observation. Instead, I included individuals based on their presence at the SSBP during data collection periods. Because the data collection occurred in a public setting where individuals could not reasonably expect privacy, formal informed consent was not required (Canadian Institutes of Health Research et al., 2018). However, I approached observation in a non-intrusive manner, did not engage individuals directly for data collection purposes, and did not record any identifying information.

Participant Observation

I adopted an “observer as participant” role (Johnson et al., 2006), in which I was present in the space and occasionally participated in the activity (e.g., riding my bike), while conducting observations. Although scholars have criticized Malinowski (1922), the “self-proclaimed inventor of participant observation” (Tedlock, 2003, p. 179), for racial prejudice (Matošević, 2025; Tedlock, 2003), the method remains effective and trustworthy when applied systematically (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Participant observation as a qualitative method is valuable, given that researchers cannot study culture without engaging with it (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983) and, as such, “all social research is a form of participant observation” (Tedlock, 2003, p. 181). It can be utilized to capture aspects of social life that extend beyond the hegemonic status of linguistic meaning (Aagaard & Matthiesen, 2016), including embodied practices, routines, and unspoken social norms. Moreover, according to Shah (2017), the use of participant observation enables us to understand the relationship between history, ideology, and action in ways that we could not have foreseen. It is therefore crucial to understanding both why things remain the same and in thinking about how dominant powers and authority can be challenged, that is crucial to revolutionary social change. (p. 47)

As such, the application of this method is relevant to this study not only for exploring the experiences of individuals engaged in the phenomenon under investigation, but also for interrogating the often taken-for-granted relationships, history, and power associated with it.

I conducted overt participant observations at the pump track for eleven weeks in July-September 2024. The observation sessions occurred approximately three to five times per week and ranged from one to two hours, totalling 80 hours of observation. I documented park users' social interactions, behaviours, languages and communications, environmental context, unspoken

rules, conflicts and resolutions, and routines and patterns (Kawulich, 2005). I initially recorded my observations on my cell phone in the notes application so as not to draw attention to myself sitting in the space with a laptop or notebook. After each observation session, I returned to my parents' house and fleshed out the observations through detailed fieldnotes in the Word application on my laptop, noting descriptive accounts and initial analytic reflections (DeWalt & DeWalt, 1998). Additionally, I highlighted questions arising during the process regarding observations or gaps in observations. While participant observation helped me understand behaviours and norms within the space, I could only assume how individuals interpreted these experiences, which necessitated the use of additional methods in subsequent chapters.

Participants

During that period, I estimate having observed over 500 different people engaging within the space. While I did not collect demographic information due to the observational nature of the study in a public setting, I noted visible variation in age, gender expression, and levels of experience among SSBP users. This broad exposure contributed to a deeper understanding of experiences of inclusion within the space.

Chapter Three

In Chapter Three, I employed a CBPR approach to address my second research question: “What are Indigenous Peoples’ experiences of inclusion at the SSBP pump tracks?” As such, sampling, recruitment, and methods were co-determined in collaboration with the CAB members. This collaborative approach ensured that the research process was grounded in community knowledge, priorities, and relationships.

Sampling

Sampling for Chapter Three was guided by the principles of CBPR and the goal of engaging participants with relevant knowledge and experience at the SSBP. I used purposive sampling to engage with Indigenous participants who could speak to their experiences of inclusion and engagement at the SSBP. Purposive sampling is a process in which participants are selected because they are considered “information rich” in knowledge and expertise (Klenke, 2016) or “experts” in their field (Creswell, 2014).

To achieve an adequate sample size, I relied on the concept of information power. Malterud and colleagues (2016) explained this concept as the “larger information power the sample holds, the lower N is needed, and vice versa” (p. 1754). Emphasizing data quality over quantity, I continuously evaluated these elements throughout data collection rather than having a pre-set requirement for participant numbers (Malterud et al., 2016). As part of this iterative process, I continued data collection until the sample held “sufficient information power” (Malterud et al., 2016, p. 1757). This approach to sampling aligns with the flexible nature of CBPR, where sampling evolves alongside ongoing community engagement (Leavy, 2017).

Recruitment

Recruitment for the study presented in Chapter Three was relational and iterative. CAB members actively identified and recommended potential participants, and they shared recruitment information via social media, including Facebook and Instagram. While this strategy increased visibility of the project, it did not directly result in the recruitment of any participants. Most participants were recruited through direct, relationship-built referrals, and one participant was recruited at the SSBP through a chance encounter while we were using the space simultaneously, which facilitated the use of a go-along interview.

Go-Along Interviews

Go-along interviews create opportunities for in-situ engagement with participants in the environment where the experiences occur. This approach facilitates co-participation between the researcher and participants and can help redistribute traditional power dynamics between researchers and participants, while providing access to rich, context-specific insights (Moran et al., 2020). Moran and colleagues (2020) identified this method as appropriate for a constructionist approach, acknowledging that experiences are subjective and shaped by context. Importantly, during go-along interviews, participants can reflect on their experiences in real time rather than rely on retrospective accounts.

I conducted three go-along interviews. During the go-along interviews, I joined participants at the pump track on my bike, riding alongside them and interacting with them and the space from just over 8 minutes to approximately 30 minutes in length. In doing so, this enabled the gathering of insights into participants' experiences, behaviours, and perspectives as they unfolded within the research setting. I loosely structured the go-along interviews by following an interview guide that was (co)developed with the CABs (Appendix B). I offered all participants a go-along interview; however, only three opted to participate, while the others chose to engage in dialogue without riding their bikes. While go-along interviews are, in theory, a strong method of data collection, they proved challenging to conduct. Although I invested in high-quality microphones and recording software, engaging in a continuous question-and-answer dialogue while riding bikes on the pump track proved difficult. As such, several participants selected to sit within the space and engage in conversation instead.

Semi-Structured Interviews

In addition to conducting go-along interviews, I conducted semi-structured interviews. For Chapter Three, I conducted three (stationary) semi-structured interviews on-site at the SSBP, one at a participant's house, one over Zoom, and two over the phone. The shortest semi-structured interview lasted approximately eight minutes, while the longest lasted nearly one hour. By utilizing semi-structured interviews, I was better able to balance a structured conversation and the flexibility to more deeply explore participants' perspectives through probing questions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). During the semi-structured interviews, I used an interview guide developed with CAB members (Appendix C).

Semi-structured interviews have been identified as the most common qualitative data collection method in sport-related research (Gratton & Jones, 2004) as they permit "insight into the experiences, concerns, interests, beliefs, values, knowledge, and ways of seeing, thinking, and acting" (Schostak, 2006, p. 10). The use of semi-structured interviews allows for flexibility through a combination of predetermined guiding questions and the opportunity to probe and explore emerging topics (Kallio et al., 2016; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Notably, participants can shape the direction and content of the discussion through the method's iterative nature (Schostak, 2006).

Despite their popularity, semi-structured interviews have been criticized for relying on participants' ability to articulate their understandings and experiences. As a result, the use of this method may privilege some voices over others (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). Additionally, researcher bias may affect questioning and interpretation of the conversation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). However, these critiques can be mitigated through reflexive practice and remain a valuable tool for eliciting in-depth, contextually relevant insights from the participants. After

each go-along and semi-structured interview, I gave each interview participant a pair of the study-specific bike socks (\$30 value) for their time and knowledge. I also emailed each participant a copy of their transcript, and they were welcome to make edits; however, none did.

Table 1
Indigenous Participant Information

Name	Pronouns	Métis or First Nations	Residence: Urban or on reserve	Method	Pump Track Knowledge
Chancellor	He/Him	First Nations	Urban	Zoom	Frequent visitor
Steve	He/Him	First Nations	On Reserve	Go-Along	Active user
Jennifer	She/Her	First Nations	Urban	Interview	Aware
Anthony	He/Him	First Nations	On Reserve	Go-Along	Frequent visitor
Chris	He/Him	Métis	Urban	Interview	Active user
Ecko	They/Them	First Nations	On Reserve	Go-Along	Aware
Isaac	He/Him	First Nations	Urban	Interview	Frequent visitor
Ian	He/Him	First Nations	Urban	Interview	Frequent visitor
Michelle	She/Her	First Nations	Urban	Interview	Active user
Owen	He/Him	First Nations	Urban	Interview	Frequent visitor

Participant Information

All participants in Chapter Three self-identified as Indigenous, either Métis or First Nations (see Table 1), and were over the age of 19. Despite being offered the option to identify under a pseudonym, all participants chose to use their names. The participants identified varying levels of familiarity with the SSBP, including awareness of the space (e.g., they had family members who were active users of the space), a frequent visitor (e.g., they used the space several times per year), or an active user (e.g., they used the space monthly or more). This range of experiences contributed to a diverse set of Indigenous experiences of inclusion at the SSBP.

Chapter Four

Similar to Chapter Three, I employed a CBPR approach to address my third research question, “What are newcomers’ experiences of inclusion at the pump tracks at the SSBP?” In

Chapter Four, collaboration with the newcomer community advisor informed recruitment strategies and methods used, situating the work within community knowledge and relationships.

Sampling & Recruitment

Similar to Chapter Three, I used purposive sampling in Chapter Four to recruit newcomer participants with varying levels of familiarity with the SSBP. I shared the recruitment poster on social media; however, I quickly deemed this approach ineffective for recruiting newcomers, as I was not contacted by any potential participants, despite the advertisement being posted and shared more than two dozen times by various people and community organizations. The lack of uptake was unsurprising, given the challenges of recruiting members of equity-owed populations, which are well documented and driven by factors related to trust, relationship-building, burdens of participation, and understanding (e.g., Weiss et al., 2024). In response, the newcomer CAB member and I broadened our recruitment strategy to include newcomers who engaged in leisure activities in Nanaimo, rather than limiting our data collection to only those who actively used the pump tracks. We revised the semi-structured interview guide (Appendix D) to reflect this shift and better account for participants' experiences of inclusion at the SSBP. The ethics amendment was approved. Through this iterative and relational recruitment process, sufficient information power (Malterud et al., 2016) was achieved.

Methods

Data collection in Chapter Four consisted of semi-structured interviews. Although I initially planned to use go-along interviews, I did not conduct any due to the practical challenges identified in Chapter Three and participants' preferences. The semi-structured interviews were conducted in various settings for the convenience of the participants, including at the SSBP, two other parks in the city, and over Zoom.

Table 2
Newcomers' Participant Information

Name	Age Range	Sex	Country of Origin	Years in Canada	Pump Track Knowledge
Aditi	Did not disclose	Female	India	2	Unaware
Connie	Did not disclose	Female	Chile	6	Frequent visitor
Hywel	19-24	Male	Wales	1	Aware
Jane	Did not disclose	Female	Ukraine	6	Frequent visitor
Amina	35-44	Female	Jordan	6	Frequent visitor
Jessica	25-34	Female	Sri Lanka	1	Aware
Kira	16-19	Female	Ukraine	2	Active user
Leo	Did not disclose	Male	Ukraine	2	Active user
Liam	19-24	Male	Wales	1	Aware
Lola	35-44	Female	Nigeria	2	Unaware
Luke	Did not disclose	Male	Ukraine	6	Frequent visitor
Mahesh	Did not disclose	Male	Sri Lanka	2	Frequent visitor
Mihri	35-44	Female	Turkey	1	Unaware
Oscar	19-24	Male	Wales	1	Aware
Vinoth	35-44	Male	India	6	Unaware
Warda	35-44	Female	Syria	3	Unaware

Participant Information

In total, 16 participants engaged in data collection for Chapter Four (see Table 2). All participants were over 19 years of age, except one high school-aged participant, who provided assent and with whom I conducted a go-along interview with her father, who provided his consent. The participants represented nine countries of origin. Four participants identified that they would like to be referred to by a pseudonym. Three participants self-selected pseudonyms, and I assigned one. I conducted all interviews in English, except for one in which the community advisor served as an Arabic interpreter. I then gave each interview participant a pair of the study-specific bike socks (\$30 value) for their time and knowledge. After each interview, I emailed participants a copy of their transcript, and they were welcome to make edits. Only four participants elected to revise their transcripts.

Table 3*Planners, Builders, and Steve Smith Legacy Foundation Participant Information*

Name	Interview Type	Pump Track Knowledge
Caron	Zoom	Active user
Nick	Interview	Active user
Kailynd	Interview	Frequent visitor
Dana	Interview	Frequent visitor
Michelle	Interview	Frequent visitor
Tianna	Interview	Frequent visitor
Dan	Interview	Active user
Interview Withdrawn	Interview	Aware

Additional Information

In addition to the go-along and semi-structured interviews conducted for Chapters Three and Four, I conducted eight semi-structured interviews with planners, builders, and members of the Steve Smith Legacy Foundation (see Table 3). While I did not quote data collected from these interviews in Chapters Two through Four, these participants provided historical and contextual information that became significant to my understanding of the SSBP, and they are cited in the preamble. Each participant who provided contextual information was sent their transcript, and one requested that their interview be withdrawn, stating that they felt their contributions were not meaningful. These contributions not only informed my understanding of the research context but also shaped the reflexive analytic approach applied throughout this study, prompting me to more critically unpack my own assumptions about the diverse understandings of inclusion and to better contextualize and interpret how inclusion is experienced at the SSBP.

Analysis

In Chapters Two, Three, and Four, I applied reflexive thematic analysis (RTA) as the analytic tool. RTA is a “theoretically flexible method for developing, analyzing, and interpreting patterns across a qualitative dataset” (Braun & Clarke, 2021b, p. 4). Central to the use of thematic analysis is the notion that the researcher’s positions and contributions are ultimately both necessary and unavoidable in the data collection and analysis process. As such, the researcher’s subjectivity is not simply acknowledged but is considered valuable to the work. Through reflexivity, the researcher critically interrogates how their own social position and lived experiences influence and contribute to the research process and, subsequently, the potential outcome of the study.

According to Braun and Clarke (2019, 2021a, 2021b), the reflexive approach builds upon their six recursive phases of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006): familiarisation, coding, generating initial themes, reviewing and developing themes, refining, defining and naming themes, and writing up. The first phase of familiarisation involves a rigorous, intimate immersion in the data. For example, in this stage, researchers are expected to read and re-read the data. Next, the researcher(s) engage reflexively and critically with the data. For example, in this stage, Braun and Clarke (2021b) suggested reflecting on the questions, “Why might [the participant] be making sense of things in this way (and not in another way? In what different ways do they make sense of the topic” (pp. 43-44)? The second phase, coding, is an exploratory process involving the methodical review of data and the allocation of descriptive codes to relevant and provocative segments. The third phase consists of generating initial themes that capture a “pattern of shared meaning organized around a central concept” (Braun & Clarke, 2021b, p. 78). The process of conducting RTA requires the researcher (and, throughout this dissertation, members of the

CABs) to develop themes created from codes, or “patterns of shared meaning underpinned by a central organizing concept” (Braun & Clarke, 2021a, p. 39). The coding process is relatively unstructured and organic, thus allowing the codes to evolve as the researcher’s understandings and insights deepen throughout the analysis. As an extension of phase three, phase four involves developing and reviewing themes. The fifth phase involves an iterative, recursive process of refining, defining, and naming themes. The sixth phase involves writing up the research by either making an argument or establishing (and addressing) a gap in previous research.

Throughout the process, my reflexivity was central. It required continuous interrogation of how my positionality as a white, female, cisgender researcher, mountain biker, Steve's acquaintance, and long-standing Nanaimo resident shaped what I observed and heard, and what I interpreted it all to mean. I am grateful to the members of the CABs and to my PhD supervisor for serving as critical friends (Costa & Kallick, 1993) who pushed me to consider alternative perceptions and positionalities throughout this work. While I conducted the initial coding and theme development, the CAB members served as sounding boards and consultative partners in the analytic process. This included sharing preliminary themes with them, inviting their feedback and interpretation, and asking them to reflect on whether my analysis resonated with them. In some cases, CAB members asked clarifying questions related to theme development, helping me refine and contextualize the analysis and making the process highly iterative. They supported the writing process by elaborating on the findings by providing additional lived examples. In doing so, the CAB members and I addressed two key facets of CBPR that are often neglected: data analysis and co-authorship (Khudadad et al., 2025). By engaging with the multiple perspectives, lived experiences, and cultural understandings held by the members of the CABs and me, the application of RTA to this work created a more nuanced understanding of the data. Ultimately,

RTA was a valuable tool for further engaging with, exploring, and unpacking the community's explicit experiences and understandings of inclusion throughout the research process.

Dissertation Format

This dissertation consists of four more chapters. Chapters Two through Four are standalone, publishable papers resulting from this doctoral work. In Chapter Two, I use an ethnographic approach to unpack my observations of what inclusion did (or did not) look like at the SSBP. In Chapter Three, we examine Indigenous Peoples' relationship(s) to the pump tracks at the SSBP. In Chapter Four, we explore newcomers' experiences of inclusion at the SSBP. In Chapter Five, the conclusion, I reflect on key insights garnered throughout this research process and offer conclusions from this work.

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Chapter Two:

Peterson, B., & Giles, A. (2025). Shared space, (un)equitable place? Exploring inclusion at an urban pump track in British Columbia, Canada. *Annals of Leisure Research*, 29(2), 174–191. <https://doi.org/10.1080/11745398.2025.2573255>

Abstract

As advocacy for ‘inclusion’ has become more prevalent, there has been a growing expectation for leisure spaces to be welcoming and accessible to all populations. Concurrently, there has been a substantial increase in the development and use of pump tracks as urban leisure spaces. Pump tracks are bicycle riding surfaces designed as a loop or multi-looped track consisting of rollers and berms. Creators of promotional materials for pump track builders and contributors to online forums have identified pump tracks as both *sustainable* and *inclusive* leisure spaces for a diverse range of user groups. In this paper, we use an ethnographic approach, informed by intersectional theory and reflexive thematic analysis (RTA), to unpack the first author’s observations of what inclusion did (or did not) look like at the Steve Smith Bike Park in Nanaimo, British Columbia, Canada. We also address why these observations may be important for service providers who have developed or would like to develop a pump track within their community. Ultimately, we assert that despite considerable rhetoric to the contrary, pump tracks are not inherently inclusive. Rather, pump tracks require deliberate and ongoing community engagement to become (and remain) inclusive.

Keywords: Inclusion; Bicycle; Pump Track; Urban Leisure Spaces.

Shared Space, (Un)equitable Place?: Exploring Inclusion at the Steve Smith Bike Park

Pump Tracks

I began writing this paper sitting on a bench at the Steve Smith Bike Park, staring at a sign posted to the public identifying the park as a ‘safe and inclusive environment.’ I wrote in my field notes, “*But what does ‘inclusion’ actually look like at these pump tracks?*”

Over the last decade, the international biking community has witnessed a substantial increase in the development and use of pump tracks: bicycle riding surfaces designed as a loop or multi-looped track consisting of rollers and berms (McCormack, 2019). This ‘groundbreaking space’ (Duncan, 2025) is distinguished from other riding surfaces by the method of propulsion riders use to move over their surfaces. Unlike other bicycle riding venues, pump tracks are designed for riders to travel around the track by moving their center of gravity up and down in a pumping motion, rather than by pedalling (Golembiewski et al., 2023; McCormack, 2019; Velosolutions, 2025).

Contributors to online forums (e.g., singletrackworld.com, pinkbike.com, mtbr.com) and newspaper articles introducing new pump track builds (e.g., Feinberg, 2020; Kaiser, 2023) have suggested that pump tracks’ success is largely due to their *inclusivity* by creating one space for participants of all ages and abilities. In an online editorial, Duncan (2025) went as far as to assert that pump tracks are the “unsung heroes of the biking scene” (par. 1). Yet, despite their popularity and accolades, no empirical research in the English language has been published about pump tracks, who uses them, and why.

As awareness of equity, diversity, inclusion, and Indigeneity (EDII) grows, members of the public are increasingly expecting leisure spaces to be welcoming and accessible to all. Facilitating EDII initiatives in leisure spaces can challenge historical oppression and create

environments that meet users' diverse needs, fostering a sense of belonging (Dattilo, 2018). When leisure providers commit to co-creating welcoming and just spaces (Fortune & Gallant, 2023), more individuals can engage in meaningful, socially connected, and culturally relevant activities. Yet, the concept of inclusion can be misinterpreted or reduced to a superficial buzzword (Haegele & Maher, 2023), including in leisure settings.

In this paper, Audrey and I use an ethnographic approach, informed by intersectional theory (Crenshaw, 1989), reflexive thematic analysis (RTA; Braun & Clark, 2019; 2021), and reflexive vignettes from my field notes to explore the first author's observations of what inclusion did (or did not) look like at the Steve Smith Bike Park in Nanaimo, British Columbia,¹ the traditional territory of the Snuneymuxw First Nation. We also address why such information may be important for service providers who have developed, or would like to develop, a pump track within their community. This exploration is particularly important as municipalities are increasingly investing taxpayer dollars into developing pump tracks on the premise that these spaces are inclusive. However, based on the observations shared in this paper, we question if community members are indeed receiving the inclusive spaces they are being promised.

