

Anishinaabeg Women's Wellbeing: Decolonization through Physical Activity

by

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Abstract

Settler colonialism has detrimental effects on the health and wellbeing of Indigenous peoples, as seen, for example, in the disproportionately high rates of chronic diseases experienced among Indigenous peoples. Indigenous peoples in Canada experience higher levels of ill health related to obesity, diabetes, and other chronic conditions than non-Indigenous people. Indigenous women experience greater incidents of chronic disease than men and are thus particularly vulnerable to ill health. Current research has focussed on documenting the health disparities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. While insightful, health disparity research reproduces settler colonial discourses of erasure and provides no meaningful or lasting solutions for addressing these disparities, thus demonstrating the need for Indigenous-led thinking regarding potential solutions. Therefore, the guiding research question for my dissertation was, “Can physical activity that encompasses a decolonization approach be a catalyst for regenerative wellbeing for Anishinaabeg women?” Using Indigenous feminist theory that is informed by Anishinaabeg gikendaasowin, I looked to the dibaajimowinan of Anishinaabeg women, Elders, and urban Indigenous women, which occurred in three stages of research and culminated in five publishable papers. In the first stage of research, I interviewed seven Anishinaabekweg who are exemplars of decolonized physical activity. In the second stage of research, I held a sharing circle with eight Elders from Naicatchewenin in Treaty #3 territory. In the last stage of research, I implemented Wiisokotaatiwin with 12 urban Indigenous women with the Odawa Native Friendship Centre, my community partner.

The results of my research revealed that wellbeing for Indigenous women can be improved through decolonized physical activity, remembering Anishinaabeg stories, and building community in urban spaces. More specifically, these activities are important resistance

tools that can lead to meaningful ways of addressing embodied settler colonialism and can also make strong contributions to Indigenous health research. Overall, my research showcased how Anishinaabeg gikendaasowin can be used as a foundation to improve Indigenous women's health and wellbeing.

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Chapter 1:
Introduction

List of Anishinaabe Words

Anishinaabe: -kwe (single), -kweg (plural) (woman/women)

Anishinaabemowin (language)

‘Ba (a suffix placed after a person’s last name to indicate that the person has passed on)

Biskaabiiyang (returning to ourselves)

Dibaajimowin (singular), dibaajimowinan (plural) (teachings, personal stories)

Gikendaasowin (knowledge)

Inaadiziwin (way of being)

Manitouwag (spirits)

Naminamayun (travel well)

Nokomis (single), nokomisag (plural) (grandmother/grandmothers)

Niizhwaaswi kchtwaa kinomaadiwinan (the seven grandfather teachings or the seven sacred gifts)

Semaa (tobacco)

Wiisokotaatiwin (gathering together for a purpose)

Locating Myself

Boozhoo, Dibikgeezhigokwe indigo. Mishkwasdesi dodaim. Bingwi Neyaashi Anishinaabek n'dongi, Anemki Wekwedong n'dongi. I belong to Bingwi Neyaashi Anishinaabek on Animbiigo Zaagi'igan (Lake Nipigon located in northwestern Ontario) and grew up in Thunder Bay, Ontario, both of which are located in the Robinson Superior Treaty territory. My paternal family is from Bingwi Neyaashi Anishinaabek. My father is Russel McGuire, one of sixteen children of Patrick McGuire-ba Sr., and Annie McGuire-ba (Legarde). My maternal family is from Animakee Wa Zhing 37 First Nation in Treaty #3 territory. My mother is Patricia Fenton, my grandmother was Dolly (Patricia) Fenton-ba (nee Lyons) and great-grandparents were Edward Lyons-ba from Couchiching First Nation and Maryjane Lyons-ba (nee Sinclair) from Hungry Hall (which was one of seven Anishinaabeg communities that were amalgamated in 1914 into the present day Rainy River First Nation). I also have family ties to Couchiching First Nation through my marriage to Ryan Adams in Treaty #3 territory, where my son Ziigwaan Adams is also from. It is important that I introduce to you my Anishinaabeg family and communities to demonstrate and honour my identity, relationships, and the stories shared within this dissertation.

Anishinaabeg knowledge is derived from our stories or dibaajimowinan. We learn from our personal stories, ancestral stories, funny or tragic stories, and truth telling stories; indeed, “stories are meant to heal” (Wagamese, 2008, p.4). As Anishinaabeg (Anishinaabeg are also known as the Ojibway people who are from the traditional territories now known as Ontario, Manitoba, and Minnesota. Anishinaabeg reside in rural and urban areas, and in their respective First Nation communities, in addition to other global localities), we have a responsibility to preserve our stories as they are meant to teach us new ways of being. My ancestral stories have

guided me while writing my dissertation. I share them now, to honour my ancestors who continue to guide me:

I was a young woman, just nineteen, when my father told me a story about my Anishinaabekweg ancestors living on the territory of Animbiigo Zaagi'igan. A long time ago on Animbiigo Zaagi'igan, three Anishinaabekweg went to check their fishing net beneath the winter ice. One of the women was pregnant and during the trip to collect the fish, she gave birth. She then walked back to our community – carrying the fish with her baby. In this story, my nookomisag showed immense physical strength, both in traversing the frigid, frozen lake to collect the fish meant to feed their families, and in delivering a baby on the, frozen, icy lake. The birth of this precious baby instilled a far greater strength in my nookomisag than the trip initially demanded of them. My nokomis showed an ethereal physicality to give birth on Animbiigo Zaagi'igan and to then carry her newborn with the fish back to her family. It is extraordinarily meaningful, and is an act for which I am very grateful.

A second story features the birth of my father. My auntie, Dr. Patricia McGuire, recounted the story of the birth of my father to me on one of our many visits together. My nokomis, who at the time was nine months pregnant, sent her children off to school one day. Upon returning from school, the children began to eat their supper while their Mama busied herself with daily chores. The siblings noticed a strange sound coming from a basket. Their first thought was that it was a puppy; however, they were astonished to discover it was in fact their new baby brother. In this story, my nokomis was able to not only give birth to my father completely on her own, but she was also then able to collect the wood to set up the fire in the wood stove, prepare and cook supper for the kids, and continue to occupy herself with other tasks.

A third story is about my ancestral relative, Pikaagooseekwe. Shared by my auntie as part of her own dissertation, it is a story highlighting the fortitude and physical strength of our ancestor.

Pikaagooseekwe came to Animbigoo Zaagi'igan when her grandmother outfitted her with food and a birch bark canoe. She and her grandmother were living by Lake Superior in what is now Pic Heron First Nation. Her grandmother did not want her to marry a specific man, as Pikaagooseekwe would have become his second or third wife.

Pikaagooseekwe was about fourteen years old when her grandmother prepared her for this journey...It took her about two weeks to travel by water from Heron Bay, close to Lake Superior and Marathon, Ontario, to the shores of Lake Nipigon. She travelled on her own and was able to avoid fur traders and various other dangers in the process.

Pikaagooseekwe arrived safely at the home of her relatives at Nipigon House, a Hudson Bay trading post on Lake Nipigon. She made certain her grandchildren knew of this journey and the reasons why it was undertaken. (McGuire, 2013, p. 74)

These stories speak to the incredible physical strength, health, and wellness Anishinaabekweg carry. In each story, the women embodied a strong physicality¹ that enabled them to collect fish for their family, deliver babies on their territories, and evade unwelcome circumstances.

Together, the ancestral stories provided me with purpose as I thought mindfully and spiritually about my responsibility in conducting research. These stories grounded me and gave me strength, as I knew my ancestors were guiding me. Most incredibly, the stories led me to realize my dissertation objective, which was to understand how our ancestral stories of physical strength, and current personal stories of physical activity, may influence our current efforts to challenge ill health. The guiding research question for my dissertation is, “Can physical activity

that encompasses a decolonization approach be a catalyst for regenerative wellbeing for Anishinaabeg women?” Answering this question required three stages of research. In stage one, I interviewed Anishinaabeg women who are exemplars of decolonized physical activity to ask, why did you become physically active? What drives you to commit to physical activity? And, why is physical activity important to you? In stage two, I held a sharing circle with Anishinaabeg Elders to ask, how is settler colonialism manifested upon Anishinaabeg women’s bodies? In stage three, I implemented Wiisokotaatiwin to explore: what are the benefits of bringing urban Indigenous women together to engage in physical activity while discussing issues related to colonization, decolonization, health and wellbeing, ancestral stories, and other aspects of physical activity?

To set the stage for addressing these questions, the remainder of this introduction is divided into three sections. First, I describe the literature regarding Indigenous peoples’ health disparities, the role of settler colonialism and personal decolonization in health, and the importance of physical activity in improving Indigenous peoples’ wellbeing. Second, I discuss Indigenous feminist theory to illustrate why this theoretical perspective was most appropriate for my dissertation. In the final section, I detail my research framework, including the Anishinaabeg research paradigm, and my research methods, analysis, and ethical considerations.

Literature Review

Health Disparities

For many yearsⁱⁱ, researchers have been documenting the health disparities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada. Indigenous peoples report poorer health and high rates of chronic health conditions (Gionet & Roshanafshar, 2013). For instance, 63 percent

of off-reserve First Nations people over 15 experience at least one chronic condition, an additional 24 percent reported two chronic conditions, and 35 percent report three or more chronic conditions (Rotenberg, 2012). When compared to the general Canadian population who experience obesity at a rate of 52 percent, Indigenous peoples experience higher rates of obesity: 63 percent of First Nations people living off reserve (74 percent on reserve), 61 percent of Métis, and 58 percent of Inuit are considered obese (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2011).

Additionally, heart disease is 1.5 times higher and rates of type 2 diabetes are three to five times higher among First Nations people, with rates increasing among the Inuit; and tuberculosis infection rates for Indigenous peoples are eight to ten times higher than non-Indigenous peoples (Health Canada, 2006). Importantly, type 2 diabetes has reached epidemic rates (Gionet & Roshanafshar, 2013; Reading, 2009), which is a cause for concern because diabetes intensifies other chronic conditions. The Public Health Agency of Canada (2011) reported that individuals with diabetes are between two to four times more likely to develop cardiovascular disease than those without, and Indigenous peoples experience higher rates of complications from diabetes, overall. This statistic is compounded for Indigenous women, as they experience high rates of type 2 diabetes. In addition, they are more likely to be diagnosed with at least one chronic condition when compared to Indigenous men and non-Indigenous women (Arriagada, 2016). A recent study of First Nations people in Alberta reported that First Nations women experience the highest lifetime risk of developing type 2 diabetes when compared to First Nations men, and non-Indigenous men and women (Chowdhury-Turin et. al. 2016). This finding supports results from Bourassa, McKay-McNabb, and Hampton's (2004) significant study in which they reported, "chronic disease disparities are more pronounced for Aboriginal women than Aboriginal men. For example, diseases such as diabetes are more

prevalent among Aboriginal women than either the general population or Aboriginal men” (p. 1). Furthermore, Indigenous women are less likely to report their health as excellent or very good (48 percent reported excellent or very good health) when compared to Indigenous men (53 percent reported excellent or very good health), and non-Indigenous women (64 percent reported excellent or very good health) (Arriagada, 2016). Also, First Nation women have been found to be “significantly more likely than [First Nation] males to be diagnosed with arthritis, asthma, an anxiety disorder, or mood disorder” (Rotenberg, 2016, p. 7). These health indicators show that Indigenous people, in particular Indigenous women, experience chronic diseases and ill health at an alarming rate.

While becoming aware of health disparities is important for understanding the ill health experienced by Indigenous people, it nonetheless occurs within a colonial narrative that places mainstream health as the standard from which to measure all Indigenous peoples’ health. When non-Indigenous health researchers document the health disparities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in Canada, it reproduces a discourse that normalizes mainstream health, and often pathologizes Indigenous people as ill (Ahenakew, 2011; Wilson, 2008). This then results in a normalization of settler health, which excludes Indigenous conceptions of health. For instance, Getty (2010) problematized how “white” researchers who aim to improve Indigenous people’s quality of life often reify whiteness and marginalize Indigenous people’s cultural solutions. She explained,

Instead of supporting the desires and efforts of Aboriginal people to improve their quality of life, we can try to fix it for them. In so doing, absorbed in our efforts to help, we can ignore their wishes and resources, including their strengths and culture. This is the crux

of the problem faced by White researchers who want to support Aboriginal peoples to improve their quality of life and health. (p. 10)

Indeed, what is missing from the health disparity literature is how it reproduces a settler colonial narrative of erasure.

As settler colonialism causes a willful disruption to Indigenous peoples' wellbeing, with the goal being our ultimate erasure (Veracini, 2013), the health disparities discourse reproduces a settler colonial narrative where Indigenous peoples disappear through succumbing to ill health. Our erasure is necessary for settler governments and society to thrive, which is predicated on the theft of Indigenous territories (Arvin, Tuck, & Morrill, 2013; Battell Lowman & Barker, 2015; Veracini, 2013). While the health disparities experienced by Indigenous peoples are firmly associated with historical and current effects of settler colonialism (Loppie Reading & Wein, 2009), in efforts to find lasting solutions to ill health, Indigenous health researchers have been focussing on Indigenous understandings of health and wellbeing (Ahenakew, 2011; Lavallée, 2008; Tobias & Richmond, 2013). For instance, Reading (2009) recommended, "we need to identify new, innovative, and transformative ideas from the broader Indigenous community" (p. 1) if critical health problems within Indigenous communities are to better be understood, and if novel solutions are to be found. What is required for Anishinaabeg and other Indigenous peoples, then, especially considering the importance of decolonization, is for us to articulate our own reasoning for engaging in physical activity that promotes health.

Centring Decolonization

Understanding how settler colonialism causes ill health and how Indigenous peoples can pursue regeneration from these effects is important for Indigenous peoples' personal decolonization efforts. Wilson and Yellowbird (2005) defined colonization as an "all-

encompassing presence in our lives” (p. 2), which includes individual behaviours, colonial policies, and systems. The authors further described decolonization as the meaningful and active resistance to the forces of colonialism that perpetuate the “subjugation and/or exploitation of our minds, bodies, and lands” (p. 2).

However, it is not enough to simply name how the effects of settler colonialism negatively influences our wellbeing; we must engage in action. Wilson (2004) explained,

Decolonization...is about transforming negative reactionary energy into the more positive rebuilding energy needed in our communities. Decolonization in its farthest extension moves us beyond mere survival and becomes a means of restoring health and prosperity to our people. (p. 71)

As settler colonialism directly impacts Indigenous peoples’ health and wellbeing, it becomes necessary to engage in personal decolonization to counteract its negative effects. In further describing decolonization, Alfred (2005) challenged Indigenous peoples to create a life committed to “meaningful change [and] to transform society by recreating our existences, regenerating our cultures, and surging against the forces that keep us bound to our colonial past” (p. 19).

Tuck and Yang (2012) emphatically articulated that decolonization is not a metaphor for other types of proactive changes occurring in settler society (e.g., educational indigenization or social justice activities). Rather, the authors asserted that decolonization is about the full repatriation of Indigenous territories. Indeed, decolonization is fundamentally about the regeneration of Indigenous peoples’ respective nationhood upon returned stolen territories (Alfred, 2005; Couthard, 2014; Wilson & Yellowbird, 2005). Yet, we cannot discount the simultaneous role personal decolonization plays in everyday acts of resistance, as “first and

foremost, decolonization must occur in our own minds” (Wilson & Yellowbird, 2005, p. 2). To be clear, decolonization is vital for the wellbeing of Indigenous peoples, and it starts with employing decolonization in our everyday lives (Alfred, 2005; Wilson & Yellowbird, 2005), which is an ongoing process. Thus, while health disparities result from settler colonialism, stories that focus on our strengths, health, and wellbeing are integral to our regeneration, and is an enactment of personal decolonization. The role personal decolonization may have on regenerating health and strength in Anishinaabekweg is currently missing from the broader health disparity literature.

The ill health experienced by Indigenous peoples clearly indicates that settler colonialism has had, and continues to have, detrimental effects on the physical strength and wellbeing of Indigenous peoples (Alfred, 2005; Reading, 2009; Wilson & Yellowbird, 2012). In consideration of creating active resistance to our apparent trajectory of ill health, I sought to understand what strategies for personal decolonization could be acquired from ancestral and current stories of physical activity.

The Role of Physical Activity

Indigenous peoples’ health and wellbeing have been, and continue to be, vastly affected by the effects of settler colonialism (Kelm, 1998; Loppie Reading & Wien, 2009). How can physical activity help us to achieve health and wellbeing again? Wilson (2012) encouraged Indigenous peoples to take up physical training regimes that regenerate the physicality experienced by our ancestors to counteract the impacts of colonization. She explained that, historically, Indigenous peoples would engage in physical training regimes on the land, which she argued can be replicated through contemporary practices of physical activity. These physical activities can be resumed by employing contemporary exercise “with a proven capacity to build

strength, endurance, speed, flexibility, balance and coordination” (p. 132). Such physical activity may include running, martial arts, and other various activities or sports. Engagement in physical activity that is mindful of our ancestors’ physicality is thus an important aspect of personal decolonization.

Lavallée’s (2008) research on Indigenous women’s perceptions of physical activity is important for understanding how Indigenous peoples may use physical activity as a catalyst for personal wellbeing. Her research has shown how Indigenous women’s experiences with physical activity can foster empowerment by helping women to challenge low self-esteem and to learn about their cultural identity. Through interviews and focus groups Lavallée’s participants described how they achieved wholistic wellbeing, which she described as encompassing spiritual, emotional, physical, and mental elements, through physical activity. The participants in the study reflected on the importance of the physical activity program being located at a culturally appropriate location, the Native Canadian Centre of Toronto (a Friendship Centre), and the instructor being Indigenous person who integrated cultural teachings into the program.

The connection between culture and physical activity is significant; it spiritually connects a person to his/her/their commitment to health through physical activity. The Tohono O’odham community in Arizona is an example of how this occurs. In her article “Toka: Empowering Women and Combating Obesity in Tohono O’odham Communities,” Brooks (2013) highlighted how Indigenous women use physical activity as a form of regeneration. Located in Arizona, the Tohono O’odham community is addressing the high rates of chronic diseases by being physically active. The community regenerated Toka, a sport specific to women, to foster a commitment to physical activity. By reviving a traditional sport that is played on the land, the Tohono O’odham women are engaging in regeneration while simultaneously gaining physical fitness; they are

challenging the effects of colonialism on their physical wellbeing. This is a powerful act of resistance against colonialism through regenerated strength. The Tohono O’Odham community is inspiring, as its members created the programming based on their epistemology. For instance, they have coordinated their programming based on O’odham Himdag, their life ways, which draws upon their cultural wisdom and heritage to formulate solutions for their present and future (Tohono O’odham, 2013). Their efforts align with decolonization processes as they seek to overcome colonial-based solutions to ill health by using their own knowledge and culture to enact solutions.