Steve Smith: Cycling Icon

Steve Smith died in May 2016 at the age of 26 from injuries sustained in an enduro motorcycle accident. At the time, he was one of the world's best downhill mountain bikers. In 2013, he was the Union Cycliste Internationale (UCI) Downhill Mountain Bike World Cup overall winner and, until September 2025, was the only Canadian to earn the top ranking in the senior men's or women's categories (UCI, 2025). Following Steve's death, the founders of the

¹ Nanaimo, British Columbia is located on central Vancouver Island on the West Coast of Canada. According to the latest Census, Nanaimo has a population of over 107,000 residents and was one of the five fastest-growing regions in Canada. Projections suggest that the area will continue to experience strong growth in the coming years (Manhas, 2024).

Steve Smith Legacy Foundation approached the City Council in Steve's hometown of Nanaimo, asking to build a bike park in Steve's memory. Worldwide, Steve's fans and friends began donating on a GoFundMe page, and thousands of t-shirts and stickers branded with 'Long Live Chainsaw' (his nickname) were sold. Local and global biking community members provided the funds, supplies, and physical labour to make the envisioned park a reality.

In August 2017, the Steve Smith Bike Park was opened to the public. The park consists of three dirt jump lines, a mulch jump line, and two asphalt pump tracks, making it (at the time) the largest park of its kind in North America. The two pump tracks cover an area of 2,500 square meters (Britton, 2017). The day the Steve Smith Bike Park opened, members of the Legacy Foundation gave away 26 free bicycles and helmets to local youth – an homage to Steve's humble beginnings. Currently, the unsupervised park is operated by the City of Nanaimo from dawn until dusk at no cost to patrons (City of Nanaimo, 2024).

Steve and I were acquaintances with several mutual friends. As such, I was involved with the Steve Smith Bike Park from its inception, including coordinating international races at the park's pump tracks. I have witnessed a diverse range of users, including those of varying ages, skills, and abilities, using the pump tracks. As a normative bodyminded (Price, 2015), cis-gender, unsettled settler (Regan, 2010) of broadly Scandinavian and European ancestry, I have always felt welcomed at the bike park. However, as a leisure scholar and a recreation therapist, I have also observed that some community members are not represented in this space that was 'built by the community for the community.' At the outset of this work, Audrey was unfamiliar with pump tracks; however, after being introduced to these spaces, she has observed their presence and proliferation. As a starting point for this study, we turned to the existing information about the history and use of pump tracks and the literature on inclusion in leisure spaces.

Literature Review

The History of Pump Tracks

Reports on the origin of pump tracks have suggested that their conception is owed to BMX racers in the 1970s (Lightcap, 2009; McCormack, 2019; Velosolutions, 2025). These early-era pump tracks were constructed to resemble a ‘snake run’ design commonly used at skateboard parks and were primarily accessed by BMX riders (Velosolutions, 2025). Members of the mountain biking community began developing pump tracks in the early 1990s by adapting the tracks to develop riding-related skills in urban settings to prevent travelling to a mountain (Velosolutions, 2025). In 2005, the biking film *Earthed 2* featured racer Mick Hannah riding the first pump track in a biking movie (McCormack, 2019), thereby exposing pump tracks to an even broader biking community. In 2006, the first sanctioned pump track race took place at the *3Ride Pro Invitational Festival* (McCormack, 2019), hosted at Rays Indoor MTB Park in Cleveland, Ohio (Petro, 2006).

Early pump tracks were constructed with packed dirt (McCormack, 2019). While relatively easy and inexpensive to build, erosion and weather conditions necessitate regular maintenance. To mitigate these issues, builders began using concrete; however, this process can be time and cost intensive. As such, in the early-2010s, pump track builders began expediting the process by constructing tracks with asphalt (Alliance Action Sports Experts, 2022).

Generally, riding pump tracks is a largely unstructured activity, whereby track users are not guided by a coach or trainer (Dovey et al., 1998). In 2018, the governing body for cycling, the UCI, included pump tracks in its regulations, presenting skilled pump track racers with the opportunity to win a UCI champion’s race bib (UCI, n.d.). This sanction formally recognized pump track racing as a legitimate and competitive international biking event.

Pump tracks have gained notoriety as an international phenomenon. McCormack (2019) estimated that there are thousands of pump tracks globally, ranging from backyard builds to large parks, with price tags of upwards of three hundred thousand dollars. Over the last 20 years, Velosolutions, a Swiss bike park development company, has reportedly built more than 800 pump tracks worldwide (Velosolutions, 2025); this figure does not include pump tracks constructed by other companies or community-built tracks. McCormack (2019) predicted that most cities will develop pump tracks based on their reasonable cost (compared to the price of other leisure spaces) and identified ability to cater to a broader spectrum of park users than skate parks and paved trail networks. Media publications noting the development of community-based pump tracks (e.g., Feinberg, 2020; Kaisar, 2023) and promotional materials advertising pump track builds (e.g., Modular Pump Track, 2024; Velosolutions, 2025) have specifically identified pump tracks as *inclusive* spaces for all members of all communities.

Inclusion in Leisure Spaces

The concept of inclusion is complex, context-dependent, and continuously changing (Haeghele & Maher, 2023; Imray & Colley, 2017). Shaped by historical, cultural, and epistemological factors (Kozleski et al., 2011), inclusion is deeply connected to both the spaces where it is enacted and the conditions surrounding its development (Petrie et al., 2018). Scholars have examined inclusion across identity markers such as (dis)ability (Arduin, 2015; Long, 2024), race (Long et al., 2011), gender (Tate et al., 2024), sexuality (Vo, 2021), social class (Trussell & Mair, 2010), and nationality as independent factors and intersecting dimensions of oppression (Messiou, 2017). Scholars often avoid explicit definitions, treating inclusion as self-evident (Long, 2024; O'Connor, 2015; Tan, 2020). Such ambiguity has hindered efforts to develop strategies for expanding and assessing inclusion (Nilholm & Göransson, 2017). Moreso, it has

complicated evaluations of whether efforts have successfully enhanced participation for the populations they aim to serve (Cobigo et al., 2012).

In leisure spaces, use of the term inclusion generally emphasizes efforts to ensure broad participation through diversity (Inam et al., 2023), equitable policies (Jones et al., 2017), community engagement (Helsper et al., 2022), and meaningful experiences (Mobily & Johnson, 2021). However, while using leisure spaces may facilitate a sense of inclusion for some people, it also has the potential to marginalize (or further marginalize) others (Amara et al., 2005; Long et al., 2011; Mowl, 2001). Leisure spaces within communities reflect dynamics that both enable and constrain inclusion and exclusion (Glover et al., 2017; Long et al., 2011; Susen, 2021), through the exercise of power and social constructs (Long et al., 2011). Inclusion is often framed within needs-based discourse, policy, and practice (Arduin, 2015; Cornell & Jorgensen, 2022), which can imply that all individuals desire to be included (Cornell, 2015). This perspective may reflect assumptions on factors that do, or apparently should, matter to members of equity-owned populations (Cornell & Jorgensen, 2022). This understanding risks implying a one-size-fits-all view of inclusion, overlooking individual and community-specific priorities.

Despite known complexities around inclusion, pump tracks have been sold to municipalities as leisure spaces that are inclusive to all. We thus sought to conduct the first known research on pump tracks by exploring what inclusion did (or did not) look like at the Steve Smith Bike Park.

Theoretical Framework

Intersectional theory has become valuable in providing nuanced understandings of how social identities and systemic power structures shape experiences of inclusion, or lack thereof. Drawing on her lived experience as a Black feminist, lawyer, and scholar, Crenshaw (1989)

argued that women of colour face unique forms of discrimination that earlier essentialist and class-based frameworks failed to capture. As a framework, intersectionality can be used to challenge single-axis approaches and examine interlocking ‘categories of difference’ (Hancock, 2013, p. 282), such as race, gender, class, sexuality, and (dis)ability (Al-Faham et al., 2019; Harari & Lee, 2021). Applying this lens enables a deeper engagement with issues of colonialism, racism, sexism, ableism, and capitalism (Collins et al., 2021).

An intersectional approach provides a valuable framework for inclusion researchers by enabling them to examine how social identities, power structures, and discourses interact to create privilege and oppression. Rather than simply comparing groups, the use of this perspective enables a deeper assessment of the complex, overlapping barriers to participation in leisure spaces (Tan, 2020). One useful methodology for exploring these dynamics is ethnography, whereby the researcher can engage with participants’ experiences and critically investigate what inclusion does (or does not) look like at the pump tracks.

Methodology & Method

Ethnography is a qualitative research methodology that can be utilized to produce a nuanced understanding of social phenomena through the exploration of the beliefs, behaviours, and practices of individuals within a particular social or cultural group (Ryan, 2017; Seligmann & Estes, 2020) “that are not yet clearly understood” (Angrosino, 2011, p. 20). Ethnographers can capture the everyday interactions, informal social norms, and unspoken power dynamics that shape participation (Angrosino, 2011), making this approach particularly valuable for examining inclusion in leisure spaces. Pisano (2024) suggested that ethnography is “not just watching people or talking with them – you’re doing what they do” (p. 43). Researchers conducting embodied and emplaced research can gain a more comprehensive understanding of the sensorial

and situated aspects of an activity by moving alongside participants in motion (Hockey & Collinson, 2006). Due to my positionality, oscillating between insider and outsider identities (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009; Kerr & Sturm, 2019) at the pump tracks, we selected an ethnographic approach for this work.

Eleven weeks of participant observation (between July and October 2024) at the Steve Smith Bike Park informed this work. I visited the park to sit on the public benches or ride my bike for 80 cumulative hours, at varying times and days of the week, to diversify my observations. Given (2008) described observational research as a qualitative approach in which researchers systematically and purposefully engage their senses, particularly sight and hearing, to gather insights about a phenomenon of interest. The use of observational research has been problematized for reasons such as researcher bias (Boyko, 2013; Jibril, 2018) and the challenges of interpreting non-visible social identities (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2019); however, these limitations do not render the methodology inherently flawed. Rather, we understand these critiques to highlight the importance of reflexivity throughout the research process, which makes explicit the perspectives and assumptions that inform observations (Berger, 2015; Holmes, 2020). Researcher reflexivity emphasizes subjectivity as an integral factor of knowledge production (Finlay, 2002). Indeed, as Coombs and Osbourne (2018) noted, failing to reflexively examine and negotiate one's positionality can limit a researcher's ability to interpret significant data. Moreover, we sought to ensure that interpretations of the data were grounded in contextual and theoretical understandings (Angrosino, 2011). Ultimately, we deemed our use of ethnography appropriate due to the belief that leisure activities are social and embodied, and, as such, observing nonverbal communication, social norms, and group dynamics in the space was valuable to record.

Through field notes (Pisano, 2024), I recorded the social interactions, behaviours, languages, and communications of park users, as well as the environmental context, unspoken rules, routines, and patterns (Kawulich, 2005). I first recorded point-form observations and reflections in my cell phone's notes application. Then, after leaving the park each day, I expanded the notes into fully fleshed-out field notes.

Notably, although we obtained ethical clearance from the University of Ottawa's Research Ethics Board (project H-05-24-10348) before conducting this work, the bike park is a public setting. As such, we did not require permission from park users to document our observations (Canadian Institutes of Health Research et al., 2018). However, if the park was not busy and I was not riding my bike, I would often approach park users to introduce myself and explain my reasons for being present. This was done to address potential perceived safety concerns due to the presence of an observant adult who was neither participating in the activity nor supervising any park users.

Analysis

We applied Braun and Clarke's (2016) six-phase approach to RTA to analyze the collected data. Their reflexive approach builds upon the six recursive phases of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006): familiarisation, coding, generating initial themes, reviewing and developing themes, refining, defining and naming themes, and writing up. Using RTA provided a flexible framework that allowed us to unpack our roles in knowledge production in relation to the underlying theoretical assumptions that informed the study (Braun & Clark, 2019; 2021). Due to my connection to the people and the place, I initially struggled with the potential social consequences of critiquing pump track development and use. I hesitated to suggest that perhaps

pump tracks are not the all-inclusive spaces that members of this ‘new’ biking community (many of whom are my friends) promote them to be.

Through the data collection and analysis, I was confronted with the recognition that much of my documentation portrayed experiences of individuals who, like me, arrived at the park in their own vehicles, presented as white, used expensive equipment, communicated in English as their first language, and appeared comfortable and welcome in the public space. As I spent more time immersed in the musings of the pump tracks, I became more conscious of my own presence and behaviours at the park and more cognizant of how other park users may interpret my actions. Yet rather than seeing discomfort as an obstacle, I used it as an analytical tool (Pillow, 2003), reframing my unease as a catalyst for deeper critical engagement with the observed structural patterns and dominant narratives of inclusion within the space. As a non-user of pump tracks, Audrey was able to serve as a critical friend (Costa & Kallick, 1993), asking pointed questions and further encouraging my reflexivity.

Results

As we analyzed my observations from the pump tracks and explored the tensions that arose from what I saw and heard, we produced three themes of what inclusion did (or did not) look like. These themes were (1) (in)visible diversity, (2) shared space – (un)equitable place, and (3) inclusion by design or default.

(In)Visible Diversity

Occasionally, when I arrive at the park, it feels eerily quiet as I sit alone in the space. But today, the scene is entirely different—the park is alive with energy, full of people of all ages. It’s a Sunday afternoon. The weather couldn’t be more perfect to be outside — the air is cool and

crisp, and the sun is shining. The parking lot is packed. It is challenging to keep track of everyone as they move around.

I lost count at 80 people. Today, it is an all-ages park, from a swaddled baby to grandparents sitting on a bench observing the action.

I overhear a boy (maybe seven years old) saying to his dad, “Look! There’s an adult riding a bike.” His dad replies, “Anybody can ride here.” (Field notes, September 29, 2024)

I consistently observed the Steve Smith Bike Park as a space that attracted individuals of various ages, genders, and skill levels. The smaller pump track was usually well-used by young children navigating the space on run bikes, scooters, and small pedal bikes, as parents and caregivers observed from the sidelines. In contrast, the larger of the two tracks was most often occupied by older youth and adults, who demonstrated advanced riding abilities (e.g., navigating the track with minimal pedalling, manualing over the rollers, and riding high into the berms). As such, it was apparent that track choice was influenced by age and skill level.

Children of all genders used the small pump track, while feminine-presenting people were notably under-represented on the larger track relative to masculine-presenting participants. When present, adult feminine-presenting riders were typically highly skilled and equipped with high-quality bikes and gear. In contrast, masculine-presenting riders spanned a wider range of skill levels and equipment quality. Often, feminine-presenting adults at the park appeared to provide a nurturing role to other park users. For example, on the afternoon of September 29, I observed five feminine-presenting adults taking photos and videos of the children they were supervising, while also providing them with food and beverages. On the same day, a feminine-presenting caregiver was overheard telling their child, “No biking without your helmet,” promoting safety and well-being. Less often, I saw feminine-presenting adults riding at the pump

tracks. However, when this did happen, such as on September 5 and 9, they were riding with youth whom I presumed to be their children. Although the space was technically available to all, the observations suggest that feminine-presenting adults predominantly take non-track use or parental roles. As a result, unspoken social and gendered expectations may discourage participation at the larger track.

Beyond gendered participation, inclusion also appeared to be shaped by skill level and confidence. Riders who seemed to be beginners often loitered around the flat area between the two tracks or hesitated before ‘dropping’ into a track, watching from the sidelines as more experienced or confident riders moved through the space. On September 15, a young rider looked at me and said, “You go first,” as they backed away from the larger track. On some occasions, skilled riders provided guidance or encouragement to less skilled or new participants. For example, on September 29, I saw an experienced rider lend their bike to a new park user who stated interest in purchasing a new bike but was unsure of which components to consider. However, at other times, beginners received impatient reactions from track users. Such as, on September 12, I witnessed one youth yell at another for stopping on the track. Interactions like this reinforced a hierarchy in which participants with higher skill levels dictated the social expectations for use of the space.

Shared Space – (Un)equitable Place

Today, it is visible that the pump tracks can be used by more than one type of rider. There are people riding scooters, run bikes, hardtail bikes, full-suspension bikes, BMX bikes, skateboards, and two people are on rollerblades. The park feels energetic, with people of all ages, wheels, and skill levels sharing the space. Yet, I remember a conversation with an individual who rides an adaptive bike. They stated that the rollers of the pump tracks are spaced

too close to allow their nearly seven-foot bike to negotiate the track smoothly and that using the space could risk damage to both their bike and the tracks themselves. (Field notes, October 12, 2024)

The pump tracks are located between upper and lower parking lots. During the observation period, the lower parking lot was closed due to local construction, limiting park access and forcing users to navigate a steep, gravel hill from the top lot. On September 16, I watched an adult struggling down the hill while carrying a bike, a scooter, two helmets, and personal belongings, indicating that the terrain could pose a barrier to entry. I was confronted with my privilege-laden assumption that all pump track users were parking in the designated lots, implying they also had the use of a personal motor vehicle. Until then, I had overlooked additional challenges encountered by participants who relied on alternative means of transportation. As a result, I became more aware of park users walking or riding to the pump tracks, which were both rare occurrences.

Upon entering the bike park, there are distinct areas catering to varied skills and abilities. The division into small and large tracks, referred to by one participant on September 3 as “the little kids’ track” and “the big kids’ track,” may facilitate progression for some riders. However, it may also create implicit barriers for others. For example, the smaller of the two tracks was frequently utilized as an entry-level space for young children and was rarely observed being used by older youth and adults. On August 15, I observed a feminine-presenting older adult in the space with her assumed grandchild. Although the older adult was in possession of a bike, I overheard her commenting that she was “too big” to ride the small track, but she didn’t want to “hurt her knees” by riding the larger track, which was assumed to be for adults.

The larger pump track features steeper rollers and larger berms than the smaller track, designed to challenge more experienced riders. While these features contribute to the appeal for skilled riders, they also function as physical barriers to younger or less confident riders. Notably, subtle social cues appeared to dictate access to the larger track, reinforcing limitations to participation. On September 29, I watched a young child struggling around the smaller pump track. As the child ‘wobbled’ over the rollers, an unrelated adult standing nearby turned to the child’s caregiver and commented that the child required assistance. Without hesitation, the parent responded, “No, they’re fine.” This brief exchange illustrated contrasting perceptions about the skills required to participate, ultimately identifying who could use the space and under what conditions.

I observed a lack of racial and linguistic diversity among park users. The majority of participants appeared white-presenting and English-speaking. This caused me to question whether the park was experienced as a welcoming space for racialized individuals or those for whom English is not a first language. All park signage was exclusively in English, which could unintentionally signal to non-English speakers that they were not considered when the space was designed. The absence of visible racial diversity at the pump tracks was suggestive of social barriers, including narrow outreach, cultural perceptions of belonging, or historical exclusion from leisure spaces, which have contributed to limited participation by equity-owed populations.

It was complicated to assess the issue of socioeconomic disparities, as an individual’s socioeconomic status is not evident from equipment alone. However, I drew inferences based on the quality and cost of the equipment and accessories in use. For example, on October 11, a masculine-presenting individual, whom I assumed to be around twelve years of age, arrived at the park wearing an open-faced motorcycle helmet. I observed him removing the helmet and

placing it under a picnic table away from a group of youth wearing expensive bicycle-specific helmets. The youth's behaviour led me to assume he did not have the resources to access bicycle-specific equipment. Furthermore, hiding the helmet led me to infer that the youth was embarrassed to not match the perceived social norms within the space. In such situations, it became apparent that a bike rental or borrowing program at the bike park may support access and participation.

Inclusion by Design or Default

Since the park's opening in 2017, it has been a destination for visitors from the international biking community. This summer, I conversed with riders from the United States and the United Kingdom. Today, I met a couple from Switzerland, and, like many other park guests, they shared a similar story of travelling by plane, ferry, and car to Vancouver Island, drawn by either seeing the Steve Smith Bike Park featured in the Anthill Films movie or having followed Steve's career.

And yet, as I excitedly welcome these international guests into the park, I can't help but wonder how many people who live right here, in the city, have even heard about this space? Is the bike park an inclusive community space or an exclusive biking destination? The people at the park appear to enjoy the space, but what about those who aren't here? (September 24, 2024)

The overall visibility of the bike park and pump tracks stood out as a significant issue. Although the park is situated in a relatively busy, high-traffic area, no promotional materials are featured on the city's website or in the local parks and recreation leisure guide, and signage is limited. For example, the only identifiable wayfinding marker for the park was a small sign largely obscured by a tree near the upper entrance, which lacked detailed information about the park's amenities or accessibility. On July 31, two adults were overheard discussing their

challenges locating an entrance to the park. One noted that the visit was the individual's third attempt to find the space within the larger park. On October 4, two young adults arrived at the pump tracks carrying skateboards and asked if the park was open to the public. They stated that they were unaware of the pump tracks until they viewed them from the soccer fields the previous day and had returned to explore the space.