The preceding literature has shown how physical activity can be used as a catalyst, given the right conditions, to regenerate holistic wellbeing among Indigenous peoples. Still, more research is needed to “explore the impact of physical activity” (Lavallée, 2007, p. 149), especially research that considers the role of personal decolonization for Indigenous peoples, particularly women. Further, Indigenous women’s health and wellbeing cannot be separated from the context of settler colonialism (Browne et. al 2009; Kelm, 1998). As my stories above demonstrate, prior to colonization, Anishinaabekweg had to be physically strong to live on the land, which also signified the enactment of health and wellbeing. Thus, it is of critical importance to analyze Indigenous peoples’ stories of health and wellbeing enacted through physical activity, both ancestral and current, to discern how they may impart innovative solutions to the trajectory of ill health for Indigenous peoples.

Johnson-ba (1976) explained that, as Anishinaabeg, we carry a responsibility to be healthy and strong to best represent our families, communities, and nation. Given our current ill health, I contend that we are not fulfilling our responsibility as Anishinaabeg. Certainly, given the context of settler colonialism, this is not entirely our fault; however, if we elect not to

actively change our ill health trajectory, we are complicit in the continuation of settler colonialism. As an Anishinaabekwe pursuing a doctorate in Human Kinetics, my goal is to achieve better understanding of how stories of strength, wellbeing, and health gained through physical activity may assist us from surging back from the grips of settler colonialism erasure. Indigenous feminist theory is a tool that has enabled me to do just that.

Indigenous Feminist Theory

Historically, Indigenous peoples have been theorized about in many academic disciplines and, until recently, the fact that Indigenous peoples could theorize themselves was largely ignored in academic circles. Simpson and Smith's (2014) *Theorizing Native Studies* challenged scholars in a range of academic disciplines to acknowledge the importance of Indigenous peoples' theorizing, specifically with regard to disrupting settler colonialism and settler normativity within the academy. Acknowledging Indigenous peoples' hesitancy with taking up theory, as we have been theorized about for centuries, the authors explained that Indigenous peoples do theorize and also engage in "intellectual promiscuity". The authors described intellectual promiscuity as native studies scholars engaging in their own theoretical analysis in conjunction with other theoretical disciplines, such as feminist theory, for instance. Applying this perspective to my own theoretical positioning, I acknowledge the importance of combining my Anishinaabe gikendaasowin within Indigenous feminist theory.

Early theorizing of Indigenous feminism focused on the struggle for sovereignty and decolonization, including a revival of Indigenous women's place of authority in community. For instance, Gunn Allen (1986) explained that in order for the colonizers to take the land, they had to disrupt woman-centred Indigenous societies. Indeed, any attempt at colonization of the land

and Indigenous peoples would surely fail unless women were oppressed and subordinated by male domination within patriarchy. Gunn Allen (1986) further noted,

Since about the 1500s the invaders have exerted every effort to remove Indian women from every position of authority, to obliterate all records pertaining to gynocratic social systems and to ensure that no American and few American Indians would remember that gynocracy was the primary social order of Indian America prior to 1800. (p. 3)

Gunn Allen (1986) exposed the relationship between taking our land and destroying the value of women in our communities. Certainly, whitemainstream feminism is implicated in the attempted erasure of matrilineal-centred Indigenous nations in order to then benefit from the taking of Indigenous lands (Grande, 2004; Jaimes & Halsey, 1992; Trask, 1996). Indigenous women and women of colour have rightfully critiqued whitemainstream feminism as exclusionary of their voices and discussions of race, as well as failing to examine white women's role in colonization.

Thornhill (1989) explained, "Woman has become synonymous with white woman, whereas women of colour such as myself are seen as 'Others', as non-persons, as dehumanized beings – sometimes not seen at all" (p. 20). Grande (2004) also noted that "mainstream feminism is actually whitemainstream feminism" (p. 125) that is driven by and formed on "the basis of white, middle class experience" (p. 125). As a result, Kolmar and Bartowski (2010) explained that women of colour began to create their own theories to address how their race and ethnicity informed their experiences, including Indigenous feminist theory.

Indigenous feminist theory advances three main tenets: the perspectives of Indigenous women in analysing how settler colonialism and heteropatriarchy have influenced Indigenous communities (Arvin et al., 2013; Anderson, 2010); Indigenous epistemologies must be included in the advancement of Indigenous feminist theorizing (Arvin et al., 2013; Suzack et al., 2010);

finally, decolonization, through both personal and territorial repossession, is a central to Indigenous feminist theory (Anderson, 2010; Arvin et al., 2013; Simpson, 2017; Suzack et al., 2010). Each tenet is integral to the development of Indigenous feminist theorizing

Indigenous feminist theory is a lens through which Indigenous women can define, articulate, and envision what Indigenous feminism means to them. Crucial to this development was a timely symposium and collection of edited papers. The year 2002 saw the first ever Aboriginal Feminism Symposium in Regina, Saskatchewan (Green, 2007). The symposium subsequently resulted in a critical addition to Indigenous feminist literature entitled *Making Space for Indigenous Feminism* (Green, 2007). Green (2007) explained how the contributors to the book “deploy their feminism carefully, specifically – and differently – drawing on political, historical, and cultural contexts and their own particular ideologies to form their feminism” (p. 18). For instance, the contributors theorized about feminist politics, rights-based discourses, and the regeneration of Indigenous values (Green, 2007). The emergence of Indigenous feminist theory has allowed for a critical engagement with the effects of colonization and patriarchy in our communities, and it has created a space for Indigenous women to theorize decolonial thought and practices. Importantly, Suzack, Huhndorf, Perreault, and Barman (2010), in their collection of papers *Indigenous Women and Feminism: Politics, Activism and Culture*, noted that there is no melting pot that results in a uniform pan-Indigenous feminism, and there is a great need to continue to build Indigenous feminist inquiry. Indeed, Indigenous feminist scholars bring their unique experiences from within our Nations, our communities, and our families. To this end, the authors explained that Indigenous women remain under-examined in contemporary feminist theory. Further, even though Indigenous feminism “is presumed to fall within normative definitions of women of colour and postcolonial feminism” (Suzack et al., p. 1), Indigenous

feminism necessitates a location specific to Indigenous contexts. Thus, Indigenous feminist theory offers space to conceptualize theories and practices specific to Indigenous community interests. Indigenous feminist theory creates a space where Indigenous women can engage with, and add to, their own Indigenous dibaajimowinan (stories). Their respective dibaajimowinan then resonates back to the broader field of Indigenous feminist theory, which is important to disrupt settler colonialism and to foster decolonization.

Indigenous feminist theory is a pivotal space for Indigenous feminists to theorize about how settler colonialism has disrupted the wellbeing of Indigenous women, and to envision decolonization. Settler colonialism is an immutable structure intent on eliminating Indigenous peoples to justify the theft of Indigenous territories (Wolfe, 2006). Further, settler colonialism requires Indigenous women to be weak in order to fulfil its logic of elimination (Anderson, 2011; Arvin et al., 2013). As settler colonialism is reasserted through each day of occupation (Arvin et al., 2013), it is not finished; settler colonialism is an ongoing process that seeks to disempower, erase, and assimilate Indigenous peoples into the Canadian colonial system (the body politic, institutions, and everyday normalizations etc.); however, Indigenous peoples survived and have always resisted forced elimination (Wolfe, 2006). Accordingly, it is imperative to seek out stories of wellbeing and decolonization that may also disrupt settler colonialism. As emphasized by Arvin et al. (2013), “Native feminist analysis is crucial if we are determined to decolonize as Native peoples...[and] we rely on the still developing frameworks for Native feminisms to examine and reflect upon the reverberations in our Native homelands” (p. 13). Arvin’s et al. (2013) emphasised the novel field of Indigenous feminist theory and the role decolonization practices have yet to play in it: “we do not intend to recommend to our readers one proper set of decolonial practices, but rather create spaces in which decolonization can be deeply considered

and experimented within the specific contexts of different places” (p. 25). Indeed, I was inspired by Arvin’s et al. (2013) instruction as through my research I have aimed to understand how physical activity may foster decolonization and challenge settler colonialism.

Theorizing about decolonization is imperative if we are to learn new ways to challenge settler colonialism, especially regarding health and wellbeing. Anderson (2010) expressed that decolonization is a necessary part of Indigenous feminist theory because of the inequities many Indigenous women experience. She argued, “until we seriously address the political, social and economic inequities faced by Indigenous women, we will never achieve full healing, decolonization, and healthy nation building” (p. 85). Further, Anderson’s (2010) work inspired new ways to use our teachings and feminism to challenge settler colonialism. For instance, she linked the health and wellbeing of women “to the advancement of our people as a whole” (p. 88). This statement speaks to the central role Indigenous women occupy in families and communities. Indeed, the health and wellbeing of our families is vetted through the health and wellbeing of our mothers and grandmothers (Anderson, 2000), as was demonstrated in my ancestral stories shared at the outset of this introduction. This sentiment is also seen in Bedard’s (2006) research, where she noted, “our roles as women are important to the health and wellbeing of our families, community, Nation and the world around us” (p. 72). Given that Indigenous women are particularly vulnerable to experiencing chronic disease and ill health (Arriagada, 2016), it is imperative to learn Indigenous women’s stories of wellbeing and decolonization to provide a counter narrative to health disparity discourses.

Indigenous feminist theory provided me with a necessary theoretical lens to engage in research concerning decolonization and Indigenous women’s health and wellbeing. Indigenous feminist theory is an essential tool to assist in the reconstruction of our being and in unravelling

how settler colonialism influences our health and wellbeing. The dibaajimowinan from the Anishinaabekweg, Elders, and urban Indigenous women presented in this dissertation advances Indigenous feminist theorizing regarding how physical activity can foster decolonization.

Anishinaabeg Research Paradigm

In this section, I briefly outline key aspects of the Anishinaabeg research paradigm (ARP) and describe how I used the ARP within my research. Importantly, this information is provided in much greater detail in chapter 2. To avoid unnecessary repetition, I summarize it here. I deliberately used Anishinaabemowin and my Anishinaabeg intelligence by employing my “skills, knowledge and values” (Simpson, 2014, p.1) to guide my research. Thus, throughout this dissertation, I use my intelligence by using my Anishinaabe voice, knowledge, and values as shown through my research. In 2014, prior to beginning my data collection, I began to articulate the ARP by utilizing Wilson’s (2008) framework for creating an Indigenous research paradigm (including ontology, epistemology, axiology, and methodology). Secondly, I looked to other Anishinaabe scholars’ theorizations of Anishinaabeg ways of being (Geniusz, 2009; McGuire, 2009; Simpson, 2011; Benton-Banai, 1988), which helped me to weave together a research paradigm using Anishinaabemowin. As Anishinaabeg scholars in academia, it is essential to learn from each other through our research to contribute to creating a flourishing of Anishinaabeg research, theorization, and presence.

The ARP includes five interrelated components which are, gikendaasowin, inaadiziwin, biskaabiiyaang, niizhwaaswi kchtwaa kinomaadiwinan, and wiisokotaatiwin. First, gikendaasowin describes Anishinaabeg knowledge perceived from the “synthesis of our personal teachings” (Geniusz, 2009, p. 193), or dibaajimowinan. I used gikendaasowin to guide my thinking within the ARP and in my overall dissertation. Second, I used inaadiziwin, or the

Anishinaabeg way of being, as my ontology. Throughout my research journey I would offer tobacco to manitouwag, and hold my rock while writing; these practices are important as they are based within my Anishinaabeg ways of being that nurture my relationships with spiritual beings, and I would receive guidance in return. Third, biskaabiiyaang means regenerating our past knowledge to foster wellbeing in the present, through a process of personal decolonization (Geniusz, 2009; Simpson, 2011). The use of biskaabiiyaang for my epistemological frame creates a connection to ancestral stories/ways of being within the dissertation, which helps me to reconnect with ancestral knowledge.

Because I am guided by my ancestors to undertake this important research, my use of biskaabiiyaang carries a dual significance: firstly, I used biskaabiiyaang as my epistemological stance throughout the research process, which, secondly, enabled me to spiritually connect with the dibaajimowinan of my research participants. For instance, during my data collection listening/learning from the dibaajimowinan of Anishinaabekweg and Elders, I had many dreams that featured Anishinaabekweg Elders. I also had many significant dreams in which I was visited by my ancestors while writing my dissertation. These dreams further connected me with the deeply spiritual process of research in which I was engaged. Fourth, niizhwaaswi kchtwaa kinomaadiwinan means seven sacred teachings/or seven sacred gifts (Benton-Banai, 1988). I used the niizhwaaswi kchtwaa kinomaadiwinan as my axiology when I fostered deeply ethical relationships with my research participants throughout the research process. Fifth, wiisokotaatiwin, which means gathering together for a purpose, is both an Indigenous research methodology and an applied research method. I initially developed wiisokotaatiwin as part of my Master's thesis (McGuire-Adams, 2009). I further developed wiisokotaatiwin as an enactment of

my Anishinaabe gikendaasowin for my dissertation as an integral component of the ARP, and an applied research method (Chapter 6 provides greater detail on wiisokotaatiwin).

The ARP was significant for my research. When I encountered challenges, be it conducting research or personal, the ARP reminded me that I was continually guided by my ancestors to undertake the work. Most importantly, the ARP allowed me to create an Anishinaabeg research framework from which to build meaningful relationships with my research participants, and is an innovative addition to the field of Health Sciences.

Methods

Data collection methods are “the means and procedures thorough which the central problems of research are addressed” (Smith, 1999, p. 144). Thus, I chose three methods of data collection that align with the ARP: interviews guided by storytelling were my chosen method for my data collection with Anishinaabekweg; they are featured in chapters three and four; a sharing circle was my chosen method for my data collection with Anishinaabeg Elders, which is featured in chapter five; and I employed Wiisokotaatiwin as my data collection method to bring together Indigenous women, is featured in chapter six.

Interviews

Indigenous scholars have emphasised the importance of storytelling or narratives in Indigenous research (Kovach, 2009; Wilson, 2008). Kovach (2009) recommended storytelling within Indigenous research as there is interrelated relationship between “stories and knowing and narratives and research” (p. 94). While Indigenous stories innately connect to knowing and research, the inclusion of our stories in academia, nonetheless, produces a coinciding strength and limitation. While Anishinaabeg stories bring a significant lens from which to learn, and is a considerable strength of the research, I am also mindful that academia has not always been

accepting of Indigenous ways of thinking and being. Kovach (2009) raised similar concerns about the level of exposure Indigenous stories garner and any potential “misinterpretations, appropriations, and dismissals that often accompany Indigenous ways of knowing within the academy” (p. 12), which is a limitation related to including our stories in academia. She went on to highlight the importance space universities offer Indigenous scholars in pursuit of knowledge that supports our respective cultural knowledges, and I am of the same thinking; I privilege Anishinaabeg ways of being and thinking in order to learn from them. Noting this possible limitation, I chose interviews that were guided by storytelling as the research method for my interviews with Anishinaabeg women.

I recruited seven Anishinaabekweg by key informant selection and word of mouth opportunities (Newman, 2010) to participate in interviews that were guided by storytelling. Kovach (2009) recommended research methods such as stories or narratives and she explained that for Indigenous peoples, stories are strong reminders of who we are and our belonging.

Upon agreeing to take part in the research and providing their endorsement through signing the consent form (Appendix A), I offered *semaa* to the participants who had face-to-face interviews. Offering *semaa* is significant as it enacts Anishinaabe *inaadiziwin* within my research. When I offer *semaa*, it demonstrated my ethical responsibility to conducting research to both the participant and *manitouwag*. Each participant accepted the offering.

Interviews were conducted at a location and time based on the preferences of the participant. Prior to starting the interview, in following with Anishinaabe protocol I shared my Anishinaabe name/clan/family connections. I created a list of guiding questions (Appendix B) to guide the interview; however, we rarely referred to the guiding questions, as the participants were all keen to share their stories of physical activity. All participants agreed to have their

interviews digitally recorded. Each interview ranged from approximately 60 to 90 minutes each. The interviews were transcribed verbatim and returned to the participants for review. As per their consent form, all participants had two weeks to review transcripts, and I assured them that I would make any changes/edits they suggested. The participants reviewed their transcripts and gave their approval for their respective transcripts' contents. Only three participants provided minor editorial revisions related to their own statements in the transcripts.

Sharing Circle

For my data collection with Anishinaabeg Elders from Naicatchewenin, I chose a sharing circle as the research method. Lavallée (2009) explained that sharing circles are a qualitative Indigenous research method, similar to focus groups. Similarly, Kovach (2009) and Wilson (2008) both emphasised that sharing circles complement Indigenous research frameworks. Thus, a sharing circle was the best method to use with the Elders, especially as we met in the community's traditional roundhouse. As I have an ongoing relationship with the community of Naicatchewenin, I requested a meeting with the Elders to seek their guidance with my research, the results of which can be found in chapter four. They provided their informed consent by signing a consent form (Appendix C). I also offered semaa to all the Elders.

We sat in a circle in the roundhouse, and I shared my purpose for meeting with them and asked for their perceptions on challenging health disparities and ancestral stories of strength. They agreed to be audio recorded, and I transcribed the sharing circle verbatim. I provided the transcript and a copy of the audio recording to the community, as the Elders indicated a desire to have their stories on file for future generations to hear. In December 2017, I travelled back to Naicatchewenin to present to the Elders the chapter I wrote based on their sharing circle (chapter four). The Elders welcomed the paper and acknowledged the significance of the findings.

Importantly, my relationship with Naicatchewenin will be ongoing, based on the community's needs, and is a reciprocal act in research. For instance, I have offered to work with Naicatchewenin residents on any areas of future research they may wish to undertake.

Wiisokotaatiwin

Through poster recruitment, which detailed the research question, location, time commitment, and other pertinent information (Institutional Review Board-Social & Behavioral Sciences, n.d.), I recruited twelve Indigenous women to participate in a 7-week session of Wiisokotaatiwin. Initially, as my study was focussed on Anishinaabeg, I planned to only recruit Anishinaabeg women to participate in Wiisokotaatiwin; however, I chose to recruit Indigenous women (inclusive of First Nation, Métis, Inuit, and non-status) to reflect the people served by the Odawa Native Friendship Centre. I developed Wiisokotaatiwin based on the tenets of consciousness-raising (hooks, 2000), critical dialogue (Freire, 2000), and Indigenous research methodologies (Kovach, 2009; Wilson, 2008), which I further describe in chapter six. I partnered with the Urban Aboriginal Healthy Living Program (UAHLP) at the Odawa Native Friendship Centre, with which I have a longstanding relationship. The UAHLP assisted with recruitment via sharing a poster on site and through social media. The UAHLP also provided the space for Wiisokotaatiwin, which took place in its gym. I provided the consent form to the participants prior to our first session, so they had an opportunity to prepare questions or raise concerns. The participants agreed to be audio recorded to aid in transcription.

When we met for the first session, I went over the consent form (Appendix D) in detail and answered questions. All participants signed the consent form. It was not until the second session when I offered semaa, which was an oversight on my part. I initially planned an offering of semaa in conjunction with the consent form. Upon waking in a fright, I realized that I had

inadvertently forgotten to undertake this important task. I shared this mistake with my participants, and they were completely understanding. My mistake also demonstrates that I am still growing in my journey with Indigenous research, and that I practice humility when I make mistakes in order to learn from them. The participants accepted their tobacco offering, and one participant shared that she greatly valued this exchange as it signalled the deeply meaningful and spiritual purpose of the research.