A digital search of the term “biking” in the city's *Parks by Activity* database (City of Nanaimo, 2026) revealed seven community biking activities. Notably, the Steve Smith Bike Park is not explicitly listed. Ultimately, without prior knowledge of what a pump track is or about the presence of the bike park, residents or visitors to Nanaimo would be inhibited from locating this space. The lack of advertising or outreach by both the Steve Smith Legacy Foundation and the City of Nanaimo has prevented the ability of potential users, especially members of equity-owned populations, from becoming aware of the leisure space, reducing opportunities for engagement and participation.

Discussion

We conducted this study to explore what inclusion did (or did not) look like at the Steve Smith Bike Park in Nanaimo, British Columbia, Canada, and to address why this may be important for current and prospective community pump track providers. The themes of (in)visible diversity and shared space – (un)equitable place led us to affirm that although pump tracks are spaces that can be used by various ages, genders, and skill levels, they are not inherently inclusive. This becomes pertinent when acknowledging that diverse axes of identity, including gender, skill, race, and socioeconomic status, intersect to support or inhibit participation. The third theme, inclusion by design or default, underscored the argument that for

community pump tracks to become (and remain) inclusive, deliberate and ongoing community engagement addressing these intersecting factors is required.

Pump Tracks Are Not Inherently Inclusive

Leisure spaces are not simply sites of recreation. They are arenas where dynamics of diversity and access are constantly negotiated. Leisure spaces in what is now known as Canada, including the Steve Smith Bike Park, are situated within systems that sustain neoliberal, colonial, ableist, and capitalist structures. The rhetoric of inclusion within leisure spaces is often framed around physical accessibility, which perpetuates dominant bodily and cultural standards, thereby excluding those who do not *fit in* (Alexander & Berbary, 2021; Litwiller, 2023). The pump tracks at the Steve Smith Bike Park are not merely physical infrastructure, but also a contested space where inclusion is reinforced by dominant power dynamics (Haegle & Maher, 2023). Accordingly, social hierarchies at the pump tracks were observed to influence who was included, who remained on the periphery, and who was excluded entirely.

Findings from this study demonstrated that people of diverse ages, genders, and skill levels used the space. Indeed, some moments reflected the potential to foster shared use; for example, skilled riders coaching inexperienced participants and the numerous families engaging in multi-generational use of the smaller pump track. However, the larger track was more frequently used by young, white, masculine-presenting individuals with high skill levels and expensive equipment. Those who did not fit this dominant identity (i.e., older adults, feminine-presenting individuals, racialized individuals, and people with non-normalized bodyminds) were largely absent. This substantiates broader patterns of leisure exclusion, whereby racialized, gendered, and non-normative bodyminds are disproportionately not included due to intersecting barriers (Crenshaw, 1989; Walby et al., 2012). Further, the observations at the pump tracks

reinforced the argument that inclusion is not merely a matter of open access but is shaped by socially constructed power dynamics that dictate who feels welcome and safe to participate (Vo, 2021).

Issues of race and class have historically shaped access to public spaces, (re)producing social privilege for select user groups (Deluca, 2013; Sturm et al., 2020; Sturm & Rinehart, 2018). For instance, Sturm and colleagues (2020) observed a community mountain bike skills park in Aotearoa New Zealand, which, despite being identified as a welcoming community space, was dominated by a “homogeneous membership... overwhelmingly white, male, middle-aged, and affluent” (p. 154). Similar dynamics were observed at the Steve Smith Bike Park, where the notable absence of members from Nanaimo’s increasingly diverse population (Manhas, 2024) further emphasized the gap between the assumption of inclusion and the lived reality of exclusion. Assertions of inclusion, such as the sign denoting the park as such, create an illusion while leaving dominant power structures unchallenged (Crenshaw, 1989). Simply labelling a space as inclusive does not make it so. Therefore, the inclusion of equity-owed groups within leisure spaces is not unconditional or guaranteed.

As with my unexamined presence and actions at the pump tracks, privileged individuals often fail to recognize how assumptions shaped by whiteness, normative bodymindedness, gender norms, or class can hinder participation for equity-owed populations (Dattilo, 2021). At the pump tracks, the limited or negotiated involvement of feminine-presenting and racialized individuals and people with non-normative bodyminds reflected a lack of cultural representation and social capital, which are factors that can deter individuals from accessing leisure spaces (Frias & Dattilo, 2021). The experience of exclusion can become more profound for individuals of multiple equity-owed intersecting identities, such as being feminine-presenting and having

low socioeconomic status. The absence of equity-owned groups in public leisure spaces matters, not only because it reflects broader patterns of systemic inequality, but because access to such spaces carries significant social, psychological, and health benefits (Qi et al., 2024). While pump tracks, such as The Steve Smith Bike Park, have the potential to be inclusive, they will remain as sites where privilege is reinforced without deliberate efforts to challenge and disrupt exclusionary norms and structures.

Inclusion Requires Deliberate and Ongoing Action

Wenger and colleagues (2023) argued that the development of inclusive playgrounds has ignored variables of inclusion beyond physical access. Addressing this shortfall requires examining systemic barriers and inviting previously excluded groups to co-lead solutions in the planning phases of development (e.g., Marriott et al., 2021; Whyte & Sharpe, 2016). Notably, inclusion hinges on sustained engagement post-construction. However, we recognize that many communities with established pump tracks, such as Nanaimo, have progressed beyond the consultation stage in developing their pump tracks. This reality challenges the assumption that building a pump track equates to participation and reveals the limitations of the adage “build it, and they will come.”

Wenger et al. (2023) emphasized that creating inclusive spaces requires intentional actions that continue throughout the venue’s availability to the community. This concept is particularly relevant with asphalt pump tracks, recognizing that once constructed, they will remain in place indefinitely. Notably, statistics relating to population development within the city of Nanaimo show that the resident demographics are changing annually to become more diverse (Manhas, 2024). Therefore, the identities and needs of the community-based pump track users are also changing. As such, there cannot be a singular or isolated initiative promoting inclusion,

particularly along a single axis of identity, that remains relevant over time, which makes ongoing engagement essential.

Signage is often cited as a tool for promoting inclusion in leisure spaces, for example, by identifying valuable information in varied fonts and textures to enhance the usability of the space (Moore et al., 2022; Rivera et al., 2024). However, Rodrigues, Coelho, and Tavares (2019) argued that while signage can raise awareness about the intended use of a space, it does not dismantle structural barriers to participation. At The Steve Smith Bike Park, one English-only sign designated the space as inclusive, while another, hidden behind a tree, signalled its location. Despite these measures, the park's user demographics remained largely homogeneous, revealing the limitations of signage as a standalone inclusion strategy. Addressing barriers to participation requires deliberate efforts, such as providing affordable access to equipment (e.g., rental, loan, or donation programs). More importantly, it requires collaborating with equity-owed populations within the community to address unique and intersecting barriers and avoiding tokenistic, one-size-fits-all programs (Haggard & Giles, 2022).

For communities to develop inclusive pump tracks, it is essential to intentionally engage diverse participants beyond the planning process. Being intentional should involve acknowledging and confronting the complex histories of inclusion within the leisure field while reflecting on how leisure spaces perpetuate and address these issues (Fortune & Gallant, 2023). This reflection should inform strategies that go beyond symbolic gestures and instead prioritize structural and cultural shifts that actively dismantle barriers to participation. For example, during this study, I observed an underrepresentation of feminine-presenting adults, individuals from racialized populations, and individuals assumed to be from lower socioeconomic situations (such as youth without bike-specific equipment and individuals without personal transportation).

Throughout the observation period, there were no noticeable initiatives at the Steve Smith Bike Park to support the increased participation of these, or any, equity-owed groups. This absence underscores the need for a more equitable and participatory approach to pump track design and management if pump tracks are to fulfill their promise of inclusivity.

We acknowledge that there are some limitations to this study. For example, this research can only be representative of the understandings related to my observations, situated within the context of the literature. Additionally, findings related to participant gender and age were based on my assumptions. To strengthen the insights gained through observation, incorporating additional data collection methods, such as demographic information, could be beneficial (Naish et al., 2023). Future research on inclusion at pump tracks would benefit from amplifying the voices of equity-owed populations, particularly by exploring their understandings and experiences of inclusion in these community leisure spaces.

Conclusion

We have made a novel contribution to academic literature by exploring inclusion at pump tracks. While the pump tracks at the Steve Smith Bike Park were observed to facilitate inclusion for some individuals of various ages, genders, and skill levels, they are not inherently inclusive by design. Rather, meaningful inclusion requires an intersectional approach that requires constant effort and ongoing attention. Indeed, we urge communities that currently own and operate pump tracks, as well as those planning to develop new facilities, to explore the presence of diversity, barriers to access and participation, and visibility and awareness within their community. Communities with (or developing) pump tracks must confront the power dynamics that are (re)produced within leisure spaces. Importantly, they must ensure informational, geographic, and

economic accessibility for diverse members of the community and commit to ongoing and intentional inclusion at the pump tracks.

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Chapter Three:

Peterson, B., Giles, A. R., Recalma, S., Amos, C., & Manson, J. (2026). Pouring asphalt on ancestral land: Indigenous experiences at the Steve Smith Bike Park pump track. *Leisure Sciences*, 1-20. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01490400.2026.2693037>

Abstract

Pump tracks are among the fastest-growing recreation infrastructure in North America. Within the leisure community, pump tracks are increasingly framed as *inclusive* public spaces for all ages, all skill levels, and all wheeled equipment. However, inclusion in urban leisure spaces in what is now known as Canada must be understood within the context of the country's colonial history, which has typically erased Indigenous Peoples. In this paper, the authors (leisure researchers and Indigenous community members) explore Indigenous Peoples' relationship(s) to the pump tracks at the Steve Smith Bike Park located on Snuneymuxw First Nation ancestral and unceded lands, in what is now Nanaimo, British Columbia. Using settler colonial theory, community-based participatory research, go-along and semi-structured interviews, and reflexive thematic analysis, we produced two themes: (1) enduring colonial legacies at the pump tracks; (2) the pump tracks as a space for resistance and cultural resurgence. Together, these themes illustrate how the pump tracks function as complex urban leisure spaces that both (re)produce settler colonial exclusions and enable Indigenous presence, resistance, and resurgence.

Keywords: Pump Track; Indigenous Peoples; Leisure Spaces; Community-Based Participatory Research

Pouring Asphalt on Ancestral and Unceded Land: Indigenous Experiences at the Steve Smith Bike Park

Pump tracks are identified among the fastest-growing recreation infrastructure in North America (Arnold, 2023). While comprehensive statistical information about their development is unavailable, McCormack (2019) estimated that there are currently thousands of pump tracks globally. Sharma (2025) projected that between 2025 and 2033, the global asphalt pump track construction market will continue to grow, driven by the infrastructure's versatility and low maintenance requirements. Unique to these spaces is that cyclists generate momentum by moving the body's centre of gravity up and down in a pumping motion, rather than by pedalling (McAllister, 2023; McCormack, 2019). Early pump tracks of the 1970s were constructed with packed dirt (McCormack, 2019). In response to issues of maintenance and durability (McAllister, 2023; McCormack, 2019), builders began experimenting with concrete in 2009 and asphalt in 2012 (Velosolutions Global, 2023), consequently, solidifying pump tracks as permanent fixtures in the spaces where they are built. Despite their origins in cycling, pump tracks have become multi-use leisure spaces. As emphasized in media reports (e.g., Feinberg, 2020; Kaisar, 2023) and promotional materials (e.g., Canadian Ramp Company, 2025; Velosolutions, 2025), these tracks can be used by people of all ages and skill levels, and accommodate various types of equipment, including bicycles, skateboards, scooters, and in-line skates. As such, pump tracks are typically labelled as *inclusive* leisure spaces for all community members (Eco Pump Track, 2025; Park N Play Design, 2024; Velosolutions, 2025).

The history of inclusion in what is now known as Canada is deeply intertwined with the nation's settler colonial foundations. National laws and legislations, including the Canadian Bill of Rights (1960), the Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1982), the Employment Equity Act

(1995), the Multiculturalism Act (1985), and the Accessible Canada Act (2019), have been implemented to promote equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI). However, Indigenous Peoples have been largely excluded from such frameworks (Moore et al., 2019). This exclusion is rooted in settler colonialism, which positions Indigenous Peoples' presence as incompatible with the state's conceptualization of inclusive citizenship (Willmott & Skillings, 2021). Consequently, the legacy of colonialism inflicts systemic harm upon the traditional inhabitants of the land (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada [TRC], 2015) and perpetuates settler colonial structures (Litwiller et al., 2023).

Settler colonialism has caused significant and ongoing harm to Indigenous Peoples within Canada. Unhonoured treaties and forced dispossession from traditional Indigenous territories have disrupted economic and social systems (MacDonald & Steenbeek, 2015) and deprived communities of their historical and spiritual connections to the land (Coulthard, 2014), which are central to Indigenous Peoples' ways of life (Gray, 2022). Furthermore, settler colonial policies, including the Indian Act (1985) and the cultural genocide that occurred through the forced attendance of Indigenous children at Indian Residential Schools (TRC, 2015), amongst other horrific acts, have been used in attempts to suppress cultural practices, and assimilate Indigenous peoples to European ideals (MacDonald & Steenbeek, 2015), including practices of sport and leisure (Forsyth & Wamsley, 2006). Subsequently, the notion of inclusive leisure spaces on traditional territory, ancestral and unceded lands, such as urban pump tracks, is complicated by Canada's historical and ongoing settler colonial history.

In this paper, we explore Indigenous Peoples' relationship(s) to the pump tracks at the Steve Smith Bike Park, located on the ancestral¹ and unceded lands of the Snuneymuxw First Nation in what is now known as Nanaimo, British Columbia, Canada. This work is rooted in settler colonial theory (SCT) and community-based participatory research (CBPR), drawing on insights from members of an Indigenous community advisory board (CAB) and six go-along and four semi-structured interviews with self-identifying Indigenous Peoples with varying levels of involvement at the pump tracks. Using Braun and Clarke's (2019) reflexive thematic analysis (RTA), we unpack settler colonial tensions at the pump tracks while also demonstrating that the space serves as an arena for continued colonial resistance and cultural resurgence.

Setting the Context

The Steve Smith Bike Park opened in the summer of 2017 to honour the legacy of Canadian downhill mountain bike legend Steve Smith, who passed away in May of 2016 from injuries sustained in a motorcycle accident. Following his death, friends, family, and members of the local and global biking community initiated fundraising efforts to actualize Steve's vision of building a bike park where youth could develop their riding skills. The Nanaimo City Council offered land within the footprint of a pre-existing municipal park (City of Nanaimo, 2015) and approved \$200,000 (City of Nanaimo, 2016b), while community members donated materials and physical labour to support the park's construction. At its opening, the park was the largest facility of its kind in North America (Britton, 2017), featuring two asphalt pump tracks spanning an area of 2,500 square meters, three dirt jump lines, and a mulch jump line. In September 2020, an adjacent bike skills park was added. Access is permitted from dawn until dusk, with no

¹ In this manuscript, the term ancestral is used to denote ongoing, intergenerational relationships to and with land that remain actively lived, governed, and asserted. The term is not utilised to insinuate Indigenous territorial rights are solely relevant to the past.

entrance fee (City of Nanaimo, 2025). City Council minutes recorded that members of the Steve Smith Legacy Foundation acknowledged the bike park would be built on Snuneymuxw land (City of Nanaimo, 2016a); however, beyond this acknowledgement, there is no clear evidence in public records of a formal engagement with or by the Nation. While one of the City Counsellors at the time of the approval was a member of Snuneymuxw First Nation, it was not a representative or liaison role for the Nation and, as such, cannot constitute Nation-to-Nation consultation.

Notably, land ownership in present-day Nanaimo remains an ongoing, contested political and legal reality, shaped by both settler colonial dispossession and the continued assertion of rights by the Snuneymuxw First Nation. Representatives for Snuneymuxw First Nation have advocated and continue to advocate for recognition and the implementation of rights affirmed under the pre-confederation Sarlequun Treaty of 1854 (Mackenzie, 2024; Zeidler, 2025). As a result of this advocacy, in 2020, a land transfer agreement announced by the Province of British Columbia included the return of over 3,000 hectares of land in parcels, including the *Sxwayxum* village site (Mackenzie, 2024), mere kilometres from the present-day location of the Steve Smith Bike Park. In October 2025, another 78.8 hectares of former federal lands were returned to the Snuneymuxw First Nation in addition to a financial settlement in an offer to compensate for Crown failures to uphold treaty promises (Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, 2025). While these recent developments may reflect the provincial government's efforts at restitution, they also assert Snuneymuxw First Nation's territorial rights, cultural presence, and self-determination despite the continuation of settler colonial structures.

Situated along the *Sxwayum* (Millstone River), the Steve Smith Bike Park is not simply a leisure space but a physical expression of settler colonialism as the very presence of the pump

tracks requires the continued occupation of Indigenous land and the normalization of settler colonial logics. As a result, I wrestled with my positionality within this study. Having known Steve through a shared social network, my involvement with the Steve Smith Bike Park has been shaped by personal and community relationships. As a cisgender woman with Scandinavian and European heritage who identifies as normative bodyminded (Price, 2015), I have experienced the bike park as a welcoming space. However, accompanied by this sense of belonging is the unsettling understanding that comfort can signal complicity with the settler-colonial structures that are embedded and often invisible in everyday life (Cooke, 2017). Amid this tension between good intentions and the (re)production of colonialism, I have committed to unlearning, unknowing, and sitting within the discomfort (Regan, 2010). Through this (albeit incomplete) process, I developed deep gratitude for the four co-authors of this paper, whose insights (both affirming and critical) have been instrumental in challenging and (re)shaping my understandings of leisure spaces. The second author, Audrey, identifies as a white, cisgender woman of English and Welsh descent. Despite having significant road biking experience, she has never ridden a bike on a pump track. The third author, Steven (*Malidas*), is an elected council member of Xwkwilxwum First Nation, a father, a competitive snowboarding coach, a recreational mountain biker, and a frequent user of the pump tracks. The fourth author, Chancellor, identifies as a member of the Nuuchahnulth from the Ehattesaht and Hesquiaht Nations. He is a father, a certified mountain bike coach, and works to promote mountain biking with Indigenous Peoples across BC. As such, he has ridden many pump tracks across the province. The fifth author, Jennifer, is a member of Snuneymuxw First Nation with ancestral ties to Huu-ay-aht First Nation, a mother, a recreational mountain biker, and a new participant at the pump tracks. To

situate this study, we turned to the existing information about the history and use of pump tracks and the literature on Indigenous histories and perspectives on leisure within a Canadian context.

Literature Review

The Settler Colonial History of Canada

Indigenous Peoples have lived on the land now known as Canada since time immemorial, with practices and governance systems that long predate the formation of the Canadian state. European settlement beginning in the 16th and 17th centuries initiated the settler colonial agenda (Gray, 2022). Contemporary institutions and policies continue to reflect colonial agendas that undermine Indigenous sovereignty and promote assimilation into settler norms (TRC, 2015). As a result, Indigenous identities and relationships to land, community, and health are influenced in ways that disrupt traditional practices (Atleo & Baron, 2022) and limit participation in previously active lifestyles (Anderson et al., 2016). The forced displacement of Indigenous Peoples from their lands has functioned to facilitate settler access to land and to justify settler permanence by framing Indigeneity as incompatible with urbanism and modernity (Geckle, 2025). According to Statistics Canada (2023), 48% of “Registered” and 75% of “Non-Status Indians” now reside in urban areas. Yet, the authenticity of urban Indigenous identities is often undermined due to social assumptions that equate Indigeneity with rural or reserve-based life (Peters, 2005). In response, scholars have framed urban Indigeneity as a dynamic space for colonial resistance (Dorries, 2023; Geckle, 2025). Despite ongoing efforts of dispossession and marginalization, Indigenous Peoples continue to assert their rights through traditional governance, political movements (Coulthard, 2014), and leisure activities (Enhawk, 2018), resulting in the (re)writing of Indigenous narratives of loss and trauma into stories of resilience, resurgence, and continuity.