Wiisokotaatiwin entailed meeting weekly to engaging in physical activity coupled with critical dialogue. I would lead and participate in the kettlebell workout, which lasted about 45 minutes. Each week I would prepare healthy snacks to offer the participants when we began the dialogue portion of Wiisokotaatiwin. Upon completion of the workout, we would sit in a circle, eat our healthy snack, and enter into meaningful dialogue guided by the research questions.

I transcribed the Wiisokotaatiwin dialogue sessions and returned the transcripts to each participant for review. I sent the seven transcripts (one from each session) to each participant in a password-protected email. I asked the participants to review the transcripts, but I instructed them to only make changes to the text that they contributed. They were given two weeks to review the transcripts. If they did not respond with edits, I told them that I would keep the transcripts as they were. Eight participants responded by saying they approved their portion of the transcripts. One of those participants asked to be assigned a pseudonym and another one indicated a spelling mistake with her name.

I also sent the complete draft of the article for the participants to review. I gave a two-week response time for comments on the article and indicated that should I not hear back from the participants within that time, I would assume that they approved. It was important for me to seek approval from the participants with how I articulated the themes of the research but, more

importantly, I wanted to be sure I used their quotes in ways they approved. Also, verifying my interpretation of participants' stories with them is a significant enactment of reciprocity and inaadiziwin within my research. Five participants indicated they had read the manuscript, approved it, and gave me and my work their emphatic support.

Anishinaabeg-Informed Thematic Analysis and Data Management

I conducted Anishinaabeg-informed thematic analysis to analyse the transcripts. Guest, MacQueen, and Namey (2012) argued, "thematic analysis is still the most useful [form of analysis] in capturing the complexities of meaning within a textual data set" (p. 11). Further, thematic analysis assists researchers with categorizing implicit and explicit ideas or themes within the data (Guest et al., 2012). As it was imperative to identify central themes within the dibaajimowinan from my research participants, I chose thematic analysis for my research analysis. Braun and Clarke (2006) described six phases of thematic analysis, which include familiarization with the data, creating data codes, examining the data for themes, assessment of the themes, providing descriptors for the themes, final analysis and generating a report. I further employed the ARP to assist in indigenizing the iterative thematic analysis process.

As I read over the transcripts multiple times, I was mindful of the ARP. I asked myself what aspects of inaadiziwin, gikendaasowin, and biskaabiiyaang was I discerning from my participants' stories as they applied to the specific research questions. Simultaneously, I would attend to my spiritual processes by offering semaa, asking for guidance with my analysis, and holding onto one of my many rocks. As I engaged in Anishinaabeg-informed thematic analysis, core themes emerged, and I created a manual coding system using coloured highlighters. I then created a separate document, which assisted me in managing and analysing the coded themes. I followed this manual process for my interviews with Anishinaabeg women and the sharing circle

with Anishinaabeg Elders. For Wiisokotaatiwin, I exported the transcripts into NVivo 10.2 and created nodes and sub-nodes as I analysed the transcripts by creating new titles of nodes and nesting them according to topic. Importantly, I followed the same iterative Anishinaabeg-informed thematic analysis process for my analysis of the Wiisokotaatiwin transcripts, but used the NVivo software to code themes, rather than manually coding the themes. I chose to code the data from Wiisokotaatiwin with NVivo rather than manually coding them to better manage the large size of the data set.

Ethics

This research was approved by the Research Ethics Board at the University of Ottawa in November 2015 and was renewed in November 2016 (Reference #H10-15-05, included as Appendix F). Of equal importance is the continual permission and support I received from my research participants throughout the duration of my research project.

Dissertation Format

Presented in publishable paper format, my dissertation explores the dibaajimowinan of Anishinaabeg women, Elders, and urban Indigenous women, which occurred in three stages of research and culminated in five papers, to address my guiding research question for my dissertation: Can physical activity that encompasses a decolonization approach (Alfred 2005; Lavallée & Lévesque, 2013) be a catalyst for regenerative wellbeing for Anishinaabeg women?

The first chapter of the dissertation, is titled, “Disrupting Settler Normativity: Regenerating an Anishinaabeg Research Paradigm to Create Space for Decolonization.” This chapter describes the research framework that I used to undertake my doctoral research and sets the framework for my study.

In the first stage of my research, I interviewed Anishinaabeg women who are exemplars of decolonized physical activity, to ask: why did you become physically active? What drives you to commit to physical activity? And, why is physical activity important to you? This stage resulted in two papers. Chapter three of the dissertation is titled, “Anishinaabeg Women’s Stories of Wellbeing: Physical Activity, Restoring Wellbeing, and Dismantling the Settler Colonial Deficit View.” Chapter four of the dissertation is titled, “Anishinaabekweg Dibaajimowinan (Stories) of Decolonization through Running.”

In the second stage of research, I explored the question, how is settler colonialism manifested upon Anishinaabeg women’s bodies? Chapter five of the dissertation is titled, “This is What I Heard at Naicatchewenin”: Disrupting Embodied Settler Colonialism.”

In the third and final stage of my research, I implemented Wiisokotaatiwin to explore how directed physical activity, coupled with critical dialogues regarding colonization, decolonization, health and wellbeing, ancestral stories, and other aspects of physical activity, may influence urban Indigenous women. Chapter six of the dissertation presents my findings and is titled, “Wiisokotaatiwin: Kettlebell Training, Critical Dialogue, and Creating Wellbeing through Physical Activity.”

To conclude, Wilson (2008) eloquently captured the meaning of Indigenous research in the following quote:

Research is ceremony...the purpose of any ceremony is to build stronger relationships or bridge the distance between our cosmos and us. The research that we do as Indigenous peoples is a ceremony that allows us a raised level of consciousness and insight in our world. Through going forward together with open minds and good hearts we have uncovered the nature of this ceremony (p. 137).

The ceremony of my dissertation research is continual, and is honoured every time it is read.

May each reader travel well through this ceremony.

Naminamayun.

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Footnotes

ⁱI acknowledge the complexities associated with Indigenous women, and women on colour, who were/are conditioned to accept the hardships of motherhood and relationships vis-à-vis capitalism and patriarchy (see bitchmedia.org blog article “Can you see me now? The fragility of maternal transition”). In my dissertation, I use my familial stories featuring the physicality of my ancestors to display and honour their physical strength.

ⁱⁱThere is a lack of reliable data/research on Indigenous health. Therefore, I use what reports are available, although some of the reports are a bit dated.

Chapter 2:
Disrupting Settler Normativity: Regenerating an Anishinaabeg Research Paradigm to Create
Space for Decolonization

This paper is in press with the *Journal of Critical Anti-Oppressive Social Inquiry*

Abstract

This paper illuminates the importance of Indigenous research paradigms and, by extension, Indigenous research methodologies for Indigenous peoples within the academy. Indigenous research methodologies are explored to highlight their specific components, including the engagement of decolonization, privileging Indigenous voices, the utilization of Indigenous worldviews, and relational accountability. Building upon an Indigenous research methodology as a foundation, the paper presents an Anishinaabeg research paradigm that is used to assist the author in connecting mindfully and spiritually to her role as a researcher. By regenerating an Anishinaabeg research paradigm, a tribal identity is privileged, which is an enactment of decolonization within the academy and disrupts settler normativity within academia.

Keywords: Indigenous research, decolonization, Anishinaabeg research, methodology

List of Anishinaabeg Words

Aadizookaan (traditional legends, ceremonies)

Anishinaabekweg (Woman: kwe, singular and kweg, plural)

Anishinaabe-gikendaasowin (knowledge)

Anishinaabe-inaadiziwin (way of being)

Anishinaabemowin (language)

Aya'aawish (animals),

Biskaabiiyang (returning to ourselves)

Chiiskun (shaking tent)

Dibaajimowin (teachings, personal stories, histories)

Dibikgiizis (the moon)

Gaa-izhi-zhawendaagoziyaag, (that which is given to us in a loving way by the spirits (manitous))

Gakinagegoon (everything)

Izhitwaawin (culture, teachings, customs, history)

Manitous (spirits),

Mishoomis (Grandfathers)

Niizhwaaswi Kchtwaa Kinomaadiwinan (the seven grandfather teachings or the seven sacred gifts)

Nbwaakaawin (wisdom)

Zaagidwin (love)

Mnaadendimowin (respect)

Aakwade'ewin (bravery)

Gwekwaadiziwin (honesty)

Dbaadendziwin (humility)

Debwewin (truth)

Wiisokotaatiwin (gathering together for a purpose)

As a young woman, I embarked on a journey to understand my identity as an Anishinaabe. It involved learning to listen to what was inherent to me. I had to see how the effects of colonization had eroded my identity as an Anishinaabekwe. Becoming aware of the emptiness in my life began to draw me out of the lethargy of oppression. I remember the day as though it just happened: It was a beautiful sunny afternoon and I was at a park beside my high school, skipping my afternoon classes, as usual. I was questioning my life. What purpose did my life have? Why was I so angry and feeling so lost? I was not happy with myself for many reasons: I skipped class all the time and used drugs and alcohol in an attempt to escape the horrible feeling of emptiness and lack of self-respect, which explained why I paid no attention to my physical, emotional, mental, or spiritual health. I grew up in a Christian home, and for some time I had felt as though I was being lied to. Something inside of me was screaming at me to change my life, to reject Christianity and all its dichotomies, and to start believing in who I was as an Anishinaabe.

Although I was not aware of it at the time, I know my ancestors were guiding me towards decolonization that day. They were there to catch me as I fell and raise me back up. On that day, I decided to reject my colonial identity and began to critically think about who I was. After I had made this decision, I felt a foreign, yet compelling, urge to take action. This urge was coupled with a feeling of exhilaration—a feeling still with me today. For the first time in my life, I felt freedom. After that day, every decision I made and every negative and positive experience I faced had a purpose. Although I did not realize it then, my ancestors had just directed me to the pathway of decolonization and regeneration. My decolonization process will not end; it is a lifelong journey, which forces me to see the “colonial stains on my existence” (Alfred, 2005, p.101), to then practice biskaabiiyang.