Perspectives on Indigenous Peoples' Leisure

Western leisure studies scholars have historically marginalized or misinterpreted Indigenous Peoples' experiences by applying colonial logics of productivity, rationalisation, and consumption (Amsden & Van Wynsberghe, 2005; Paraschak, 2013). At the same time, leisure holds deep meaning in many Indigenous cultures, often intertwined with spiritual, cultural, social, and physical connections (Fox et al., 1998; Peterson, 2023, 2024). Scholars have advanced definitions that frame sport and leisure as forms of medicine (Lavallée, 2007), supporting increased health and well-being (Saskamoose et al., 2016) and as a site of friendly competition (Forsyth, 2007), community engagement (Forsyth et al., 2016), cultural continuity, and decolonial possibilities (e.g., Forsyth & Wamsley, 2006; Fox, 2006; Henhawk, 2023; Iwasaki et al., 2009; MacDonald & Steenbeek, 2015; McGuire-Adams & Giles, 2016). Thus, leisure is not apolitical. It can be a site of resistance, where Indigenous Peoples reclaim and sustain cultural practices and assert sovereignty.

Reclaiming Space: Indigenous Self-Determination and Leisure Practices

In the last decade, multi-use trail systems have become dynamic spaces for Indigenous cultural reclamation. Trail builders intentionally engaging with local Indigenous nations and protocols can transform trail development and use beyond recreation into land-based community and cultural development. As an example, the Indigenous Youth Mountain Bike Program (IYMBP), operating in British Columbia, Canada, collaborates with Indigenous nations to develop trail systems that honour the land and promote skill development, stewardship, and cultural connection (Smith et al., 2024). Similar initiatives within the province include the Squamish Off-Road Cycling Association (SORCA) co-managing trail systems with Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish Nation), modelling shared governance (SORCA, n.d.);

and the *Ćumaata* trail network, developed in collaboration between the Ucluelet Mountain Bike Association and the Yuułuʔiłʔatḥ (Ucluelet First Nation), incorporating Nuu-chah-nulth language and storytelling (Malley, 2023; Stuart, 2022), reflecting Indigenous perspectives in outdoor leisure. While these examples highlight how trail-based leisure in rural and natural settings can challenge Western understandings of leisure, less attention has been paid to how permanent, immovable leisure infrastructure, such as pump tracks, intersects with Indigenous land in urban areas. Through this study, we apply SCT as a critical lens to explore how these dynamics shape Indigenous Peoples' experiences at pump tracks at the Steve Smith Bike Park.

Theoretical Framework

SCT is a framework used to conceptualize settler colonialism as an ongoing structure, rather than a past event, grounded in the dispossession of Indigenous Peoples to secure settlers' access to land and resources (Tuck & Yang, 2012; Wolfe, 2006). While colonialism is often characterized by the extraction of resources and labour from Indigenous lands for the benefit of a distant metropole (Veracini, 2013), settler colonialism is structured around the permanent occupation of the land and the ongoing erasure of its Indigenous Peoples (Wolfe, 2006; Veracini, 2010). Importantly, SCT emerged from historical and ongoing resistance by Indigenous, enslaved, and colonized peoples against conquest, dispossession, and systemic oppression (Coulthard, 2014; Wolfe, 1999).

The use of SCT supports a critical analysis of how settler colonialism operates within systems of oppression, such as racism, classism, heteropatriarchy (Wolfe, 2006), and capitalism (Coulthard, 2014), that continually shape contemporary structures and significantly undermine social justice, land rights, and reconciliation efforts (Chen & Mason, 2019; Coulthard & Simpson, 2016; Veracini, 2010). As such, the use of SCT is appropriate within a Canadian

context as settler colonialism is not a historical phase, but it is instead an enduring structure that continues to shape land use, governance, and social relations (Coulthard, 2014; Tuck & Yang, 2012), including the production and use of public leisure spaces.

Applying SCT enables scholars to interrogate how settler colonial logics shape public leisure spaces, which often (re)produce exclusionary practices while obscuring Indigenous Peoples' presence (Alexander & Berbary, 2021). Further, SCT can be used to highlight Indigenous Peoples' resistance, autonomy, and sovereignty exercised in settler states (Tuck & Yang, 2012). To explore SCT dynamics, inclusion, and pump tracks, we used a CBPR approach to engage with Indigenous Peoples about their relationship(s) to the pump tracks at the Steve Smith Bike Park on Snuneymuxw First Nation's ancestral and unceded lands.

Methodology & Methods

CBPR is rooted in participatory and collaborative research approaches that support the researcher in engaging community members as active participants in the research process (Wallerstein & Duran, 2008). CBPR is distinguished from other methodologies by its emphasis on shared decision-making (Strand et al., 2003) and the co-creation of knowledge between researchers and community members (Jull et al., 2017). One commonly identified strength of CBPR is its usefulness in renouncing historical practices of scientific oppression and dominant relations of power (Coppola et al., 2020; Funnell et al., 2020).

A common engagement strategy in CBPR is creating a CAB. CABs can be vital in guiding the research process through input, recruitment, and analysis (Lasker & Weiss, 2003) by increasing the cultural and social relevance of the research project (Sandoval et al., 2012). As such, this research was conducted in collaboration with a CAB comprised of three individuals (Steven, Chancellor, and Jennifer) recruited through my existing networks within local

Indigenous nations and the broader biking community. Each member contributed to the project, offering guidance informed by their lived experiences as Indigenous Peoples who regularly ride bicycles and possess varying experiences with pump tracks. Through Zoom, email, text, and in-person communications over one year, the CAB advised the research process, including the development of research questions, recruitment, being interview participants, analysis, and co-authorship of the discussion. CAB members were financially compensated for their time and labour, receiving e-transfers after meetings and reading drafts.

After receiving ethics approval from the University of Ottawa Research Ethics Board (project H-05-24-10348; Appendix A), and with CAB support, we recruited a purposive sample (Creswell, 2014) of 10 individuals who self-identified as Indigenous and had previously participated at the pump tracks or were connected to the local biking community. The members of the CAB and I shared a recruitment poster on our personal social media networks, receiving more than a dozen additional shares from community members, casting a broader recruitment net. The poster was also shared with local biking organizations through the Steve Smith Bike Park social media and with various community groups serving urban Indigenous Peoples. After gaining informed consent, I conducted three go-along interviews, which enabled in-situ engagement, co-participation, and access to rich data sources (Moran et al., 2020). In the go-along interviews, I accompanied the participants to the pump tracks to engage with them in both the activity and conversation, exploring their experiences, behaviours, and perspectives while immersed in the research context. Use of this method allowed for “subjective and variable experiences” (Moran et al., 2020, p. 51) and a more natural creation of dialogue. For the convenience of participants who did not want to ride their bikes while being interviewed or were unable to meet at the bike park, I also conducted seven semi-structured interviews (Merriam &

Tisdell, 2015), three at the park, two over the phone, one via Zoom, and one at the participant's home.

Table 1
Participant Demographic Table

Name	Pronouns	Métis or First Nations	Residence: Urban or on reserve
Chancellor	He/Him	First Nations	Urban
Steven	He/Him	First Nations	On Reserve
Jennifer	She/Her	First Nations	Urban
Anthony	He/Him	First Nations	On Reserve
Chris	He/Him	Métis	Urban
Ecko	They/Them	First Nations	On Reserve
Isaac	He/Him	First Nations	Urban
Ian	He/Him	First Nations	Urban
Michelle	She/Her	First Nations	Urban
Owen	He/Him	First Nations	Urban

The participants engaged in interviews with me based on questions from a guide co-developed by the research team (Appendix B; Appendix C). As shown in Table 1, one participant identified as Métis and nine identified as First Nations. Although concerted efforts were made to elicit participation from members of Snuneymuxw First Nation, two of the participants identified as members of the Nation; several others politely declined participation, citing limited awareness of or engagement with the park, time constraints, and other personal reasons. Seven of the participants identified as male, two identified as female, and one identified beyond the binary. All participants were between 24 and 54 years old. While three participants identified as living on reserve, the remaining identified as living in an urban setting. All participants consented to being referred to by their first names in this manuscript.

As a gesture of appreciation, at the end of the interview, participants were given of custom-made bike socks, specifically designed for this research by two Indigenous artists (approximate \$30 CAD value). I transcribed the interviews verbatim using online transcription

software (TurboScribe), after which, I confirmed transcript accuracy through line-by-line comparison with the original audio recordings. Each participant received the transcript of the interview and was invited to make edits as they deemed appropriate; however, no participants amended their transcripts.

Reflexive Thematic Analysis

We employed Braun and Clarke's (2019) reflexive thematic approach to analyze the collected data, drawing on their six-phased analytic process of familiarization with the data, coding, generating initial themes, reviewing and developing themes, refining and naming themes, and writing up. The process was recursive and iterative rather than linear. I imported the interview transcripts into NVivo (Version 14) as an organizational tool to facilitate theme development. Importantly, through RTA, Braun and Clarke (2019, 2021a, 2021b) build on their earlier work (2006) by emphasizing the importance of researcher reflexivity throughout the analysis process. When applying this approach, researchers should critically engage with their subjectivities and consider how their positionality influences the research process (Braun & Clarke, 2021b). This was particularly relevant to this study, considering our positions and experiences intertwined with the pump tracks, encompassing both positive and negative experiences (and, in the case of Audrey, none at all). I conducted the first five phases independently, then invited Audrey to serve as a critical friend (Costa & Kallick, 1993), prompting me to explore tensions shared by the participants I had otherwise left unchallenged. In this stage, I was prompted to accept, and more deeply explore, the spectrum of engagement experienced by the participants. Ultimately, Audrey supported a more critical investigation of the space. Audrey and I then engaged with the CAB to edit, comment on, or otherwise engage with the themes. Although Steven, Chancellor, and Jennifer chose not to revise any themes, they

supported the overall content of the work through asking questions and the provision of contextual information and the sharing of personal experiences in alignment with other participants' experiences.

Results

Using RTA, we produced two main interrelated themes that reflected participants' experiences at the pump tracks: (1) enduring colonial legacies at the pump tracks; (2) the pump tracks as a space for resistance and cultural resurgence. These themes are not distinct or linear but overlapping, reflecting the complexity of Indigenous Peoples' engagement in urban leisure spaces.

Enduring Colonial Legacies at the Pump Tracks

The interviews with participants highlighted the complex and often uncomfortable realities of how settler colonial legacies shape who feels seen, included, and safe in urban leisure spaces, such as the pump tracks.

Indigenous Representation (or Lack Thereof)

When asked about Indigenous representation at the pump tracks, the participants frequently described a notable absence of Indigenous Peoples, both in terms of physical presence and visible cultural markers. Eight of ten respondents shared that they rarely, if ever, saw other Indigenous Peoples using the space. Ecko stated, "Here today, I don't see a lot of people that come from our communities... I see a lot of white families." Others reiterated this, noting the space felt disconnected from their Indigenous communities. Jennifer shared, "[I see] the odd [Indigenous Person] here or there, but I feel like it's not something that [members of my community] do ... I don't really see our people on bikes." Isaac shared, "Honestly, no, I don't really notice any obvious Indigenous People down there." Chris said, "I've never seen [the

Nation] promote the pump tracks or try to create awareness around it.” Steven was more definitive and outright stated, “Absolutely not.”

For some Indigenous pump track users, the absence of other Indigenous Peoples extended to a deeper sense of cultural exclusion. Jennifer shared, “I am Indigenous but raised in... Western culture. You’d think I would feel welcome in a space like this... I don’t, though.” She elaborated,

A lot of places are acknowledging the traditional lands they operate on and incorporating culture where they can. When I notice this... I automatically feel a bit more welcome. It says, ‘We respect the local Indigenous folk and the land we operate on...’ It’s small in the grand scheme of reconciliation, but the tone that it sets is loud to me. There is no land acknowledgement at the Steve Smith Bike Park. There is no Indigenous artwork... [That] could be a big step towards blending the Indigenous community into the space.

This reflection reinforced that inclusion requires more than physical access. It involves cultural affirmation.

The Limitations of Efforts of Inclusion

Some participants described efforts to engage more Indigenous youth at the pump tracks. For example, Anthony described how he brought youth from his nation to ride the pump tracks and Michelle recalled a builder-led initiative that included the provision of free bikes and helmets to local Indigenous youth. While these efforts demonstrated intent to promote Indigenous participation at the pump tracks, they were relatively isolated incidents and highlighted the need for a more consistent approach to engaging with Indigenous Peoples. To bridge this gap, Chancellor suggested, “If you have an event, invite out the local First Nations singing group... so when the youth come out, they can see familiar faces and feel comfortable and safe and like, ‘Okay, we’re allowed here.’” Ecko added, “I really like the idea... [of]

specialized events that invite people who maybe... are *afraid* to step foot here because they don't know how to navigate the space.” These accounts highlighted how efforts at inclusion need to address the deeper systemic disconnect that Indigenous users can experience stemming from a lack of sustained, culturally grounded engagement.

Navigating Emotional and Cultural Safety on Ancestral and Unceded Land

Despite the pump tracks being constructed on the ancestral and unceded land of the Snunuymuxw First Nation, two of the participants alluded to the notion that the urban space does not necessarily feel like a physically, emotionally, and culturally safe space for Indigenous users. For example, alluding to the alarming number of missing and murdered Indigenous Peoples, Chancellor shared, “When I walk outside my house, there’s still the possibility that I might not come home... it just takes one person that thinks a certain way to have a bad day.” Exploring their feelings of vulnerability, Ecko described their feelings about being a participant at the pump tracks by saying,

Coming from an Indigenous lens, this is not what feels like community to me...
community is about being equal... sitting in circle together, being able to uplift others...
to co-create, and move forward in a healthy way.

These experiences reinforced the notion that inclusion requires more than access; it also requires emotional and cultural safety. As Chancellor explained, “The most important thing when it comes to being inclusive [is] being able to make sure you provide a safe space.” As such, while the pump tracks are publicly accessible and identified as inclusive, there are subtle dynamics that affected how the participants felt able to engage with the space. For some participants, the absence of a visible Indigenous presence contributed to the perception that the pump tracks were not a welcoming space for Indigenous Peoples. However, a tension arose in all participants’

acknowledgement that the pump tracks had simultaneously served as a space for the formation of personal and/or familial connections. In this way, pump tracks were not solely identified as spaces of settler colonial legacy but also of Indigenous presence.

The Pump Tracks as a Space for Resistance and Cultural Resurgence

Despite being shaped by settler colonial legacies, the pump tracks were also described as a site for subtle acts of resistance and cultural resurgence.

Resistance Through Existence

The participants emphasized the pump tracks as sites of relational continuity, emphasizing community development, family connections, and intergenerational presence. Specifically, Chris shared that participation at the pump tracks, “Create[s] a sense of community and brings people together... it brings family together. It also brings people who share the passion for cycling together.” Further, Steven identified, “I really see the sense of community and how it builds relationships and friendships with kids and parents.” Notably, all ten participants were parents. Nine shared that they had brought their children or grandchildren to the pump track. For example, Chris shared, “I have family who love the pump track... My kids love the pump track.” Isaac shared, “I like to bike myself, so I... set up a snack and water station. [The kids] do their thing, and I do mine. We give each other high fives and all that stuff.” These comments highlighted how the pump tracks can serve as a site of relational continuity, where Indigenous cultural values around intergenerational collective engagement are practiced, resisting colonial ideals of individualism.

Resisting broader narratives that have marginalized Indigenous Peoples and their participation in leisure and urban spaces, some participants expressed that their experiences while present at the pump tracks were liberating. For example, Michelle shared, “Riding [the

pump track] to me is freedom.” Steven also shared that riding the pump track created a “free feeling.” Chancellor identified the pump tracks as a space where he and his friends can “shred it and have those freeing moments.” Anthony identified riding the pump tracks as “a rush feeling.” As such, through these liberatory experiences, participants offered lived critiques of Indigenous containment.

Two-Wheeled Resurgence

Participants described weaving cultural and spiritual practices into their experiences at the pump tracks. For many of the participants, the pump tracks have been a space for family bonding and the integration of Indigenous cultural practices into their biking routines. For example, two participants described engaging in reflective and spiritual practices before using the tracks. Chancellor shared that before riding his bike, he takes a moment to pray and acknowledge the land and its original caretakers. Further, he indicated that expressing gratitude to the land was particularly important to him as an urban Indigenous person, who rarely rides in his home territory, and therefore considers himself a guest on the land where he rides. He described these small acts of acknowledgement as having both personal and cultural significance. Similarly, Steven shared, “Before I get on my bike, I give thanks... I acknowledge that I am so small compared to the land, the mountains, and the ocean.” In these ways, cultural continuity was embodied through spiritual practices woven into everyday actions at the pump tracks.

The act of biking itself was described as directly tied to cultural (re)connection and resurgence. For example, Chancellor shared, “Biking has always been my therapy... to ground myself, reconnect, and do those important cultural things that shaped me into who I am.” Steven noted the emotional and cultural resonance between riding and practicing culture: “Riding at the

pump track gives me the same feeling as [practicing] my culture... there's intertwining pieces fitting together." These reflections highlighted how physical activity, in this case biking at the pump tracks, can act as a means towards cultural continuity, particularly in urban contexts where colonial structures and limited opportunities for cultural practices may shape access to land. Together, these themes illustrated how the pump tracks are not fixed or neutral spaces. Rather, they are complex sites where Indigenous Peoples simultaneously navigate exclusion, inclusion, resistance, and resurgence. Indeed, these findings demonstrate the need to explore the politics of urban leisure spaces as both contested and transformative within the broader settler colonial landscape.

Discussion

Our findings support the existing literature that challenges the common assumption in recreation planning and policy that urban leisure spaces are inherently inclusive or culturally neutral (e.g., Lamond & Lashua, 2021). Drawing on SCT, we illustrate how these spaces (re)produce ongoing structures of dispossession, despite being framed as inclusive. However, our findings also reveal how such spaces can paradoxically serve as sites of Indigenous resistance and cultural resurgence. Below, we discuss these tensions, resisting the homogenization of pump tracks as either inclusionary or exclusionary leisure spaces, rather, acknowledging them as spaces of both, being shaped by and responding to settler colonialism.

Colonial Legacies and the Politics of Urban Leisure

Participants in this study supported the notion that settler colonial logics shape the spatial and cultural organization of urban spaces (Razack, 2002). To begin, the material transformation of the land through the construction of the pump tracks could be considered a settler colonial practice in and of itself. Specifically, the shift away from packed dirt tracks, which are temporary

and modifiable, towards the use of asphalt, renders pump tracks as permanent fixtures on the land. As Wolfe (2006) argued, settler colonialism is structured around the securing of land for ongoing occupation, as such the transformation of land into permanent infrastructure normalizes settler presence and logics. Next, while pump tracks are often promoted as inclusive leisure spaces, participants described them in ways that reflected settler colonial spatial dominance. Eight participants explicitly noted the absence of Indigenous Peoples at the pump tracks, and two described feelings of unsafety. One participant with ancestral ties to the Snuneymuxw First Nation stated they did not feel welcome in the space at all. Despite being situated on the ancestral and unceded territory of the Snuneymuxw, the pump tracks did not display markers of Indigenous Peoples' presence or belonging. This absence reflects what Wolfe (2006) referred to as the settler colonial logic of erasure, whereby Indigenous Peoples are systematically rendered invisible in public space. This further aligns with Litwiller et al.'s (2023) argument that leisure spaces are often shaped by settler colonial ideologies, which dictate who belongs there and, consequently, who does not. Ultimately, if Indigenous users do not feel safe or welcome, then the space fails to become inclusive.

Superficial efforts towards inclusion reflected a broader failure to disrupt settler colonial norms for the use of urban space. While Michelle acknowledged inclusionary efforts, such as the provision of free equipment for some Indigenous youth and invitations to be involved in building days at the bike park, these acts could be identified as gestures that lack the depth and continuity required to create a consistently inclusive space. It appeared that a deeper level of cultural engagement was needed beyond one-off efforts to involve more Indigenous Peoples at the pump tracks. Chancellor suggested the pump tracks could engage with Indigenous Peoples by inviting the local singing group to events. Jennifer suggested art as an option to increase Indigenous

representation at the pump tracks. Sparks (2024) indicated that Indigenous art in public spaces can be a “decolonial act of subversion” (p. 3), which can reassert Indigenous Peoples’ presence in spaces. Similarly, Martineau and Ritskes (2014) articulated, “Indigenous art disrupts colonial hegemony by fracturing the sensible architecture of experience that is constitutive of the aesthetic” (pp. I-II). The absence of Indigenous cultural representation is reflective of broader colonial structures wherein Indigenous Peoples’ presence continues to be regulated, diminished, or treated as an afterthought.