Before that fateful afternoon, I was on a path of self-destruction, a path on which many of our people find themselves. I was on this path because I did not know what love and respect were. My ancestors chose to help me. I did not choose to help myself; they chose me. I am still on the path of self-realization and I have to remember who I am and where I came from in order to remain true to myself. I have to be cognizant of the reality and lure of colonialism. In my experience, it can be easy to let go and forget about my responsibilities as an Anishinaabekwe in order to enjoy the passive, materialistic, and detached Euro-Canadian lifestyle. When I have fallen prey to the fake lifestyle of materialism, my spirit and my ancestors have guided me back to my original responsibility. Those of us who commit ourselves to living a lifestyle our ancestors would be proud of know the everyday challenges and rewards. I continually acknowledge my name, my clan, and my ancestors to renew my commitment to living as an Anishinaabekwe. I seek out Anishinaabeg stories and ceremony to fulfill my connection to my Anishinaabeg ancestors as they continue to provide me with strength and guide my life, especially as I engage in an Anishinaabeg research paradigm for my PhD research.

Academia can test your limits and make you question if you can endure because, as an Anishinaabe woman in a predominately non-Indigenous institution steeped in settler normativity, it can feel like an intellectual battleground. One of my Anishinaabeg teachers once stated, “Education can be a violent process” (D. McPherson, personal communication). I now recognise this to be true. At the time, however, during my undergraduate education, I really did not understand what he meant. It was not until I continued on my academic journey to pursue my doctoral research that the teaching began to make sense; I have witnessed and struggled with how, as an Anishinaabekwe, mainstream education can be a vicious process as it seeks to suppress my identity. However, as an Anishinaabekwe, I persevere because I know that I am not on this

academic journey for myself, but to help fight for the health of my Anishinaabeg community. I believe in education and see its benefits in helping our Anishinaabeg people's regeneration—especially when we use our own research paradigms (Absolon, 2011). My doctoral research draws on an Anishinaabeg research paradigm to create, with Anishinaabeg and other Indigenous peoples, a novel pedagogical praxis through physical activity. My research engages in a decolonization process within academia; I am “bending and swaying” (Alfred, 2005, 29) in order to survive and thrive in academia, which may assist other Indigenous peoples as we combat the effects of colonialism in our everyday lives.

This paper has two main sections. In the first section of the paper, I explore the development and components of Indigenous research methodologies, which include personal decolonization and relational accountability. From this vantage point, I provide an overview of qualitative research methods that best align with Indigenous research methodologies. Next, consideration is given to how the use of Indigenous research methodologies disrupts the contentious settler normative space of academia. In the second section, I use Wilson's (2008) framework for creating an Indigenous research paradigm (including ontology, epistemology, axiology, methodology) as a guide to articulate an Anishinaabeg research paradigm based on four fundamental concepts within Anishinaabeg-gikendaasowin: Anishinaabe-inaadiziwin (Geniusz, 2009); Biskaabiiyang (Geniusz, 2009; Simpson, 2011); Niizhwaaswi Kchtwaa Kinomaadiwinan (Benton-Banai, 1988), and Wiisokotaatiwin (McGuire-Adams, 2009). By regenerating an Anishinaabeg research paradigm, I privilege an Anishinaabeg way of being while also enacting an engagement in decolonization within the academy.

Indigenous Research Methodologies

The inclusion of Indigenous research methodologies is relatively new to academia (Weber-Pillwax, 1999). Absolon, (2011), Chilisa (2012), Kirkness and Barnhardt (1991), Kovach (2009), Lavellee, (2009), Martin, (2002), Rigney (1999), Smith (1999, 2008), Steinhauer (2002), Thomas (2005), and Wilson (2008) have ushered Indigenous research methodologies to the fore. Certainly, given the context that produces colonial discourses as “true” knowledge, challenging colonialism in academia necessitates the use of Indigenous knowledge, values, and language.

Indigenous scholars began to challenge the colonial distrust and prejudice of Indigenous knowledge in academia by developing approaches to research that honour Indigenous knowledge and ways of being. Their efforts resulted in a “shift in position, from seeing ourselves as passive victims of all research to seeing ourselves as activists engaging in counterhegemonic struggle over research” (Smith, 2008, p. 116). This positional shift is substantial, as it creates a space where Indigenous peoples can use their specific knowledge in furthering their own Indigenous research, and are no longer forced to use only Western research frameworks within academia. In the following section, the tenets of Indigenous research methodologies are explored to show how specific Nations can employ them in order to advance their tribal research paradigms.

Description and Features of Indigenous Research Methodologies

The articulation of Indigenous research methodologies, which are Indigenous-informed processes of research, have resulted in a fundamental positional shift in research concerning Indigenous peoples: from Western frameworks to Indigenous paradigms. Rigney (1999) expressed three fundamental principles of Indigenous research methodologies: “resistance, political integrity, and privileging Indigenous voice” (p. 116). He explained resistance as the struggle to personally decolonize in order to foster self-determination by using our cultural

knowledge to engage in research. Political integrity is enacted by Indigenous peoples conducting research by and for themselves, which directly benefits their peoples and ensures accountability to their communities. Finally, to privilege Indigenous voices in research, both of researchers and of participants, is to “focus on the lived, historical experiences, ideas, traditions, dreams, interests, aspirations, and struggles of Indigenous [peoples]” (Rigney, 1999, p. 117).

For Rigney (1999), these features of Indigenous research methodologies are central to challenging colonialism operating within academia. As, historically, the academy was created specifically for non-Indigenous people, it is oblivious to Indigenous ways of conducting research. In order to address this epistemic absence Rigney (2009) asserted that it is not enough to just include Indigenous peoples within the academy; rather, “Indigenous perspectives must infiltrate the structures and methods of the entire research academy” (p. 114). Reflecting on Rigney’s three principles of Indigenous research methodologies within my own research, I *resist* colonialism by engaging in my personal decolonization process of using Anishinaabeg-gikendaasowin to guide my research. I show *political integrity* by being accountable to my communities, our ancestral knowledge, and to other Indigenous peoples as we collectively strive for decolonization. And I *privilege Indigenous voice* by using Anishinaabemowin (language) by making space for the Anishinaabeg research paradigm, and by using my decolonial voice.

Martin (2002) outlined similar features of Indigenous research methodologies: The recognition of our worldviews, which are vital to our identities and survival; honouring our unique values, which guide how we live and learn on our respective territories; acknowledging the unique, but similar, historical and political contexts that form our existence and futures; and privileging Indigenous peoples’ narratives and lands. My personal narrative, presented at the outset and woven throughout this paper, is a further example of enacting Indigenous research

methodologies as it privileges my Anishinaabeg worldview, and focuses on decolonization and regeneration.

The role of personal decolonization. The principle of decolonization is an essential feature of Indigenous research methodologies. It is therefore necessary to define how I use decolonization within my research and in my life. Several different scholars have situated and in turn defined the concept of decolonization in a variety of ways (Alfred, 2005; Memmi, 2006; Mohanty, 2003; Smith, 2012). However, for the purposes of this paper, I draw on the following definition of decolonization: “[decolonization is] the meaningful and active resistance to the forces of colonialism that perpetuate the subjugation and/or exploitation of our minds, bodies, and lands” (Wilson & Yellowbird, 2012, p. 3). Further, for Wilson (2004), decolonization requires “a belief that situations can be transformed, a belief and trust in our own peoples’ values and abilities, and a willingness to make change” (p. 71). To this pedagogical and institutional end, I heed Wilson’s call for Indigenous scholars “to utilize our research, analytic, writing, and teachings skills to facilitate [the decolonization] process in whatever way we can” (p. 84). My epistemological engagement with decolonization directly informs how I use Anishinaabeg-gikendaasowin. The influence of the ancestors, ceremony, and culture are all essential elements of my decolonization and regeneration against the effects of colonialism.

In sum, in order to engage in research that will be beneficial to one’s community, it is first necessary to understand how colonization has personally affected oneself to overcome “the emotional and psychological [colonial] baggage, to then return to their ancestral teachings” (Geniusz, 2009, p. 10). Likewise, to engage in Indigenous research, one must emanate a “strong connection between self, community, memory, reciprocity, and research, [which] makes the research strong from day one” (Kovach, 2009, p. 115). As an Anishinaabe researcher, I also have

the responsibility to engage in relational accountability, which is another fundamental aspect of Indigenous research methodologies.

Relational accountability. Relational accountability is an integral component of Indigenous research methodologies. For example, as Indigenous peoples, we seek out ancestral stories to provide us with guidance (Thomas, 2005), but to also assist in our decolonization and regeneration processes. My journey to regenerate from the effects of colonialism creates an immense thirst for my Anishinaabeg stories. As a result of my reading on Indigenous research methodologies, I understand that this yearning, this thirst, directly correlates with my relational accountability to my Anishinaabekweg ancestors, my community, and all of my relations. Steinhauer (2002) explained, “as Indigenous people we are dependent on everyone and everything around us – all our relations, be it the air, water, rocks, trees, animals, insects, humans and so forth” (p. 72). She then connected this accountability to Indigenous researchers: “Because of this relationality, as Indigenous researchers we must realize that we are accountable to all our relations when doing research” (p. 72). By taking up Indigenous research methodologies, one is able to connect to the world around oneself as an Indigenous researcher with “respect, relationship, reciprocity, and responsibility” (Bell, 201, p. 89)

For example, I have been taught through Anishinaabe-gikendaasowin that everything has a spirit. Animate and inanimate items have energy, which fosters their existence. This explains why in our chiiskun ceremony, ancient spirits speak to us. It also explains why we consider the rocks in the sweat lodge our Mishoomis. We carry relationships between each other, but also between Akii, aya’aawish, and dibikgiizis; this relationship exists between gakinagegoon. This relational understanding connects me in an important way to the responsibility I carry to my

ancestors and future generations. Anishinaabe author and Elder Basil Johnson-ba (1976) explained,

It was from their ancestors that the Anishinaabeg inherited their understandings of life and being, all that they were and ought to be. What the grandfathers left as a legacy was the product of their minds, hearts and hands. The living were to accept the gift, enlarge it, and then pass it on to the young and the unborn. (p. 27)

This teaching directly relates to the ethic of reciprocity. As I receive guidance and purpose from my Anishinaabe identity, I have a reciprocal obligation to do something for the people (Johnson, 1995). Thus, Indigenous research methodologies require that a researcher must be accountable to the people and community involved in research and must engage in reciprocity.