Indigenous cultural presence and land-based practices are more readily assumed or accommodated in natural or rural settings, such as at multi-use trail systems (e.g., the IYMBP). In contrast, our study demonstrated that fixed, urban leisure infrastructure, such as pump tracks, can reproduce settler colonial exclusion even when promoted as inclusive space. Subsequently, we must (re)imagine urban leisure spaces as sites of ongoing contestation, where Indigenous-led design, governance, and relational practices are foundational rather than supplemental. Lavallée (2007) advocated that truly inclusive spaces must be co-created with Indigenous communities, embedding cultural protocols and self-determined uses of land. Without this, leisure spaces risk (re)producing settler colonial hierarchies under the guise of inclusion. Notably, a tension within the pump tracks’ space was that although settler colonial structures persist, Indigenous Peoples are quietly but actively asserting their presence and resisting erasure at the pump tracks.

The Act of Existence: Indigenous Resistance, Refusal, and Resurgence

Resistance does not always take the radical form of protest or confrontation. For the participants in this study, resistance manifested through the use of the pump tracks for their own benefit and developing familial and community connections. Scholars examining skateparks, fixed leisure spaces akin to pump tracks, have explored how skateboarders have (re)defined

urban space through embodied practice and alternative use into arenas of creativity and collaboration, disrupting privatized, controlled planning (Borden, 2013). Geckle (2025) argued, “Indigenous skateboarding is not just a resistance... It is a means to build and strengthen Indigenous communities, a contemporary expression of traditional values and art forms, and a method of reclaiming space and rewriting settler colonial narratives of Indigeneity” (p. 24). Romero (2021), however, cautioned that constructing skateparks (rather than street skating) risks reproducing settler logics of spatial containment by displacing skateboarders into sanctioned areas, parallel to the reserve system. Notably, some participants identified the pump tracks as spaces of freedom, explicitly resisting the notion of Indigenous containment.

Participants additionally resisted settler colonial powers through existence at the pump tracks, an embodied act of refusal to be erased or excluded from a space (Tuck & Yang, 2012). Importantly, refusal may also manifest in absence, for example, in the lack of Indigenous presence noted at the pump tracks. Yet, what Indigenous Peoples’ refusal signifies, particularly in the context of leisure and sport, has been under-explored (Nachman et al., 2023). This gap is significant considering that within dominant discourses, Indigenous Peoples are often positioned as lacking the agency to initiate change (Sharpe et al., 2022). Toppo and Parashar (2019) emphasized that refusal can be powerfully enacted through “non-reactionary” silence, where the absence of expected engagement becomes a meaningful interruption (p. 124). Correspondingly, Nachman et al. (2023) critiqued the “paternalistic assumption... that all Indigenous [Peoples] want to participate in sport programs, especially those funded and provided by settler organizations” (p. 5). As such, what is rarely, if at all, considered is the lack of presence within a space may be an intentional refusal to participate. In this way, although pump tracks are framed as inclusive spaces, the dominant rhetoric of inclusion assumes that everyone wants to

participate, making refusal a deliberate, rather than passive, act. Such refusal could be exemplified by Ecko sharing that they were aware of situations in which facilitators at their local pump track, which neighbours the Steve Smith Bike Park, had extended several invitations to the local First Nations community that received no uptake. Importantly, non-participation at the pump tracks cannot be definitively interpreted as refusal. Rather, refusal is presented as an analytically meaningful possibility of non-participation that dominant inclusion frameworks often ignore. This analysis adds to a growing body of work on refusal by centring it in urban leisure infrastructure, spaces often presumed to be neutral and universally desirable. By framing non-participation not as a gap to be solved but as a political act, we challenge the logic that inclusion is universally sought.

Resistance and refusal are not the only responses to settler colonial exclusions in urban leisure spaces. Although situated within settler-designed infrastructure, Indigenous use of the pump tracks reflected what Simpson (2017) described as everyday acts of resurgence, characterized by the revitalization of identity, relationship, and cultural practice through ordinary, embodied actions. Riding, gathering, praying, and acknowledging the land became ways of reclaiming the space for Indigenous use. While the pump tracks may not conform to ‘conventional’ understandings of an Indigenous cultural space, being layered with asphalt and shaped by settler sport design, the Indigenous participants’ use of the tracks revised the meaning of the space. Four participants described the space using the term “freedom” (and synonyms), while others connected their use of the space to spirituality, expressing gratitude, and kinship. These experiences illustrated a fluid relationship with the land, resisting settler-imposed binaries that frame urban spaces as detached from Indigenous space (i.e., the First Nations reserve system, rural locations).

Throughout the study, several participants described ways in which they engaged in cultural practices at the pump tracks. Participants asserted their Indigenous identities by undertaking activities such as biking, gathering, and practicing spiritual traditions, and, in doing so, enacted cultural continuity within the settler space. Similarly, Forsyth and Wamsley (2006) argued that Indigenous athletes actively reclaim space through their participation in movement and sport. Such practices challenge binary understandings of Indigenous versus non-Indigenous activities. As such, there does not have to be a strict dichotomy between Indigenous and settler sport; instead, the rooting of Indigenous worldviews can instill cultural meaning in the activity (Paraschak, 1997; Paraschak & Thompson, 2014; Peterson, 2024). Therefore, Indigenous Peoples' presence, rooted in Indigenous worldviews and practices, can give the use of pump tracks Indigenous cultural meaning.

Spaces of Both

As settlers, Audrey and I will never truly understand the lived realities of Indigenous Peoples. Moreso, from my emotionally invested position, raised within settler colonial logics, steadfast in the promotion of binaries (superior vs inferior, inclusive vs exclusive) and with an emotional attachment to the pump tracks at the park, I struggled to rationalize the pump tracks as spaces of simultaneous colonial legacy and Indigenous resistance and resurgence. Yet, through the patience and engagement of Audrey, Steven, Chancellor, and Jennifer, I began to dwell in the tensions of the pump tracks, which exist as *spaces of both*. Taken together, our understandings offer a novel contribution by demonstrating how Indigenous cultural resurgence can manifest within fixed urban infrastructure that was not designed with Indigenous worldviews in mind. This complicates current discourses of Indigenous land-based resurgence, which often prioritize rural or natural settings, by showing that resurgence also emerges in asphalt-covered, settler-

planned spaces. Ultimately, through this research, we have highlighted the importance of recognizing urban leisure spaces as both contested sites of colonial legacy, but also as potential sites for Indigenous resistance and resurgence, which may include the practice of refusal.

Conclusion

In this study, we explored the experiences of Indigenous Peoples at the pump tracks at the Steve Smith Bike Park, revealing how urban leisure spaces remain entangled with settler colonial logics. Despite being identified as inclusive, participants at the pump tracks often did not perceive the space as welcoming to Indigenous Peoples, noting a lack of Indigenous representation, concerns about safety, and a need for sustained engagement. These absences serve to reflect broader settler colonial structures that continue to govern public leisure spaces and affect the spatial, social, and emotional connections for Indigenous users. However, the pump tracks were also experienced as sites of resistance and resurgence. The participants described embodied practices that asserted the presence of Indigenous Peoples and (re)defined the space through acts rooted in cultural values and land-based connections.

Significantly, our research extends current scholarship on Indigenous engagement in nature-based trail systems by focusing on immovable, settler-designed infrastructure in an urban setting, highlighting the tensions between narratives within rural and urban spaces. We challenged discourses of inclusion in public leisure spaces (e.g., Patrick & McKinnon, 2022) and highlighted how Indigenous Peoples actively (re)shape urban leisure environments. Notably, we also emphasized the practice of refusal, not simply absence, as a firm stance that disrupts settler assumptions about participation.

Ultimately, we call for a (re)imagining of urban leisure spaces to prioritise the self-determination of Indigenous communities, particularly those on whose ancestral and unceded

lands these spaces are located, and support sustained, reciprocal relationships with them.

Importantly, this work must be led in collaboration with Indigenous Peoples and supported by municipalities, recreation planners, and funding bodies. Designing truly inclusive spaces requires more than symbolic gestures. It demands critical engagement with colonial histories and a commitment by all community members to co-create spaces beyond settler-defined frameworks.

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Chapter Four:

**Peterson, B., Giles, A. R., & Qughondouqa, J. (2026). Forced to know the unknown:
Exploring newcomers' experiences of inclusion at the Steve Smith Bike Park pump tracks.
Leisure/Loisir. [https://doi.org/ 10.1080/14927713.2026.2743497](https://doi.org/10.1080/14927713.2026.2743497)**

Abstract

Pump tracks, often described as inclusive public spaces for all, are proliferating rapidly. Simultaneously, the number of newcomers to Canada is steadily increasing. In this paper, we share findings from a community-based participatory study exploring newcomers' experiences at the pump tracks at the Steve Smith Bike Park in Nanaimo, British Columbia. Drawing on interviews with 16 newcomers to Canada, we conducted a reflexive thematic analysis through an intersectional lens. We produced two themes, i) negotiating participation and ii) knowing the unknown, which illustrate how factors including perceived safety, access to social networks, and linguistic and contextual knowledge intersect to shape engagement with and at the park. Importantly, a significant barrier to the participants' engagement at the pump tracks was not about *how* to participate, but rather the *awareness* that participation was possible. These findings demonstrated that inclusion is socially and structurally mediated beyond the boundaries of the pump tracks themselves.

Keywords: Pump track; Inclusion; Newcomer; Community-based participatory research

Forced to Know the Unknown: Rethinking Inclusion Through Newcomer Experiences at the Steve Smith Bike Park Pump Tracks

The City of Nanaimo, located on Vancouver Island, British Columbia (B.C.), is situated on the ancestral and unceded territory of the Snuneymuxw First Nation. With a current population of 99,863 (Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada, 2025a), it is one of Canada's fastest-expanding mid-sized cities, with growth rates recorded at nearly double the national average (Manhas, 2024). Between 2020 and 2021, settlement in Nanaimo accounted for over 5% of international migrants to B.C. (Manhas, 2024). Yet, while the influx of newcomers, broadly defined as individuals who have relocated to Canada within the previous five years (Caidi & Allard, 2005), contributes significantly to the nation's economic (Bank of Canada, 2024) and social fabric (Kaufmann, 2021), it also unfolds alongside troubling trends, such as a dramatic increase in the number of hate crimes committed (Government of British Columbia [B.C.], 2025). Specifically, between 2022 and 2023, police-reported hate crimes driven by race or ethnicity rose by 12%, while crimes motivated by religion climbed over 50% (Government of B.C., 2025), causing significant tensions around immigration and settlement. In this context, public environments, including leisure spaces, become important sites for examining the perceived safety and subsequent experiences of inclusion of newcomers.

The City of Nanaimo's parks and recreation system comprises more than 100 natural and built environments, including "an extensive trail system, public beaches, picnic areas, and several recreational facilities" (City of Nanaimo, 2024, p. 7). One example of a built leisure space is the Steve Smith Bike Park (SSBP), situated within the footprint of the larger Beban Park in central Nanaimo. The bike park features three dirt jump tracks, a mulch jump line, a skills

park, and a pair of asphalt pump tracks, and it is operated by the City of Nanaimo from dawn until dusk at no cost to users (City of Nanaimo, 2025).

Riding on pump tracks could be categorized as participating in a lifestyle sport, a largely informal, participant-driven activity (Gilchrist & Wheaton, 2017) associated with action sport cultures. Pump tracks are distinct from most other cycling surfaces due to their design, often in a circuit with rollers and berms, and are ridden by shifting one's centre of gravity up and down in a pumping motion rather than by pedalling (McCormack, 2019; Velosolutions, 2025). Further, pump tracks are increasingly promoted as shared leisure spaces available for multiple action sport disciplines, including BMX, skateboarding (Ellmer et al., 2020; Thorpe & Wheaton, 2013), and mountain biking (Wheaton & Townsend, 2023). In this way, pump tracks reflect many of the social characteristics associated with action sport cultures, including individualized (Thorpe & Wheaton, 2013; Wheaton & Townsend, 2023) and informal (Ellmer et al., 2020; Wheaton & Townsend, 2023) activity, with participant-led norms (Immonen et al., 2017). Often constructed as public leisure spaces, pump tracks have become increasingly common components of municipal recreation infrastructure in Canada, and globally (McCormack, 2019), primarily based on the narrative that they are *inclusive* to people of all ages, skill levels, and various types of wheeled equipment (e.g., Alliance ASE, n.d.; Parkitech, n.d.). As such, claims of inclusivity at pump tracks warrant critical investigation, particularly amid rising social tensions involving newcomers.

The purpose of this paper is to explore newcomers' experiences of inclusion at the SSBP in Nanaimo, B.C., specifically at the pump tracks within the space. By adopting an intersectional lens (Crenshaw, 1989) and using a community-based participatory research (CBPR) approach and reflexive thematic analysis (RTA; Braun & Clarke, 2019), we unpack the experiences shared

in semi-structured interviews by 16 self-identifying newcomers to Nanaimo. In doing so, we produced two themes, i) negotiating participation and ii) knowing the unknown, which illustrate how factors including feelings of safety, access to social networks, and linguistic and contextual knowledge intersect to shape participant engagement with and at the SSBP. Importantly, a significant barrier to participants' engagement at the pump tracks was not *how* to participate, but rather the *awareness* that participation was possible. These findings demonstrated that inclusion is experienced through intersecting social positions and broader structural conditions that extend beyond the boundaries of the pump tracks themselves. We conclude by offering community-informed suggestions to enhance newcomers' inclusion at pump tracks and, in doing so, align with this special issue on action sports in Canada and contribute to emerging scholarship examining inequalities in Canadian sport and leisure spaces.

Setting the Context

The SSBP, located within Nanaimo's Beban Park, opened for public use in August 2017. The park's namesake, Nanaimo resident Steve Smith, was the first Canadian to win the Union Cycliste Internationale (UCI) downhill Mountain Bike World Cup overall title (UCI, 2025). Tragically, in May 2016, Smith passed away from injuries sustained during an enduro motorcycle accident. Shortly after his death, the founders of the newly formed Steve Smith Legacy Foundation proposed building a memorial bike park, for which the City of Nanaimo made land available. At the same time, fans, fellow riders, and local charity groups contributed to the park's development through fundraising campaigns, purchasing legacy merchandise, and donating building materials and volunteer labour.

The first author became involved in the development of the Bike Park at its early stages, motivated by having known Steve through mutual friends. Her role included supporting

fundraising efforts and organizing events within the space. She identifies as normative bodyminded (Price, 2015), cisgender, and a recreational mountain biker. She is the third generation of her family born in Canada and the fifth generation to live in Nanaimo. Author two is an experienced road cyclist with no prior experience with pump tracks at the outset of this research. She identifies as a cisgender, first-generation Canadian of English and Welsh ancestry. The third author identifies as cisgender, is a newcomer to Canada, is ancestrally from the North Caucasus, and was born and raised in Jordan. She has frequented the SSBP to supervise her daughter; however, had no prior familiarity with pump tracks before moving to Nanaimo. She brings both a newcomer's perspective and direct experience as a parent using the space.

Literature Review

Newcomer Engagement in Leisure

Statistics Canada (2022) reported that more than 8.3 million people, or one-quarter of the population, identify as immigrants, refugees, or permanent residents. In 2025, approximately 435,500 people immigrated to Canada, nearly double the number in 2001 (Statista, 2025). Despite the federal government's strategic plan for "well-managed, comprehensive, and coordinated migration" (Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada, 2025b, p. 8) into Canada, settlement remains a significant transition (Lauckner, 2022) that involves adapting to new social relationships, cultural norms, economic stability, and political systems (Connor Schisler & Polatajko, 2002). Navigating these new dynamics influences how individuals spend their time, including their participation in leisure activities (Antoun & Karlis, 2025; Karlis, 2016; Quirke, 2015).

Scholars have argued that engagement in leisure activities is a meaningful contributor to a positive settlement experience and the overall well-being of newcomers (e.g., Barrick, 2023;

Gallant & Tirone, 2017). Newcomers' participation in both structured and unstructured activities can facilitate opportunities for social interaction (Sport for Life, 2023). Such involvement may also assist in the development of language proficiency and cultural understanding, while creating spaces to explore and negotiate new identities (Campbell et al., 2016). Additionally, scholars have suggested that leisure participation can serve as a coping strategy, helping newcomers to manage the stress associated with migration and major life transitions (Karlis, 2016; Stack & Iwasaki, 2009).

Despite these benefits, newcomers frequently encounter obstacles that limit their participation in leisure experiences (e.g., Antoun & Karlis, 2025; Barrick et al., 2021; Campbell et al., 2016). Structural barriers, such as transportation and its costs and insufficient communication regarding opportunities (e.g., Curtin et al., 2018), and social barriers, such as limited social networks and challenges with language proficiency (e.g., Aizlewood et al., 2006), often prevent participation or lead to the discontinuation of previously enjoyed activities (Connor Schisler & Polatajko, 2022). As such, newcomers often report lower and less consistent participation in leisure pursuits than the broader Canadian population (Institute for Canadian Citizenship, 2014).

Although scholars have emphasized the role of leisure in supporting newcomers' positive adjustment, much of this work has focused on how individuals adapt to their new environment (e.g., Gallant & Tirone, 2017; Kim & Iwasaki, 2016). Less attention has been paid to the broader contexts that shape newcomers' leisure experiences, particularly the new community's responsibility to foster inclusive and accessible leisure spaces (Long et al., 2011). Therefore, it is crucial to understand how inclusion is conceptualized and enacted within leisure settings, particularly when supporting newcomer participation.

Inclusion in Leisure Spaces

Inclusion is widely regarded as a central principle in the design and use of public leisure spaces; yet, a universal definition remains elusive (Long, 2024). While inclusion is readily used as a buzzword (Felix, 2024; Haegele & Maher, 2023), inconsistent understandings of the term have complicated efforts to apply or evaluate inclusive practices (Cobigo et al., 2012; Nilholm & Göransson, 2017). The concept is inherently context-dependent (Petrie et al., 2018) and shaped by historical, cultural, and epistemological conditions (Kozleski et al., 2011). For example, in education, inclusion is often defined as the integration of diverse learners into mainstream systems (e.g., Polat, 2011). In urban planning, inclusion is frequently associated with spatial access and the distribution of resources (e.g., Jian et al., 2020). Within (dis)ability studies, inclusion is often applied to emphasize the removal of social and structural barriers to extend beyond physical access (e.g., Valle & Connor, 2019), while in leisure studies, inclusion is frequently conceptualized as opportunities for meaningful participation (e.g., Dattilo, 2021; Trussell & Mair, 2010). Despite these contextual differences, the definitions of inclusion are often “presented as self-evident” (O’Connor, 2015, p. 55).

Inclusion in leisure spaces extends beyond accessibility to include variables of interpersonal and cultural dynamics. For example, inclusion requires individuals to feel like they can belong and meaningfully engage with others within a space (Haegele & Maher, 2023; Richardson & Motl, 2019). For newcomers in particular, inclusion involves opportunities for relationship building, cross-cultural interaction, and expression of cultural identity without fear of discrimination (Berasategi Sancho et al., 2023). Public leisure settings, such as parks, sport facilities, and community centres, play vital roles in fostering community cohesion and cultural diversity (Lowe et al., 2005; Ravazzoli & Torricelli, 2017; Zerengök, 2024).

Participation within leisure spaces can facilitate social connection and foster a sense of belonging; however, these spaces are not automatically inclusive. Researchers have argued that patterns of exclusion can be (re)produced within leisure spaces through the perpetuation of unexamined social norms and institutional practices (Glover, 2017; Long et al., 2011), ultimately reinforcing existing power imbalances (Tink et al., 2020) and shaping who *fits* with leisure environments (Litwiller et al., 2023). Correspondingly, operationalizing inclusion through needs-based approaches, wherein inclusion is framed around identifying and accommodating presumed individual deficits or social expectations, serves to perpetuate the belief that all individuals seek the same types of participation (Titchkosky, 2020) or hold similar beliefs on what matters (Cornell & Jorgensen, 2022) to members of communities who experience marginalization. As such, access to leisure spaces alone does not account for the intersecting social complexities within and across them.

Theoretical Framework

Intersectional theory was developed by Crenshaw (1989), a Black feminist scholar, to explore the different and overlapping axes of identity that were previously underexamined by essentialist frameworks. Rather than attributing inequity to a single factor, intersectionality can be used to highlight how multiple social locations, such as race/ethnicity, gender, class, sexuality, age, (dis)ability, migration status (Hankivsky, 2014), and power structures (Wijeyesinghe & Jones, 2014), interact to produce complex forms of marginalization (Ruiz et al., 2021) and privilege (Dill & Zambrana, 2009). By foregrounding these intersections, scholars can challenge dominant discourses of oppression and advocate for (re)thinking policy, research, and activism to account for complexities of context and power relations (Crenshaw, 1991).

The use of intersectionality has become increasingly common for examining issues of equity, diversity, and inclusion within leisure settings (Watson & Scraton, 2013; Wegner et al., 2025). This shift reflects a growing awareness that existing sport and recreation practices often fall short in responding to the layered and structural forms of exclusion experienced by members of communities who experience marginalization within sport (Peers et al., 2023; Turelli et al., 2025) and leisure settings. Rather than simply comparing groups, the use of this perspective enables a deeper assessment of the complex, interlocking axes of identity that inform participation in leisure spaces (Tan, 2019). Using an intersectional lens and a CBPR approach, we explored newcomers' experiences, or lack thereof, at the SSBP pump tracks.

Methodology and Methods

CBPR is a methodology grounded in participatory and collaborative approaches through which researchers and community partners work to challenge scientific oppression and the dominant power relations embedded in historical research practices (Coppola et al., 2020; Funnell et al., 2020). Emerging from traditions of action research and critical pedagogy, those who use CBPR emphasize reciprocal relationships, shared authority, and ethical responsibility in research (Rich et al., 2024). Central to CBPR is the recognition of community members as experts and as partners throughout all stages of the research process.

In practice, CBPR is used to engage community members as active participants in the research process through shared decision-making (Strand et al., 2003), the co-creation of knowledge (Jull et al., 2017), and sustained decision-making beyond data collection (Wallerstein & Duran, 2008). The application of CBPR in this study allowed us to centre collaboration and value the diverse knowledge and lived experiences (Israel et al., 2010; Wallerstein, 2006) of members of the newcomer community. Accordingly, our commitments to equity and shared

knowledge production were embedded throughout the research process. Notably, the first author attempted to recruit a robust community advisory board (CAB) by posting on social media and inviting multiple community organizations via email and phone; however, only one individual agreed to serve in an advisory role. Importantly, as a member of the newcomer community in Nanaimo and actively engaged in supporting other newcomers to settle in the community, Author Three was well-positioned to contribute meaningfully to this study. She actively advised the research process, informing the development of research questions, recruitment, and analysis, and is a co-author of this manuscript.

After receiving ethics approval from the University of Ottawa Research Ethics Board (project H-05-24-10348), we recruited 16 participants over a six-month period through purposive sampling (Creswell, 2014). Initially, the first author recruited six participants while they were actively using the pump tracks at the SSBP over the first three months of data collection. During semi-structured interviews, the participants were asked questions such as why they first came to the pump tracks, what factors would facilitate or prevent their return, whether and how the pump tracks were unique, and asked to comment on any relationships between the participants' cultural community and their participation in the space. However, noting that the sample had not reached "sufficient informational power" (Malterud et al., 2016, p. 1757) and that there was limited representation of newcomer voices at the pump tracks, the authors made an ethics amendment to change recruitment strategy to include newcomers who were active users of recreation and leisure spaces in Nanaimo to more deeply explore newcomers' awareness of the pump tracks.

After receiving approval for the ethics amendment, the first and third authors recruited the remaining 10 participants by sharing a recruitment poster with individuals as they engaged in activities at other leisure recreation spaces within the City of Nanaimo, specifically May Bennett

Pioneer Park and Harewood Centennial Park. Notably, we recruited four participants at the Cultural Family Fun Night, a free event hosted by the Nanaimo Parks, Recreation, and Culture Department at Harewood Centennial Park. During the semi-structured interviews after amending our recruitment, we asked participating newcomers to discuss what makes a leisure space feel welcoming, as well as the barriers and facilitators to their engagement with the pump tracks.

The involvement of Author Three, a co-researcher with lived experience as a newcomer to Canada, shaped several decisions throughout the research process. For example, while the term newcomer broadly refers to individuals who have relocated to Canada within the previous five years (Caidi & Allard, 2005), the authors allowed participants to self-identify as newcomers rather than strictly adhering to the five-year-or-less timeline. Author Three advocated for this nuance, acknowledging that people experience settlement on their own timelines and that identifying as *new* to a space is a fluid, personal process. Author One conducted 15 in-person semi-structured interviews and one Zoom interview with participants after they provided informed consent. Semi-structured interviews allow for a guided yet open-ended exploration of participants' experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). At the end of each interview, all participants were invited to share any additional information about the subject that they had not been explicitly asked about. Author Three attended three of the in-person interviews to provide social support, having engaged with the participants at the Cultural Family Fun Night, and while present during one, was able to assist with language interpretation when the participant struggled to articulate their experiences in English.

Table 1
Participant Demographic Table

Name	Age Range	Sex	Country of Origin	Years in Canada	Pump Track Knowledge
Aditi	Did not disclose	Female	India	2	Unaware
Connie	Did not disclose	Female	Chile	6	Frequent visitor
Hywel	19-24	Male	Wales	1	Aware
Jane	Did not disclose	Female	Ukraine	6	Frequent visitor
Amina	35-44	Female	Jordan	6	Frequent visitor
Jessica	25-34	Female	Sri Lanka	1	Aware
Kira	16-19	Female	Ukraine	2	Active user
Leo	Did not disclose	Male	Ukraine	2	Active user
Liam	19-24	Male	Wales	1	Aware
Lola	35-44	Female	Nigeria	2	Unaware
Luke	Did not disclose	Male	Ukraine	6	Frequent visitor
Mahesh	Did not disclose	Male	Sri Lanka	2	Frequent visitor
Mihri	35-44	Female	Turkey	1	Unaware
Oscar	19-24	Male	Wales	1	Aware
Vinoth	35-44	Male	India	6	Unaware
Warda	35-44	Female	Syria	3	Unaware

As shown in table one, of the 16 participants, 11 had immigrated to Canada within the previous three years, while the remaining five newcomers had arrived within six years of data collection. Seven of the participants had previously visited the SSBP, two of whom were active users of the pump tracks while the other five regularly visited in parental roles. Four had heard of the pump tracks and/or the SSBP but had never been there, while the remaining five had never heard of the park or the pump tracks. All participants were over the age of 16. Notably, 12 of the participants were parents and referenced their children's experiences at and with the pump tracks during the interviews. Following the interview, each participant was given a pair of bike socks, specifically designed for this research, as a gesture of appreciation. The first author transcribed the interviews verbatim with the assistance of online transcription software (TurboScribe) and then verified accuracy through detailed comparison with the original audio files. Author One emailed participants the transcript of their interview and invited them to make edits as they

deemed appropriate; four participants elected to amend their transcripts, most often revising their language or offering richer descriptions of their initial responses.

Analysis

To analyze the collected data, we applied Braun and Clarke's (2019) six-phase, recursive, and iterative reflexive thematic analysis framework. RTA users acknowledge researcher subjectivity as both necessary and beneficial to the analytical process (Campbell et al., 2021). The authors engaged reflexively with the data, attending to their differing positionalities and experiences with and at the pump tracks. This approach was particularly appropriate for this study as its use promoted context-sensitive interpretation grounded in the authors' experience and relationships (Braun & Clarke, 2021b). As such, reflexivity was an ongoing practice rather than a discrete analytic step.

The first author conducted the initial analytic phases of RTA and then engaged the second and third authors during reviewing, defining, and refining themes. To start, the first author became familiar with the data through the transcription process and repeated reading of the transcripts. Next, initial semantic codes were created focused on participants' explicit accounts (Byrne, 2022). Then, related codes were iteratively grouped into themes based on patterns of shared meanings as interpreted by the first author. Following that, the first author revised the codes and themes as the analysis progressed and insights developed (Braun & Clarke, 2019, 2021a, 2021b), including general factors of recreation participation barriers and facilitators and understandings of access and use related to pump tracks as patterns across the data became clearer. Consistent with the RTA approach, the first author developed primarily latent themes by moving beyond participants' explicit accounts (Byrne, 2022) to interpret how systems interacted to shape newcomers' experiences of inclusion at the pump tracks. Then, the co-authors assisted

by contributing collaborative discussions to review, challenge, and refine the developed themes. In using an intersectional lens throughout the analytic process, the authors remained cognizant of interacting social and contextual factors. Rather than coding experiences according to single categories of difference, the authors sought to explore how multiple dimensions of identity, social position, and power relations intersected. The third author provided meaningful contextual knowledge that helped ensure the themes resonated with community members' experiences. Importantly, the second and third authors challenged the first author throughout the process to recognize that the pump tracks were personally significant to her. Specifically, the co-authors prompted Author One to reflect more critically on emotional resonance, attachment, and potential bias, thereby supporting a more nuanced and accountable interpretation of participant narratives.

Results

Through the use of RTA (Braun & Clarke, 2019), we produced two key themes reflecting the newcomers' experiences of inclusion at the pump tracks: (1) Negotiating participation and (2) knowing the unknown. Notably, the themes did not exist in isolation; instead, they reflected the multifaceted ways in which newcomers navigate and sometimes struggle to access and engage with leisure spaces. As we engaged more deeply with the participants' lived experiences, it became evident that their experiences of inclusion at the pump tracks were often enmeshed in their broader leisure experiences beyond the park's boundaries. This insight shifted focus from viewing the pump tracks as a bounded site of inclusion and prompted us to understand them within broader social and spatial relations that shape newcomers' leisure experiences.

Negotiating Participation

To express the diversity of participants' experiences, we divided the first theme, negotiating participation, into three sub-themes: (a) Navigating barriers, (b) seeking access, and (c) understandings of inclusion.

Navigating Barriers

When describing their encounters with – or absence from - the pump tracks, participants most often first shared their experience(s) of navigating leisure more broadly within Nanaimo; notably, such descriptions were commonly associated with barriers to participation, and safety within and during the use of public leisure spaces was a noted concern. Three participants reported feeling comfortable engaging in activities only during daylight hours. Specifically, Aditi stated, “It’s nice [in Nanaimo], but after it gets dark, I don’t feel safe.” Further, she shared that she and her family had previously been the target of aggressive behaviour, racial slurs, and derogatory comments related to religious attire from strangers in a public space. Such situations shaped how she approached unfamiliar leisure environments, explaining that she felt more comfortable in spaces where she knew she and her family would not be targeted: “I feel a little safer in my own [religious] community... I feel loved and accepted there... We get skeptical [exploring new places] because we don’t know if it’ll be safe there.” She shared how when her son’s bike was stolen from her property, local law enforcement failed to respond, alluding to a failed opportunity to make the broader community feel safer for her and her family. Correspondingly, Lola shared, “I went to a park yesterday after work just to relax, and I was kind of looking around to be sure is there any form of security or would anybody just come from somewhere to try to attack me?” While not explicitly identified as a safety concern, other participants mentioned a sense of discomfort in public spaces when smelling marijuana or hearing foul language. In contrast, other participants, such as Vinoth and Mihri, expressed feeling

safe within Nanaimo. For example, Vinoth shared, “I feel more safe here than where I was before.”

Four participants cited time constraints as a barrier to participation, particularly for parents balancing work and family demands. Jessica explicitly stated, “Time is the biggest factor,” while Aditi shared, “When I come back from work, there is only a little time left in the evenings, so we usually use the back lane for [my son to ride] his bike.” Noting transportation as an additional barrier, Jessica questioned, “How am I going to take the bikes there? My kids don’t have new helmets... I don’t feel safe for them to be riding on the road [to get to leisure spaces].” The barriers of safety, time, and transportation are shaped by broader decisions and services related to public safety, organization of recreation and leisure services, and transportation infrastructure rather than by individual choice, and ultimately created a foundation of hesitation for several participants to pursue new leisure opportunities within Nanaimo, such as the pump tracks.

Seeking Access

These barriers, however, did not appear to be the most significant factors preventing the use of the pump tracks. Instead, the participants most often noted a lack of awareness of the pump tracks as the primary barrier to engagement for newcomers. All participants shared that since arriving in Nanaimo, they had learned about recreational activities through personal exploration, word of mouth, and digital searches, often in spontaneous situations shaped by proximity, social networks, and chance encounters. Reflecting on how her early leisure activities when first arriving in Nanaimo were guided by what was nearby and easily visible, Aditi stated, “When I first moved here, my apartment was near downtown. Maffeo Sutton [Park] was close by, so I walked there.” Like many of the other participants, she shared that she turned to the

internet to learn about alternative leisure spaces. She said, “Every weekend, we used Google [to find] where to go. The top stuff that came up was Piper’s Lagoon and Neck Point... I got to know [about other places] from friends and just by exploring the surrounding area.” Noting a gap in advertising for the pump tracks, Jessica reflected, “I don’t think that I have ever seen [the pump tracks] mentioned in the parks and recreation guide.”

All participants identified informal interpersonal sources as important for learning about leisure spaces, including friends, co-workers, and neighbours who introduced them to spaces they would otherwise have been unaware of. For example, Mahesh, whose children are active users of the pump tracks, shared, “A friend of ours showed us [the pump tracks], and we really like it [here]... We never knew there was a park like this.” Jane, another frequent visitor of the SSBP, mentioned, “Unless someone tells you or brings you here, you would have no idea that [the Bike Park] exists.” As such, participants’ reliance on informal networks also reflected how information about recreation opportunities within the community was disseminated through channels that assumed familiarity with local systems or pre-existing community connections. This barrier ultimately meant that some opportunities, such as biking at the pump tracks, remained unknown to newcomer residents without such networks. Lola shared, “I was shocked... when I saw it. Like, ‘Whoa, this is here?’ [I didn’t have] the information. It didn’t come to mind [to search] online, you know?” The chance-based encounters identified by participants highlighted how uneven information access can leave newcomers feeling unsure about how or where to engage in recreation experiences. After noting barriers related to locating and accessing the pump tracks, the focus of the interviews often shifted to experiences of inclusion within the space.

Understandings of ‘Inclusion’

The participants who identified as regular users and frequent visitors of the Bike Park described the pump tracks as inclusive; however, their perspectives of inclusion at the Bike Park varied depending on factors such as observable characteristics of pump track users and social interaction. For some, inclusion was associated with visible variation in age and skill level, though they noted limited ethnic diversity. For example, Connie reflected on the diversity of users she has witnessed in the space and stated, “It’s not only young people [using the pump tracks]. It’s [also] adults with three-year-old kids... even though you don’t have the diversity from other countries or ethnicities, at least you can see there are diverse ages... that shows inclusion.” Other participants, such as Kira, identified inclusion at the pump tracks as stemming from the diversity of user types. For example, she shared, “It’s so good for skateboards, for bikes... There are groups of different people here.” For Luke, inclusion at the pump track meant social categories were irrelevant within the space, stating, “It doesn’t matter your age, status, or whatever.”

Importantly, the participants noted that inclusion was also related to opportunities for social interaction at the pump tracks. For some, a sense of inclusion was explained through sharing moments of comfort and interpersonal connections. Small encounters, such as hearing a familiar language spoken in the space or recognizing other families from similar cultural backgrounds, reinforced feelings of inclusion. For example, Mahesh stated, “Here, [my children] socialize and make friends who are also new to Canada.” Further, Jane described how the pump track became a space for her son to develop confidence in his new community, sharing:

Coming from another country... when you’re trying to call a new place home, it takes time. One of the things about the pump tracks is that they’re creating a core memory.

Seeing [my son] come here and call it his favourite place, it's great to see because he feels he belongs here... I think that's building confidence, not only here, but when he meets with his peers in every other environment.

She elaborated by stating, "[The pump tracks are] a place for [the youth] to connect... If they see each other somewhere [else], my son says, 'Mom, I've seen this guy at the Bike Park.'"

However, these expressions of inclusion, while meaningful, coexisted with accounts that brought into question the depth and consistency of engagement at the pump tracks, emphasizing the limited or conditional nature of inclusion within the space. For example, some participants noted that, for them, inclusion did not always translate into social interaction or a sense of community. Exemplifying this, Amina shared, "From [my] point of view as a newcomer... I don't think there is a great sense of community. If I weren't with a friend, it would feel like every person is on their own." Therefore, while the space was often described as inclusive in principle, participants experienced feelings of social connection and community unevenly and conditionally, depending on familiarity, frequency of use, and social interaction. For some, inclusion was described as moments of connection and confidence-building, whereas for others, it remained limited to physical presence without meaningful engagement.

Knowing the Unknown

For many of the participants, engaging with the pump tracks as newcomers was not a straightforward process. Beyond the previously identified barriers to access, participants described an overall lack of conceptual awareness of pump tracks, which impeded their ability to learn about, navigate, and participate in the space. In particular, some of the participants noted that the purpose and terminology associated with pump tracks were not always familiar or clear. Aditi explicitly shared, "I wasn't aware of the term." Similarly, Amina reflected that the

unfamiliarity of the word pump track itself may prevent newcomers from knowing how to search for, or participate in, such spaces:

I don't know if pump track is a universal word... Some newcomers might not be familiar with the idea of pump tracks because it wasn't in their home country, or they don't know what it's for, so they wouldn't know how to access it or look for it.

For others, this challenge extended beyond the language; instead, the pump track represented an entirely new kind of leisure space.

Indeed, for many of the participants, the concept of using a pump track was simply unfamiliar - unlike any recreation activity they had seen or participated in before. Mahesh shared, "We've never seen a place like this anywhere. If there are interesting places for cyclists or other people like this, we should know." Correspondingly, Jane identified, "We didn't have this in our country [Ukraine]. There's nothing to compare it to." Liam echoed this unfamiliarity, stating, "When I first got to Nanaimo, I hadn't really heard of pump tracks before... I had been to outdoor bike parks, but they're not quite like pump tracks; it's more like in the woods and stuff like that."

This lack of familiarity shaped how participants understood opportunities for learning and skill development at the pump tracks. Luke described how his son expressed a desire to learn new pump track-related skills, yet, beyond observing other users, he felt uncertain about how to better support his son's learning, stating, "[I'm] here, but [I] don't have a clue what's going on... Back in my country, it's not a common thing." He further noted that accessing formal lessons can be challenging for newcomers, using the local Parks and Recreation registration system as an example. Liam noted that it "Fill[s] up too quick" and suggested that "It would be great if there was someone here... to just help out kids who really want to learn." Correspondingly, Amina

proposed, “Maybe have something like a buddy system, or someone who can do special sessions... so [newcomers] feel more included at the pump track and not just like an outsider.”

Taken together, such reflections illustrated how linguistic and contextual unfamiliarity with pump tracks forced newcomers to learn to know the unknown without clear guidance or support. In this way, the burden of learning fell largely on the newcomers themselves, shaping participation and reinforcing the risk of exclusion for those unable to navigate the unfamiliar on their own.

Discussion

In this study, we explored how newcomers experienced inclusion at the SSBP's pump tracks. Consistent with previous leisure research, participants acknowledged social and structural constraints to participation (Barrick et al., 2021; Campbell et al., 2016; Rivera et al., 2024). We highlight that meaningful inclusion was influenced by intersecting axes of identity, which shaped the newcomers' access to social networks, linguistic and contextual knowledge, and feelings of safety. A novel contribution of this study is the assertion that these factors do not function as isolated barriers to newcomers' participation; rather, they are mutually constitutive and actively shape the conditions that enable or constrain the understanding that *participation is possible*. Moreover, we argue that inclusion at the pump tracks is experienced through intersecting social positions and broader structural conditions that extend beyond the perimeter of the SSBP and, as such, requires rethinking the boundaries of inclusion beyond the physical site.

Participation is Possible, but...

While several participants described the pump tracks as a space for people of all ages and abilities to use with various types of wheeled equipment, there were also underlying tensions. Participants who identified feeling welcome in the space also discussed engagement through

repeated visits or supportive social interactions as common. This suggests that the dominant culture of the space was not inherently inclusive, but rather it was contingent on accumulated experience and social capital (Campbell et al., 2016). Even repeat visitors to the pump tracks, such as Amina, identified an isolated nature or an “every person on their own” feeling within the space, suggesting that sharing the infrastructure with others did not necessarily equate to a deeper social connection or the provision of support responsive to participants’ needs. Interestingly, four of the participants were unaware of the park's existence altogether, effectively excluding them from the possibility of experiencing inclusion within the space. Together, these findings indicated that while participation may be possible, meaningful inclusion at the pump tracks was often mediated by social knowledge and repeated spatial exposure.

The participants' experiences reflected that inclusion at the pump tracks was also shaped by their identities as newcomers. For some participants, limited linguistic skills in English prevented them from understanding what the pump tracks were. For others, such as Luke and Liam, migration history and cultural experiences influenced their understanding of what the pump tracks offered and how they might engage with them. These factors rendered unfamiliarity not merely a linguistic but also a conceptual barrier.

Our findings suggest that unfamiliarity with pump tracks operated not simply as a knowledge gap, but as a structurally produced barrier that shaped whether participation was perceived as possible at all. Access to leisure spaces implicitly privileges individuals with prior cultural and contextual knowledge of and experience within the space. This understanding aligns with a report by the Central Vancouver Island Multicultural Society (CVIMS; 2025), which collected data from 200 newcomers to Nanaimo, 13% of whom reported not accessing community services “because they were unaware of their existence” (p. 15). From an

intersectional perspective, participants described how the contextual barriers to participation at the pump tracks were not created by factors such as migration history or language in isolation but through the interaction of such factors with the leisure and recreation systems structured to assume English proficiency, familiarity with local culture, and access to both formal and informal community resources. In this way, decisions about communication, programming, and outreach became mechanisms through which existing power relations shaped who was positioned to participate. When language or contextual familiarity was missing, the onus fell on the newcomers to *know the unknown* to locate and navigate the pump tracks, shifting the responsibility for inclusion away from leisure systems and onto the newcomers themselves.