Research methods within Indigenous research methodologies. Importantly, using Indigenous research methodologies requires mindfully thinking about methods of data collection, which are the “means and procedures through which the central problems of the research are addressed” (Smith, 1999, p. 144). Lavallée (2009) brought attention to the methods of data collection that match an Indigenous research methodology by explaining her use of two qualitative methods of data collection: sharing circles and Anishinaabe symbol-based reflection, which is a qualitative, arts-based approach to research. She recognized that, “Indigenous research is not qualitative inquiry; however, the methods used [within Indigenous research] may be qualitative” (p. 36). Lavallée focused on Indigenizing two approaches of data collection that best resonated with her use of Indigenous methodologies.

Similarly, stories and narratives are further examples of useful methods of data collection that may align with Indigenous research methodologies. Kovach (2009) recommended research methods such as stories or narratives, research/sharing circles, interviews, and even dreaming.

She explained that for Indigenous peoples, stories are strong reminders of who we are and our belonging. Within the Indigenous research paradigm there is an “inseparable relationship between stories and knowing, and the interrelationship between narrative and research” (p. 94). I see the relevance in using stories as a research method, as we are taught that storytelling is the way our people transmit teachings. Smith (1999) explained that the stories and perspectives of our community members are a vital part of Indigenous research, where both researcher and research participant “serve to connect the past with the future, one generation with the other, the land with the people and the people with the story” (p. 146). By using Indigenous research methodologies, we seek to engage in a reciprocal relationship with the stories and narratives shared by our research participants. The engagement with the stories and narratives of the research participants is a ceremony where we are able to gain a raised level of consciousness and insight (Wilson, 2009) into how the participants’ stories inform research. Thus, qualitative research methods may be indigenized when used in conjunction with Indigenous research methodologies.

Challenging settler normativity. The inclusion of Indigenous research methodologies in academia offers a counter-narrative to colonial, settler normative thinking. Kirkness and Barnhardt (1991) clarified the troubling colonial space that Indigenous students encounter in university, where “their survival [in academia] often requires the acquisition and acceptance of a new form of consciousness that not only displaces, but often devalues their Indigenous consciousness” (p. 8). Simpson (2014) illuminated how the devaluing of Indigenous consciousness takes place in education:

My experience of education, from kindergarten to graduate school, was one of coping with someone else’s agenda, curriculum, and pedagogy, someone who was neither

interested in my well-being as a kwezens, nor interested in my connection to my homeland, my language or history, nor my Nishinaabeg intelligence. No one ever asked me what I was interested in nor did they ask for my consent to participate in their system. My experience of education was one of continually being measured against a set of principles that required surrender to an assimilative colonial agenda in order to fulfill those principles. (p. 6)

Simpson (2014) makes clear that as Anishinaabeg attend school, we become trained in settler colonial pedagogy, as there is an inherent violence that takes place within neoliberal capitalistic education systems. We become very efficient in the colonizer's epistemology and worldview, to the point where some of us become experts in Western fields (Western medicine, law, engineering etc.). Yet, as Little Bear (2000) explained in his well-known paper "Jagged Worldviews Colliding," there are vast differences in Indigenous thinking and Eurocentric thinking, which manifest in our respective worldviews. Academia remains steeped in settler normativity, where linearity, objectivity, and an Indigenous non-presence permeate most, but not all, disciplines¹. Settler normativity in academia silences different culturally-based ways of seeing the world (Little Bear, 2000), which is a form of epistemic violence (Marker, 2006). Bang et al. (2014) explained, "while the denial or erasure of Indigenous points of reference may not be intentional, educational environments that uncritically mobilize them and leave settler-colonial interpretations silenced are complicit in this erasure [of Indigenous presence]" (p. 40). In consideration of settler normativity in academia, Simpson (2014) challenged us to also become trained in Anishinaabeg ways of being. As I reflect upon her challenge, I ask: Where in academia might I look to become trained in Anishinaabeg epistemology? I have learned the answer to my question is, sadly, nowhere. Yet, I am choosing to be in academia in pursuit of a PhD, which

requires a dual responsibility: a responsibility to be Anishinaabe in my work/research, and a greater responsibility to continue learning from the land, my Elders, and through ceremony. Thus, I have an obligation to use my tribal identity in everything I do. Whether I am learning Anishinaabemowin, going out on the land, participating in ceremony, or pursuing a PhD, I must use my Anishinaabeg ways of being as there is a very real threat that it will be lost due to the ongoing effects of colonialism in our communities. In the next section, I present an Anishinaabeg research paradigm that weaves together the tenets of an Indigenous research methodology from an Anishinaabe perspective.

Anishinaabeg Research Paradigm

An Indigenous research paradigm utilizes Indigenous knowledges to engage story research. It establishes (or draws on traditional) morals and beliefs that directly inform our actions. For Indigenous researchers, like Wilson (2008), “these beliefs include the way we view reality (ontology), how we think about or know this reality (epistemology), our ethics and morals (axiology), and how we go about gaining more knowledge about reality (methodologies)” (p. 13). Similarly, Absolon (2011) explained that to fully acknowledge the importance of Indigenous research methodologies, scholars must first “acknowledge the worldviews they come from and the paradigms and principles they rest on” (p. 53). Certainly, there are shared aspects of Indigenous philosophical traits, such as the importance of our connections to land, and shared values like respect, reciprocity, relevance, and responsibility (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991). These similarities offer us a network of people, ideas, and mentorship, in turn affording us pedagogical opportunities to use our respective tribal knowledges to construct our specific research paradigms, especially in academia (Absolon, 2011; Kovach, 2009). Thus, in this section, I draw on Anishinaabeg knowledge to regenerate an Anishinaabeg research paradigm.

Using the Anishinaabeg research paradigm assisted me in thinking through my research purpose, while also disrupting settler normativity within academia.

When Indigenous peoples engage in research that privileges our Indigenous research paradigms (ontology, epistemology, axiology, and methodologies), it enacts a deeply spiritual journey. Wilson (2008) described Indigenous research as an engagement with ceremony, which connects Indigenous researchers to our spiritual ways of being:

The purpose of any ceremony is to build stronger relationships or bridge the distance between aspects of our cosmos and ourselves. The research that we do as Indigenous peoples is a ceremony that allows us a raised level of consciousness and insight into our world. (p. 11)

Similarly, Bell (2013) advances an Anishinaabeg paradigm that acknowledges the spiritual aspects of research. For example, she explained that “Anishinaabeg spirituality is a holistic and respectful worldview that was created by the Anishinaabe...existence on Turtle Island” (p.98). Applied within a research lens, Anishinaabe spirituality enhances consciousness-raising, connection to land, and spirit.

Each Indigenous community has unique worldviews, theories, and epistemologies in relation to the places in which they live. Kovach (2009) explained that Indigenous peoples are aware of the pan-Indigenous approach that homogenizes our knowledge. Yet, by exercising our tribal knowledges, which are connected to our respective territories, we challenge the generalizable concept of a pan-Indigenous ways of thinking. Bell (2013) correspondingly emphasized that while she advanced an Anishinaabe perspective, it is “imperative to avoid a stereotypical pan-Indigenous way of knowing” (p. 90), which is avoided by acknowledging our commonalities and differences. Thus, by learning about the key features of an Indigenous

research methodologies, I am now able to apply my Anishinaabe-gikendaasowin to construct a research paradigm that is reflective of my own tribal identity. As an Anishinaabekwe committed to Indigenous research, it is crucial for me to look at Anishinaabeg-gikendaasowin as a framework for understanding the world.

Anishinaabeg-gikendaasowin

Anishinaabemowin provides a spiritual connection to our land, ancestors, culture, teachings, and fosters relationships. Wilson (2008) reminded scholars that “our [Indigenous] language has words that contain huge amounts of information encoded like a ZIP file within them” (p. 13). When Indigenous people use their language in their research, it links their thoughts, actions, and writing to their tribal identities. As such, I use Anishinaabemowin within my research paradigm. As a result of colonialism, I am not fluent in Anishinaabemowin. Nonetheless, I am able to learn it from other Anishinaabeg (family/friends) in my life and through Anishinaabeg scholars such as, but not limited to, Benton-Banai (1988), Geniusz (2009), McGuire (2009), Simpson (2011), and even online Anishinaabemowin platforms (Little River Band of Ottawa Indians, 2014). While learning Anishinaabemowin, I remain humbled during my pedagogical, emotional, spiritual, intellectual growth. Therefore, I am required to both learn and then use Anishinaabemowin with a good heart.

To this end, Figure 1 represents a depiction of how I envision an Anishinaabeg research paradigm. Having a visual representation of the research paradigm assists in understanding how ontology, epistemology, axiology, methodologies are intersecting elements (Wilson, 2008). The three-dimensional circle does not have a starting point or end point, but the elements are simultaneously connected together, moving fluidly between each other.