These findings challenge needs-based or access-only approaches to inclusion, which reduce participation to a matter of access rather than meeting the social and emotional requirements for meaningful engagement within that space (Long, 2024; Long et al., 2011). Consequently, the (re)production of leisure norms through the intersection of social positions and systems of power positioned participants unevenly within the space, highlighting the need for more intentional pump track-related leisure education. Based on participant interviews, suggestions to support meaningful engagement at the pump tracks include implementing multilingual signage and promotional materials and offering beginner-oriented programming and facilitated skill-building sessions. Additionally, hosting special events tailored to communities that rarely access the pump track could help create a sense of inclusion and a more welcoming atmosphere. However, a lack of familiarity and skill uncertainty were not the only factors shaping experiences of inclusion. Notably, the participants' social positions and their interactions with broader structural conditions were essential to consider when examining inclusion at SSBP.

Rethinking the Boundaries of Inclusion

At the outset of this study, Author One was hopeful that members of the newcomer community would, like her, feel included at the pump tracks. However, her personal connection to the space initially obscured her ability to recognize the significant barriers faced by people occupying social locations different than her own. Reflecting on the findings and through discussions on settlement with Author Three, it became clear that inclusion at the pump tracks was often shaped before even entering the space due to intersecting systems of power and identities operating beyond the SSBP itself.

The participants described how their identities, including cultural background and parental roles, influenced their perceptions of safety and comfort in public leisure spaces. Rather than operating in isolation, these identities interacted with structural racism, xenophobia, and religious marginalization to produce uneven experiences of inclusion for the participants. These considerations shaped whether the participants pursued recreation in new spaces, such as at the pump tracks. Several participants, particularly those identifying with intersecting identities as racialized newcomers and religious minorities, explicitly articulated concerns related to perceptions of safety as primary barriers to pursuing new leisure spaces within Nanaimo. Safety is a well-documented barrier to recreation participation, and perceptions of fear are experienced in uneven ways that are related to gender (e.g., Stanko, 1995), age (e.g., Kappes et al., 2013), ethnicity (e.g., Chadee, 2003), and socio-economic status (e.g., Pantazis, 2000). Notably, previous research on newcomers has largely framed safety as an individual competency issue (e.g., Kiss et al., 2024; Lovelock et al., 2011), without examining how perceptions of safety shape newcomers' experiences of inclusion. Our findings demonstrated the importance of taking

these concerns seriously, especially in light of the increase in police-reported hate crimes (Government of B.C., 2025) and anti-immigration rhetoric (e.g., Housley, 2025).

Beyond safety, parental roles, which were compounded by work-related responsibilities also shaped participants' engagement with recreation participation in leisure spaces. For example, Aditi and Jessica described feeling that they did not have enough time and capacity to support their children in visiting the SSBP. Such perceptions limited their opportunities to become familiar and engaged within the space. In this way, caregiving and work-related responsibilities constrained not only participation in recreation, but also the social and structural conditions through which their perceptions of inclusion were produced.

Ultimately, we suggest that inclusion at the pump tracks is less contingent on physical infrastructure and more contingent on outreach, visibility, and relational engagement both within and beyond the site itself. We advocate that efforts to promote inclusion would be more effective if pump track operators (often municipal parks and recreation departments) reached out to members of the newcomer community rather than placing the expectation on them to find the pump tracks themselves. To do so, we suggest that pump track operators develop intentional partnerships with newcomer-serving organizations. For example, the CVIMS is an organization trusted by newcomers for credible information within Nanaimo or other leisure service providers in the community who offer recreation opportunities to newcomers. Additionally, relationships could be built with religious communities, such as by extending invitations to members of the local Gurdwara (a Sikh spiritual, educational, and community centre). Such partnerships create opportunities for collaborative outreach action. These recommendations reflect participants' recognition that inclusion is relationally produced and often built upon existing networks of trust and familiarity.

Conclusion

In this paper, we demonstrated that while pump tracks are framed as inclusive to all, at the SSBP, meaningful inclusion was shaped by social and structural factors operating through intersecting axes of identity and systems of power and oppression and was thus not guaranteed. Specifically, experiences of inclusion at the pump tracks required that newcomers not only know how to participate but also be aware that participation was possible at all, including knowing the unknown and navigating unfamiliar language and contexts. Moreover, we argued that for many newcomers, inclusion at the pump tracks was shaped by intersecting systems of power and identities that operated beyond the Bike Park itself, including migration history, race, language, religion, gender, and parental roles. Acknowledging this broader conceptualization of inclusion shifts attention away from the physical design of the pump tracks themselves towards addressing the social and structural systems of power and oppression through which inclusion is produced. Importantly, our findings support calls in leisure scholarship to move inclusion discourses away from integrationist expectations placed upon newcomers (Long et al., 2011) and towards a more relational and context-dependent understanding of inclusive practice. Ultimately, without interventions that address these intersectionally-produced inequities, pump tracks risk (re)producing the very inequities they are promoted as overcoming, and remaining leisure spaces that, while technically open to everyone, are meaningfully inclusive to only some.

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Chapter Five: Conclusion

Conclusion

As I sat down to begin writing this conclusion chapter, I became overcome with the realization that it was mere weeks from the tenth anniversary of Steve Smith's passing and, correspondingly, my first introduction to pump tracks. In some ways, this story has come full circle. In others, it is still unfolding. The Steve Smith Bike Park (SSBP) was built as a space for people to come together to honour Steve's legacy and hone the skills of future champions. While there are no data recorded on the use of the space, in the nine years since the Bike Park was opened to the public, it is evident that thousands of people have used the pump tracks, some travelling from across Canada and beyond. National competitions have been hosted at the SSBP, producing athletes who have competed on the world's stage and, as such, solidifying the space as a site of excellence in skill development. However, international recognition and individualized athletic success do not translate into meaningful inclusion for all members of the community. It was this tension that prompted critical reflection on my own experiences and assumptions at the pump tracks and, ultimately, shaped the impetus for this dissertation.

Through my doctoral work, I engaged with calls from leisure scholars for leisure spaces to become inclusive (e.g., Long, 2011; Smart et al., 2018; Trussell & Mair, 2010), while I also critically examined the growing discourse promoting asphalt pump tracks as inclusive leisure infrastructure (e.g., Alliance ASE, n.d.-b; Parkitech, n.d.) and leisure spaces (e.g., Goden, 2025). Due to the large presence of both Indigenous Peoples and newcomers in Nanaimo (Manhas, 2023), established pump tracks, and my pre-existing connections to the community, in this dissertation I concentrated specifically on the two pump tracks at the SSBP. However, I was cognizant that "sporting spaces ... are constitutive of and constituted by particular bodies, by how certain bodies are invited into that space, and by the actions and movements of those

bodies” (Adams, 2014, p. 203). This prompted me to move beyond simply identifying which bodies occupied the space and toward investigating how intersecting social identities and power structures influenced presence and participation at the SSBP. Importantly, given my focus on inclusion, I conducted this work in collaboration with two community advisory boards (CABs), one comprising Indigenous Peoples and the other representing the newcomer community. Rather than speaking on behalf of equity-owed groups, I sought to engage with them meaningfully throughout this work. As such, this conclusion, like the rest of the dissertation, reflects my individual positionality (hence the use of “I”) and, in other situations, adopts a collective voice (“we”) to acknowledge the intellectual and experiential contributions of the community advisors.

In this final chapter, I first synthesize the findings from the three publishable papers that comprise this dissertation. Second, I describe the research implications of these papers, focusing on the theoretical insights on inclusion in leisure spaces, specifically pump tracks, and methodological considerations for community-based research, specifically with Indigenous Peoples and newcomers to Canada. Third, I outline practical implications, highlighting tangible actions to support meaningful inclusion for equity-owed communities at pump tracks. Next, I identify some limitations of this research and offer recommendations for future research. To conclude, I reflect on key insights garnered throughout this research process and explore how my understandings of and relationships to pump tracks have changed.

Summary of Papers

Paper One

In paper one (Peterson & Giles, 2025), I adopted an ethnographic approach that was grounded in intersectional theory (Crenshaw, 1989). Drawing on reflexive vignettes derived

from over 80 hours of fieldwork between July and October 2024, I examined what inclusion did (or did not) look like at the pump tracks at the SSBP. Although I observed the space being used by individuals of various ages, genders, and skill levels, my observations indicated that the pump tracks predominantly attracted and catered to young, white, male-presenting, English-speaking individuals with expensive equipment and high skill levels. These dynamics highlighted broad social inequities and, therefore, rendered the pump tracks a space that was not inherently inclusive. Correspondingly, I argued that advertising the infrastructure as inclusive did not necessarily make it so. As a result, I advocated for pump tracks to become (and remain) inclusive, dominant power structures, specifically racialized, gendered, and classed structures that are embedded within the space, must be addressed. Ultimately, I asserted that symbolic efforts and signage are insufficient for dismantling the structures that exclude people from engaging with and using the pump tracks. Rather, meaningful inclusion requires deliberate and ongoing action with members of equity-owed populations. This finding was a precursor to papers two and three.

Paper Two

In the second paper (Peterson, Giles, Recalma, et al., under review), the co-authors, my dissertation supervisor Dr. Audrey Giles, three Indigenous CAB members of this research, Steven Recalma, Chancellor Amos, Jennifer Manson, and I applied settler colonial theory (SCT; Wolfe, 1999, 2006) and community-based participatory research (CBPR; Wallerstein & Duran, 2008) to explore Indigenous Peoples' relationship(s) to the pump tracks at the SSBP. I conducted three go-along and seven semi-structured interviews with self-identifying Indigenous Peoples with varying levels of involvement at the pump tracks. Then, we used Braun and Clarke's (2019) reflexive thematic analysis (RTA), specifically drawing on lived experiences and insights from

Steven, Chancellor, and Jennifer, to define and refine themes and more deeply engage with the data. Ultimately, based on our findings, we argued that pump tracks are not neutral; rather, they serve to (re)produce settler colonial structures of dispossession of Indigenous Peoples and land-based practices. Specifically, we argued that the construction of immovable asphalt pump tracks may function as permanent fixtures of settler colonial occupation, serving to normalize settler presence and logics. Importantly, however, we asserted that the pump tracks have simultaneously operated as sites of Indigenous resistance and cultural resurgence. We highlighted participants' descriptions of resistance through refusal in and of the space and embodied practices that asserted the presence of Indigenous Peoples and (re)defined pump tracks through acts rooted in both Indigenous cultural values and land-based connections. As a result, we advocated for a (re)imagining of urban leisure spaces built on ancestral and unceded land, foregrounding Indigenous self-determination and the development and sustainability of reciprocal Indigenous-settler relationships.

Paper Three

In the third paper (Peterson, Giles, & Qughondouqa, under review), Dr. Audrey Giles, Jansiat Qughondouqa, and I applied intersectional theory (Crenshaw, 1989) to explore newcomers' experiences of inclusion at the pump tracks within the SSBP. We used a CBPR approach (Wallerstein & Duran, 2008) and RTA (Braun & Clarke, 2019) to unpack the experiences of 16 self-identifying newcomers to Nanaimo through semi-structured interviews. In doing so, we argued that meaningful inclusion was shaped by intersecting axes of identity, which influenced newcomers' access to social networks, linguistic and contextual knowledge, and feelings of safety. As a result of these intersecting factors, a significant barrier to participants' engagement at the pump tracks was not only knowing how to participate but also understanding

that participation was possible at all. Additionally, we asserted that inclusion at the pump tracks was often shaped before even entering the space due to intersecting systems of power and identities operating beyond the Bike Park itself. Ultimately, we argued that inclusion at the pump tracks ought to rely less on physical infrastructure and more on intentional outreach, visible representation, and efforts to build meaningful relationships both within and beyond the physical space. We concluded by offering community-informed suggestions for enhancing newcomers' inclusion at pump tracks, including developing partnerships with newcomer-serving organizations.

Research Implications

Taken together, Chapters Two, Three, and Four advance understandings of inclusion, specifically at pump tracks, by challenging how inclusion has been conventionally conceptualized and operationalized in leisure spaces. Ultimately, across the three papers, I argued that experiences of inclusion at pump tracks cannot be reduced to a binary understanding of included versus excluded. Rather, inclusion was experienced by Indigenous Peoples and newcomers at the SSBP as negotiated and uneven, and it was shaped by intersecting identities and power relations, including settler colonial logics, racism, and classism. These arguments highlight key theoretical insights and methodological considerations for understanding the experiences of inclusion of equity-owed populations in an unstructured leisure space, the SSBP.

Theoretical Insights

Rather than functioning independently, the three papers collectively deepen understandings of inclusion, especially as experienced by Indigenous Peoples and newcomers, in leisure spaces, specifically pump tracks. Conversations about leisure spaces frequently blend access, participation, and inclusion, often treating the terms as synonymous. Throughout this

work, I observed people of various ages, genders, and skill levels operating various types of equipment on pump tracks. While such diversity may suggest inclusion, my research extends existing assertions that inclusive leisure infrastructure does not equate to inclusive leisure participation (e.g., Zerengök, 2024), and that inclusion in leisure spaces is not guaranteed or experienced equally (e.g., Dattilo et al., 2019; Lopez Frias & Dattilo, 2021). Similarly, Ahmed (2012) critiqued how acts towards institutional diversity can become symbolic gestures when not accompanied by meaningful changes to structures that reproduce exclusion.

Within leisure studies, inclusion has often been approached through a focus on siloed identity categories, such as gender, age, or (dis)ability, and barriers are typically identified and addressed in isolation. Such approaches have led to targeted interventions, including accessible design features (Moore et al., 2023) and identity-specific programming (Haggar & Giles, 2022), which perpetuate the assumption that overall inclusion can be achieved by accommodating individual groups (Turelli et al., 2025). In contrast, throughout this dissertation, the community advisors and I argued that siloed approaches are insufficient because they fail to account for the conditions that differentially position diverse users within the space.

The community advisors and I extended existing theory on inclusion in leisure spaces by (re)conceptualizing it as ongoing, politically contested, and relational. First, throughout the work, we demonstrated that inclusion needs to be conceptualized as an ongoing process, rather than one that is achieved through a single intervention. Dominant approaches to inclusion in urban leisure spaces often frame the concept as an outcome achievable through accessibility measures, targeted programs, and symbolic representations of diversity. However, we demonstrated that isolated design features, one-off programming initiatives, and symbolic gestures fall short of making a space inclusive because inclusion at the pump tracks was continually negotiated

through everyday interactions and social dynamics. This understanding aligns with Ahmed's (2006) theorization of orientation, in which she argued that spaces are organized around particular bodies, ultimately rendering some bodies as natural to spaces and others as out of place. The participants' experiences underscored that inclusion shifted across contexts and social encounters, suggesting that it requires ongoing engagement rather than one-time solutions.

Second, we demonstrated that inclusion in unstructured leisure spaces is politically contested within broader power relations. Inclusion requires responsiveness to intersecting identities and the dismantling of the ways in which power dynamics such as racism, colonialism, and classism are exercised within leisure spaces. For example, experiences of inclusion at the pump tracks were shaped by broader systems of power that privileged individuals whose identities and lived experiences fit within the dominant culture of the space. Importantly, as Laurendeau (2023) argued, "simply including more bodies" (p. 41) without interrogating the structures and logics that produce exclusion leaves dominant systems intact.

Third, we conceptualized inclusion as relational by illustrating how experiences of inclusion resulted from interactions among individuals, communities, institutions, and the spatial culture at the SSBP. The participants in Chapters Three and Four highlighted how power dynamics and their individual identities were mutually constitutive and, as such, they rendered experiences of inclusion as socially produced, structurally reinforced, and deeply embedded in the space. Ultimately, these experiences could not be understood solely through individual identity categories. Rather, inclusion was experienced relationally through social encounters, informal norms of the space, and broader cultural meanings attached to leisure engagement. In some cases, this was implicated in accounts of participation, while in others, systems of power and oppression became more apparent through investigations of patterns of absence.

As such, an important theoretical implication of this dissertation is the (re)framing of absence as reflection of a way in which power operates, rather than simply as evidence of the lack of inclusion. Interestingly, absence at the pump tracks was experienced and expressed differently along intersecting axes of identities discussed within the three studies. For example, in Chapter Two, I explicitly noted an absence of older adults, female-presenting individuals, racialized individuals, and people with non-normalized bodyminds, largely attributing their absence to exclusionary social norms and structures. However, the experiences of Indigenous participants, reflected in Chapter Three, suggested that absence from the space could be a deliberate act of refusal to assumptions that involvement with and at the pump tracks was wanted or meaningful to them. Meanwhile, for the newcomer participants in Chapter Four, absence was related to unfamiliarity stemming from a lack of linguistic and contextual knowledge and unawareness of the possibility of participation. Importantly, this form of absence was not simply attributed to a lack of knowledge but rather reflected how participation in the SSBP depended on culturally specific forms of knowledge, social networks, and taken-for-granted norms within the space.

Through this work, I began to understand absence from leisure spaces as socially and structurally motivated and, as such, enabled a more nuanced exploration of engagement and resistance at pump tracks beyond simply recording participation metrics. Specifically, in this dissertation, understanding inclusion at the SSBP required moving beyond the physical boundaries of the site of inquiry to include those who are not present within it, and to examine why they may not be. Leisure scholars have long examined non-participation by interrogating constraints (e.g., Crawford et al., 1991; Godbey et al., 2010) or “factors that researchers assume, and individuals perceive or experience, as limitations that restrict the development of leisure

preferences and hinder or entirely prevent participation in leisure activities” (Jackson, 1991, p. 279). Notably, such literature reduces understandings of absence into the investigation of factors that inhibit participation, and it positions absence as a deficit to be managed, negotiated, or overcome (Kono & Ito, 2023; Ntovoli et al., 2025).

Investigating absences from the SSBP required engagement with the community. This understanding became particularly evident during the data collection phase of Chapter Four, in which we explored newcomers' experiences of inclusion at the SSBP. Notably, newcomers were largely absent from the Bike Park and did not respond to my initial recruitment efforts. The newcomer community advisor and I submitted an ethics amendment to revise our participant recruitment strategy and to allow engagement with members of the newcomer community who were active participants in recreation and leisure in the City of Nanaimo but were not active users of the pump tracks. By revising our recruitment strategy, we were able to explore how, in addition to conventional barriers to participation (e.g., cost, time, transportation), participants experienced deeper contextual barriers preventing them from being aware that participation was even possible. Additionally, conversations with participants in Chapter Three led us to interrogate absence from the Bike Park and intentional refusal of the space. Therefore, throughout this dissertation, I conceptualized absence as emerging from exclusion, refusal, or unfamiliarity. Building on results from a separate scoping review that I conducted with some colleagues (Peterson et al., 2025) in which we argued that inclusion is not necessarily the opposite of exclusion, I began to understand that interrogating processes of exclusion enables a more nuanced understanding of inclusion itself. As a result, it was vital to adopt methodological approaches to better engage with people who may be considered excluded from the space and create richer, more nuanced understandings of inclusion within it.

Methodological Considerations

This dissertation was shaped by the contributions of the CAB members, who were also co-authors of Chapters Three and Four, and drew on data collected using ethnographic and CBPR approaches. While this dissertation reflects my engagement with the required academic requirements and the research process for each chapter, the outcomes would not have been possible without the critical lenses of the people directly affected by this work and their willingness to engage with me and share their vulnerabilities (Middleton, 2025) related to the pump tracks and leisure participation. Taken together, Chapters Three and Four provided further validation of the value of CBPR in research on inclusion and leisure spaces, specifically among Indigenous Peoples and newcomers.

The methodological choices of ethnography and CBPR for this dissertation determined how inclusion and absence became visible. Specifically, my understanding of inclusion became more nuanced through a combination of participant observation and participants' accounts of their experiences as they unfolded across different contexts of time and place, and in diverse interactions. First, in Chapter Two, by using an ethnographic approach, I was able to witness the norms of participation within the SSBP, observe what inclusion looked like within the Park, and note who was *missing*, based on my best understanding of the City's and the Park's contexts. Next, in Chapter Three, the adoption of a settler colonial lens and a CBPR approach informed by the Indigenous CAB members/co-authors (Steven, Chancellor, and Jennifer) allowed for the reframing of *missing* voices. Rather than simply identifying who was absent, we considered whether a lack of presence could be *intentional*. As such, within this work, the community advisors and I viewed absence as an explicit refusal of dominant assumptions (Fawaz & Peers, 2022; Peers et al., 2023; Tink et al., 2020) about how or whether people wished to engage at the

pump tracks. Finally, in Chapter Four, the application of a CBPR approach informed by the community advisor (Jansait) and an intersectional lens made it clear that the absence of newcomers at the SSBP underscored deeper linguistic and contextual limitations of the space. Within these chapters, I demonstrated how the use of ethnography and CBPR highlighted different dimensions of inclusion and its absence within the SSBP.

Engaging with the participants required consideration of the methods used. During this work, I used participant observation, go-along interviews, and semi-structured interviews as data collection methods. Each method allowed for a unique form of engagement with participants. Participant observation (Tedlock, 2003) was useful to garner a broad understanding of what inclusion looked like. Because I did not actively communicate with participants, I was unable to verify participants' demographic information, which created uncertainty about participant representation. While data collection in Chapters Three and Four allowed participants to self-identify, the observational data in Chapter Two were contingent on my interpretation and assumptions based on visible markers. As a result, assumptions about identity were inferred and not confirmed. This limitation highlights the risks of interpreting inclusion solely through visible social dynamics in the space. It therefore underscored the importance of including methods that allowed for the centring of participants' voices and lived experiences in data collection, which informed my intended use of go-along and semi-structured interviews.

I initially selected semi-structured and go-along interviews to create a relational and effective approach to data collection. When I began this work, I was excited about the potential of conducting go-along interviews (Moran et al., 2020) for in-situ data collection with participants. I was eager to share my passion for riding my bike (newly purchased thanks to SSHRC-funding) alongside participants and to engage in conversations about the pump tracks.

Notably, only three participants chose to engage in the process, and all three ultimately decided to stop riding and continue the interview in person while seated at the park. Although I still believe that go-along interviews are a valuable data-collection tool, conducting interviews while actively riding at the pump tracks proved difficult in practice. Riding a pump track requires concentration, physical exertion, and attention to safety. Further, from a practical standpoint, conducting interviews while seated on the ground allowed for me, as the interviewer, to access my interview guides and did not require raised voices to communicate audibly. Ultimately, due to this lack of feasibility, I relied on semi-structured interviews for data collection in Chapters Three and Four. Being able to offer participants the option of conducting semi-structured interviews online, by phone, and in person, and at various locations, was a practical and logistical strength. For example, one newcomer participant who spoke English as an additional language noted that connecting over Zoom felt more comfortable to her. Additionally, she was a mother who would have required childcare to participate in an interview outside of her home. Such diversity was an important consideration for equity. During data collection, participants also highlighted tangible actions that could occur to enhance inclusion at the SSBP, which I discuss below.

Practical Implications

Below, I outline actions that municipal recreation and leisure providers, community organizations, and infrastructure planners and builders can take to support meaningful inclusion for equity-owed communities at pump tracks. Importantly, participants' experiences throughout Chapters Two, Three, and Four directly informed these recommendations and reflected the need to move beyond symbolic approaches to inclusion toward sustained structural, material, and relational change.

First, structural change requires the recognition that inclusion at pump tracks cannot be achieved solely through physical design features or symbolic representations of diversity. As noted in Chapter Two, while accessible infrastructure and signage remain important, participants emphasized that meaningful inclusion was also dependent on social engagement at the SSBP. Therefore, municipalities should invest in ongoing community engagement initiatives, including beginner-oriented programming, mentorship opportunities, and facilitated drop-in sessions designed for individuals unfamiliar with pump track use and bike park culture. Significantly, such initiatives should not be one-time engagements but sustained opportunities that facilitate relationship building and continued participation.

While I cannot determine whether Chapter Two directly influenced changes within the pump track community, it is notable that shortly after its publication, an article titled “More girls on the pump track – designing inclusive spaces for everyone” was published on Alliance Action Sports’ (n.d.-a) website. The article outlined practical strategies for designing pump tracks that are “truly inclusive community infrastructure... [that] encourage girls and women” (para. 1) to engage within the space, specifically highlighting the need for women and girls to experience visibility and social comfort through community engagement. In the article, Alliance ASE (n.d.-a) noted that identity-specific events can be hosted to not only invite different groups into the space, but more importantly, to “raise awareness that pump tracks are for everyone, helping change social expectations and usage patterns” (para. 4). This suggests that transforming power dynamics with pump track spaces requires recognition and actively addressing power dynamics in the space. As Avelino (2021) argued, when “social context changes, power relations are bound to change as well, and that as such, changing power relations form an inevitable dimension of social change” (p. 441). The emergence of the conversation of power dynamics within pump

track spaces suggests that members of the industry are increasingly recognizing that the actualization of inclusion at pump tracks requires greater attention, particularly in relation to social and cultural factors that shape how the space is experienced.

Second, reducing material and informational barriers to participation requires targeted initiatives. Specifically, participants' experiences across Chapters Two, Three, and Four highlighted the need for access to bicycles, helmets, and transportation support. Participants identified that access to these material goods shaped whether they, or other potential participants, could engage with the pump tracks. In response, municipalities and community organizations should consider developing equipment loan or rental programs, as well as forming partnerships with local cycling organizations to facilitate low-barrier entry into participation, including introductory riding sessions to teach interested people how to use the space, and equipment repair workshops to support sustained participation.

Notably, the City of Nanaimo Parks, Recreation, and Culture hosted its first introductory skills course at the pump track in the summer of 2025 (City of Nanaimo, 2025). This children's skill development course was the first city-planned event at the SSBP. The program was offered again in Spring 2026 (City of Nanaimo, 2026). Notably, participation in this program required accessing and navigating the City's program registration system, paying for the program, supplying a bike and helmet, and providing transportation to and from the event. In October - November 2025, a local organization that coordinates and implements multi-sport camps and events hosted a camp at the pump track (PacificSport, 2025). A second iteration of the pump track children's program is occurring May – June, 2026 (PacificSport, 2025). Notably, this program, while still run at a cost to participants, advertised that owning a bike was not a prerequisite for participation and that equipment was available to borrow. Again, while I do not

have direct proof that this doctoral research was the catalyst for these programs, I did meet with administrators of both organizations to discuss the pump tracks before they organized these events. Regardless, the organization and implementation of these structured programs serve to validate the need for this research and commitments to supporting more diverse engagement within the space.

In Chapter Four, newcomer participants emphasized their uncertainty of what pump tracks are and how to use them, highlighting the need for clear, multilingual communication. Municipalities, pump track planners, and builders should consider signage, promotional materials, and introductory resources in multiple languages commonly spoken within the local community. One practical strategy for reducing language barriers may involve incorporating quick response (QR) codes into signage throughout the space, directing users to simple instructional videos that demonstrate how to navigate and use the space.

Third, and importantly, the responsibility for inclusion should not fall on the individuals and communities that these initiatives intend to support. As part of my commitment to advancing inclusion at pump tracks, I will continue to engage within pump track spaces and contribute to ongoing conversations about how inclusion can be meaningfully supported in practice. Recently, it was announced that the Steve Smith Legacy Foundation will be building a second asphalt pump track in Cedar, British Columbia, neighbouring Nanaimo. The new pump track will be located in a rural area, in close proximity to one of Snuneymuxw First Nation's reserves. At the time of writing, I am in communication with the project coordinators involved in planning and developing the new Cedar Pump Track. Through these ongoing discussions, I aim to share relevant insights garnered from this dissertation where appropriate, with the aim of supporting inclusive design and programming considerations in the development of the new space.

Currently, these conversations remain exploratory and do not guarantee specific outcomes; however, they reflect my effort to translate research findings from this work into outcomes that are responsive to the participants' expressed needs.

Limitations

As noted by McGrath (1981), all research has its flaws, and the three studies in this dissertation are no exception. This dissertation is grounded in qualitative, ethnographic and community-based research and, as such, is subject to several limitations related to context and researcher positionality. As I reflect on the processes and outcomes of my doctoral work, I acknowledge two key limitations: first, the focus on a single site, and second, my positionality as a non-Indigenous, non-newcomer researcher who oscillated between insider and outsider identities at the SSBP (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009; Kerr & Sturm, 2019).

A primary limitation of this dissertation is my reliance on a single research site. All research for this dissertation was conducted at the pump tracks at the SSBP in Nanaimo, B.C. Subsequently, this work is bound to a mid-sized Canadian city with a unique demographic, political, and community history. As such, the findings from this work are context-specific and may not be generalized to other pump tracks in different spaces and places, including larger metropolitan centres or rural regions. However, qualitative researchers do not typically seek to create broad generalizability; rather, they emphasize contextual depth and situated understanding (Drisko, 2025). At the same time, the single-site focus of this study enabled deeper engagement that would not have been possible in a multi-sited study. Additionally, my use of participant observation and sustained collaboration with community members were conducive to rich place-based analysis and to attentiveness to the relational dynamics among community, history, and land use.

A second limitation concerns my positionality as a researcher. The positionality of a researcher can create limitations to qualitative research. As an insider to the SSBP, I entered into this research with assumptions of familiarity and social dynamics within the space. While my own lived experiences provided a contextual foundation and facilitated access to participants, they also limited my ability to more fully understand the experiences of Indigenous and newcomer peoples within the space. I am an outsider to these communities. This positionality may have shaped participant disclosures, given that community members are often wary of researchers' intentions (Collet, 2008) and my ability to interpret the data. Although I made my best effort to approach this work with ethics of care and engaged with CAB members throughout the research process, my social location may have influenced which stories of participants' experiences were shared and how I interpreted their meanings.

The insider/outsider binary became increasingly complex over the course of this research. Through the CBPR and RTA processes, my positionality and those of the participants and community advisors shifted relationally across contexts, interactions, and stages of data collection and analysis (Botterill, 2015). For example, while my identities as a bike rider and a female facilitated connections with some participants, these shared identities did not negate differences related to ethnicity, Indigeneity, and newcomer status. Through the CBPR process, the community advisors' relationships, shared lived experiences, and cultural knowledge informed participant engagement in ways that I could never have achieved on my own. This became particularly evident when interviews took place outside the SSBP's physical boundaries. In these settings, the embodied familiarity with being an active pump track user that had contributed to my insider positionality became less stable, requiring me to rely more heavily on the participants and community advisors to guide interactions and provide contextual

understanding. In one instance, the newcomer community advisor (Jansait) served as an interpreter during an interview, requiring me to concede all interpretive *authority* and rely on her linguistic, relational, and cultural expertise during the interaction, (re)enforcing that this knowledge was relationally negotiated and not individually controlled. Recognizing these limitations is important not only for interpreting the findings of this work, but also for identifying opportunities for future research.

Future Research

Throughout this dissertation, I engaged critically with inclusion at pump tracks and, in doing so, opened opportunities for further inquiry. Importantly, while there are opportunities for future research directly related to pump tracks, I also believe there is much work to be done to better understand how power is exercised in a wider variety of unstructured leisure spaces. Building on this dissertation, future research should move beyond additive models of inclusion that treat identities as separate, measurable factors and instead explore how systems of power are reinforced within leisure spaces, policies, and practices. Importantly, an intersectional approach should be applied to future research with greater attention to the normative assumptions surrounding leisure spaces, including – but not limited to - ability, gender, ethnicity, age, and class. Below, I outline four specific directions for future research: multi-sited studies, longitudinal research, interrogating refusal and absence as exercises of power, and a deeper investigation of how municipal parks and recreation departments operationalize inclusion.

First, comparative, multi-sited studies of pump tracks would enable researchers to explore how inclusion is conceptualized, experienced, and operationalized across varied contexts. For example, research could be conducted across urban and rural regions, large metropolitan centres and mid-sized cities, municipally-funded and privately operated-facilities,

and stand-alone pump tracks versus those, like the pump tracks in this dissertation, embedded within a larger bike park, could highlight how local governance structures, funding models, and community demographics interact to shape inclusion. Such research would move beyond context-specific findings and could help identify socially produced and structurally reinforced patterns of inclusion that transcend place.

Second, longitudinal research is required to better understand how the use, governance, and meanings of pump tracks may change across spaces over time. As addressed in Chapters Two, Three, and Four, community demographics and the social and institutional conditions surrounding them are constantly shifting, including policy priorities, leadership structures, and local social dynamics. As such, a longitudinal approach could be used to examine whether and how experiences of inclusion change as the physical use of pump tracks and their surrounding social and political context evolve. Such an investigation would also allow researchers to track changes in who uses the space over time and whether users become more diverse.

Third, while I have interrogated the concepts of refusal and absence in this dissertation, there is much more work to be done. There is already much literature on how power is exercised to subtly exclude and oppress members of equity-owed populations from leisure spaces; however, what remains under-theorized is the act of refusal as an exercise of power that challenges dominant assumptions that participation in leisure activities is universally wanted or important (Nachman et al., 2023). Indeed, it would be interesting to explore non-participation more deeply, not as a passive absence, but as an active, meaningful stance. In the future, researchers should engage directly with people and communities who actively choose not to participate at the pump tracks. Such an exploration would make a significant contribution to understanding how leisure spaces are negotiated and/or resisted, and could be used to interrogate

the meanings, conditions, and politics of refusal and non-participation, rather than treating absence as merely a demographic deficit or a numerical indicator of *failed* inclusion.

Greater attention to policy and governance of leisure spaces is also needed. In the future, it will be important for researchers to interrogate how municipal parks and recreation departments operationalize inclusion, particularly related to how programming is developed and implemented, how funding priorities are established, and how infrastructure decisions are justified. By exploring the institutional processes that govern the management of leisure spaces, researchers will be better able to understand the dynamics of power exercised within them.

Conclusion

This work was conducted over nearly four years as a PhD student, including two summers at the pump tracks. During this time, I have grown as a student, a researcher, and a human being. My understanding of inclusion has expanded in ways that challenged me. Specifically, this work has required me to navigate tensions between participating in institutional academic practices and engaging in a leisure space shaped by colonial, capitalist, and ableist logics, while simultaneously critically examining the effects of these structures. Such tensions included facing institutional expectations to align my research with funding priorities and create scholarly contributions within predetermined timelines, which often conflicted with the flexibility required to create and maintain meaningful community relationships. I attempted to balance the production of (good) academic knowledge while remaining committed to meaningful community engagement and honouring lived, situated experiences. During this work, I have come to understand these dynamics as more complex than the binaries of inclusion and exclusion, insider and outsider, good and bad, because reducing complex social relations and power dynamics to fixed categories can oversimplify them.

I have come to understand inclusion at the Bike Park as so much more than who is present; it is about whose presence is normalized, whose histories are made visible, and whose belonging is assumed. Specifically, to many people, the pump tracks at the SSBP are a profoundly meaningful place rooted in physical and emotional connections. I was, and largely still am, one of those people. However, because of this work, I now also carry a deeper understanding that this space does not hold the same meaning or connection for everyone. I think I always knew that, but now I understand some of the potential reasons why. For some of the Indigenous participants in this research, the pump tracks exist on their traditional territory. The asphalt tracks are fixed in place, a material reminder of settler colonialism and of displacement from their land and their ancestral home. For others, the pump tracks are a space to engage with their cultural teachings and experience a sense of connection to the land. For many of the newcomer participants in this research, the pump tracks represented opportunities to create new social connections and engage in physical activity, while others experienced unfamiliarity with the norms and activities in the place they now live. For several of the participants across this dissertation, barriers such as time, transportation, and equipment limited or prevented engagement with the pump tracks altogether. For others, there was simply no desire to participate. Taken together, these varied relationships underscore that inclusion cannot be assumed based on interest or presence. Rather, inclusion at pump tracks must be understood as contingent, uneven, and shaped by broader relations of power that structure how the space is experienced or refused.

Ultimately, this dissertation does not resolve the barriers to inclusion at the pump tracks. If anything, it has made them more visible. I am left with a deeper awareness that access to or participation in a leisure space is not evidence of inclusion. Rather, the failure to interrogate the

conditions implicit within public leisure spaces (re)produces the very exclusions that leisure practitioners seek to prevent. Therefore, this work is not complete. It is just beginning. However, it will now inform how I forever inhabit, research, and engage within leisure spaces, particularly at pump tracks, and I hope it does the same for others.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Certificate of Ethics Approval

Université d'Ottawa

Bureau d'éthique et d'intégrité de la recherche

University of Ottawa

Office of Research Ethics and Integrity

CERTIFICAT D'APPROBATION ÉTHIQUE | CERTIFICATE OF ETHICS APPROVAL

Numéro du dossier / Ethics File Number

H-05-24-10348

Titre du projet / Project Title

Biking for Belonging: Exploring
Pump Tracks as Inclusive
Leisure Spaces

Type de projet / Project Type

Thèse de doctorat / Doctoral
thesis

Statut du projet / Project Status

Renouvelé / Renewed

Date d'approbation (jj/mm/aaaa) / Approval Date (dd/mm/yyyy)

31/05/2024

Date d'expiration (jj/mm/aaaa) / Expiry Date (dd/mm/yyyy)

30/05/2026

Équipe de recherche / Research Team

**Chercheur /
Researcher**

Affiliation

Role

Britta PETERSON

École des sciences de l'activité physique / School of Human
Kinetics

Chercheur Principal / Principal
Investigator

Audrey GILES

École des sciences de l'activité physique / School of Human
Kinetics

Superviseur / Supervisor

Conditions spéciales ou commentaires / Special conditions or comments

Appendix B

Interview Guide for Go-Along Interviews

Questions specific to equity-owned members of the community (park participants):

1. When meeting a new person, how do you introduce yourself?
2. What communities do you feel you belong to?
3. What makes you feel like you belong?
4. Why was the pump track built in this community?
5. When did you first come to the pump track?
 - a. Why?
6. What makes you return?
7. Would anything make you stop coming?
 - a. If yes, what?
8. Are pump tracks unique?
 - a. If yes, how?
9. Since the park was created, have you witnessed a difference in the attitudes and behaviours of the pump track community towards different park users?
10. Is there any relationship between your culture/community and your participation at the pump track?
11. Do you think your community is included at the pump track?
 - a. Why or why not?
 - b. How could the pump track be more inclusive to your community?
12. How could pump tracks be more inclusive to a diverse range of participants (in general)?

Appendix C

Semi-Structured Interview Guide

General Questions:

1. When meeting a new person, how do you introduce yourself?
2. Why was the pump track built in this community?
3. When did you first get connected to the pump track?
 - a. Why?
4. Are you still involved with the pump track?
 - a. Why or why not?
5. Are pump tracks unique?
 - a. If yes, how?
 - b.

Questions specific to community partners:

6. What elements of the park were developed to promote inclusivity?
7. Have any evaluations been conducted on the park or its use?
 - a. If yes, what was the outcome of the evaluation?
8. How could pump tracks be more inclusive to a diverse range of participants (in general)?
9. How does the park promote user belonging?
10. Since the park was created, have you witnessed a difference in the attitudes and behaviours of the pump track community towards different park users?
 - a. What has influenced the change (or lack of change)?

Questions specific to equity-owed members of the community (non-park users):

11. Is there any relationship between your culture/community and your participation at the pump track?
12. Do you think your community is included at the pump track?
 - a. Why or why not?
 - b. How could the pump track be more inclusive to your community?
13. How could pump tracks be more inclusive to a diverse range of participants (in general)?

Appendix D

Modified Interview Guide for Newcomers

Semi-Structured Interview Guide (Newcomers)

Name or pseudonym for publication: _____

Age Range: 19-24 25-34 35-44 45-54 55-64 65+

Date of arrival in Canada (approximate):

under 1 yr 1-2 yrs 2-3yrs 3-4 yrs 4-5yrs

Country of origin: _____

1. When meeting a new person, how do you introduce yourself?
2. Have you heard of a pump track before?
3. When you think of outdoor recreation (or leisure) spaces in your community (e.g., parks, playgrounds, sports areas), what comes to mind?
4. Have you or your family members participated in any activities in those kinds of spaces?
 - a. What made you feel welcome there?
 - b. What made you feel unwelcome there?
5. Do you feel that spaces like the pump track (a bike and wheeled sport track) are designed with your community or culture in mind?
 - a. Why or why not?
6. What might make a place like a pump track feel more _____ to you or your family?
 - a. welcoming
 - b. safe
 - c. appealing
7. Sometimes cities say spaces are ‘for everyone.’ In your experience, what makes a public space truly feel like it includes everyone?
8. Do you feel like you have the same access to outdoor or leisure spaces as others in your community?
 - a. What helps your access?
 - b. What helps limits your access?
9. How do ideas of safety, familiarity, or comfort influence whether you use a new public space like a pump track?
10. Have you ever avoided going to a public space because you felt it wasn’t ‘for you’? Can you share why?
11. What would make you want to visit a space like a pump track—or encourage others in your community to do so?