Figure 1. Depiction of an Anishinaabeg research paradigm.

Gikendaasowin

Gikendaasowin is located in the centre of the figure, as it is the reinforcement of Anishinaabeg wisdom that is passed down from generation to generation. Without gikendaasowin, the other elements of the figure would be disconnected. Geniusz (2009) explained how Anishinaabeg research is derived from principles of Anishinaabe-inaadiziwin: “These principles are gaa-izhi-zhawendaagoziyaag, that which is given to us in a loving way by the manitous” (p. 11). She further clarified the principles are given to the Anishinaabeg through our stories, including: dibaajimowin, aadizookaan, and izhitwaawin. Undergirding these principles is the process of personal decolonization; one has to engage in the hard work of decolonization in order to “reclaim Anishinaabe-gikendaasowin” (Geniusz, 2009, p. 10).

Anishinaabeg-gikendaasowin, demonstrated through stories, is an integral component used to advance Anishinaabeg ways of being in the academy (McGuire, 2009).

Inaadiziwin

I include Inaadiziwin, the Anishinaabeg way of being. It informs our beliefs about our existence (ontology). For instance, Indigenous researchers often pray for guidance while they engage in research processes. Praying or engaging in spiritual processes ensures that the research is guided by our ancestors, manitous, and worldviews (Absolon, 2011; Kovach, 2009). Kovach (2009) suggested that participating in cultural catalyst activities, such as dreams, ceremonies, and prayer, helps researchers prepare themselves to apply an Indigenous research paradigm. For example, my auntie shared a dibaajimowin with me about the role rocks have in teaching us: Rocks are a direct connection to our ancient ancestors as rocks were created with the Earth, and we, as Anishinaabeg, are only in human form for a short time (P. McGuire, personal communication). Similarly, Donald (2009) explained that rocks are spiritual entities, continuously emanating energy, which help to guide us. Correspondingly, when I need guidance, I hold onto one of my many rocks so that I may receive inspiration to write.

Biskaabiiyang

The Anishinaabeg concept Biskaabiiyang (Geniusz, 2009; Simpson, 2011), which means returning to ourselves, or how we come to have knowledge (epistemology), is integral to the research paradigm. Biskaabiiyang, by definition, requires an Anishinaabe researcher to personally decolonize in order to use/return to our ancestral dibajimowinan. Through decolonization, one must rely on his/her Indigenous identity, culture, ancestral dibajimowinan and ontology in order to rebuild his/her identity, which is a process of regeneration against the effects of colonialism. For instance, the decolonization dibaajimowin I shared at the outset of this

paper is an engagement of Biskaabiiyang. Furthermore, as Indigenous researchers decolonize they become “conscious Indigenous scholars...who are on a path of intentionally learning, recovering and reclaiming their indigeneity” (Absolon, 2011, p. 22) within their research.

Niizhwaaswi Kchtwaa Kinomaadiwinan

The Niizhwaaswi Kchtwaa Kinomaadiwinan, also referred to as the seven grandfather teachings or the seven sacred gifts, are a sacred teaching among the Anishinaabeg and encompasses our izhitwaawin. The Niizhwaasi Kchitwaa Kinomaadiwinan are principles, ethics, and morals (axiology) that guide the Anishinaabeg to live in balance, especially as we seek gikendaasowin. They include the following: To cherish knowledge is to know Nbwaakaawin (wisdom), to know Zaagidwin (love) is to know peace, to honour all of the Creation is to have Mnaadendimowin (respect), Aakwade’ewin (bravery) is to face the foe with integrity, Gwekwaadiziwin (honesty) in facing a situation is to be brave, Dbaadendziwin (humility) is to know yourself as a sacred part of Creation, and Debwewin (truth) is to know all of these things (Benton-Banai, 1988). I strive to live according to the Niizhwaaswi Kchtwaa Kinomaadiwinan as I continue upon my decolonizing journey. These principles provide a framework so that I may continually assess my actions and my words. As such, they provide me with ethical guidance as I seek gikendaasowin and determine in what ways, for what purposes, and to what ends the knowledge gained through research will be used.

Wiisokotaatiwin

Wiisokotaatiwin, means gathering together for a purpose, may be used as both a methodological framework (i.e., as an approach) and as a research method (i.e., a way to collect data). Using Wiisokotaatiwin throughout my research is significant as it directly connects to the fundamental aspects of Indigenous research methodologies, which are to engage in

decolonization, privilege Indigenous voices, and use Indigenous worldviews (Rigney, 1999). I began to articulate Wiisokotaatiwin while completing my Master of Arts thesis. I looked to feminism (specifically, bell hooks) and critical theory (specifically, Paulo Freire) for support, “not for external validation [but] rather as complementary frameworks” (Wilson, 2008, p. 16), as their work resonated with my Indigenous methodology. As such, I built upon what hooks (2000) described as consciousness-raising groups. She highlighted how consciousness-raising groups offered a space to grow the revolutionary potential of feminism where women fostered their personal transformations. Informing this practice, was the belief that to make changes in their communities, women must first see the change in themselves. Correspondingly, Alfred and Cornassel (2005) acknowledged, “the movement toward decolonization and regeneration will emanate from transformations achieved by direct-guided experience in small, personal groups and one on one mentoring towards a new path” (p. 613). Thus, I apply the term Wiisokotaatiwin to promote an Anishinaabeg consciousness-raising, which “gathers people together for a purpose,” to engage in decolonization processes, to usher in critical consciousness with the intent to create a pathway to Biskaabiiyang. An essential tool to achieve the purpose of Wiisokotaatiwin is dialogue.

Critical theorist Paulo Freire (2000) explained that dialogue is key to transformation through praxis, which necessitates critical thinking about our realities with the goal of ultimately transforming them. Hence, Wiisokotaatiwin, which is based on our Inaadiziwin, can provide a pathway to Biskaabiiyang; in supporting each other’s consciousness-raising, we also engage in decolonization and regeneration against the effects of colonialism. Engaging in Wiisokotaatiwin as a research methodology entails an engagement in decolonization that has implications for at least three proponents: for myself, as I continually reassess and develop my journey with

decolonization practices; for the participants, who may for the first time engage in their own process of decolonization; and for academia, where an Anishinaabeg research methodology is used with the expressed intent to foster decolonization, thereby disrupting settler normative thinking concerning research.

Conclusion

Wilson's (2008) framework for creating an Indigenous research paradigm (including ontology, epistemology, axiology, methodologies) was instructive as I pieced together what an Anishinaabeg research paradigm would encompass. I believe Wilson's intent was to mentor other Indigenous researchers through his own narrative of coming to know Indigenous "research is a ceremony." Much like the role of dibaajimowinan, as listeners, we are meant to mindfully think about what the narrative is attempting to teach us and upon our own realizations, apply this new knowledge to our own lives.

Thus, in this paper, I have shown that Indigenous research paradigms and Indigenous research methodologies are incredibly significant for Indigenous peoples within the academy. Methodology is one of four component parts of an Indigenous research paradigm that also includes ontology, epistemology, and axiology. When taken together, the four components foster an engagement in ceremony (Wilson, 2008). Indigenous research methodologies include decolonization, the privileging of Indigenous voices, the utilization of Indigenous worldviews, and relational accountability—all of which serve to challenge colonialism in some form.

An Indigenous research paradigm permits me to blend my personal narrative with my academic voice (Wilson, 2008). This in turn, fosters my personal decolonization in relation to the accountability I have to my community, my ancestors, and to my research. An Anishinaabeg research paradigm grounded in Anishinaabeg-gikendaasowin includes Inaadiziwin,

Biskaabiiyang, Niizhwaaswi kchitwaa kinomaadiwinan, and Wiisokotaatiwin. Further, by grounding the paradigm in my Anishinaabeg-gikendaasowin, I connect with and build upon Anishinaabeg presence in academia, which ultimately disrupts settler normativity within such spaces. Finally, an Anishinaabeg research paradigm is valid, legitimate, rigorous, and immensely ethical, as I am accountable not only to an academic institution, but also to my communities, family, ancestors, manitous, and to the Creator.

Niinwendimaaginatok – All My Relations.

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Footnotes

ⁱ Some education and feminist disciplines have disrupted settler normativity by including land-based pedagogies, anti-colonial, anti-racist, and intersectional analyses.

Chapter 3:
Anishinaabeg Women's Stories of Wellbeing: Physical Activity, Restoring Wellbeing, and
Dismantling
the Settler Colonial Deficit Analysis

This paper is published in the *Journal of Indigenous Wellbeing: Te Mauri - Pimatisiwin*

Abstract

The settler colonial deficit-based approach to Indigenous peoples' health constructs us as ill, which sets the stage for our eventual erasure. In contrast to this deficit-based approach, in this paper I employ an Anishinaabeg research paradigm and follow Anishinaabeg protocols to understand how Anishinaabeg women are creating wellbeing for themselves, their families, and communities through engaging in physical activity. Based on seven semi-structured interviews with Anishinaabeg women who are engaged in decolonized physicality, I found that the Anishinaabeg women participants promote gwesayjitodoon indo bimaadiziiwin, which means to transform oneself into a better life. The participants showed how if one can apply the concept of gwesayjitodoon indo bimaadiziiwin to his or her physical activity, it has potential to enact broader community wellbeing that can dismantle the settler colonial deficit lens that requires Indigenous peoples' erasure, and through which Aboriginal health research has for too long been examined.

Keywords: Indigenous women, physical activity, wellbeing, Anishinaabeg women, health deficit research, settler colonialism

For far too long, researchers have analyzed Indigenous peoples' health and wellbeing through a deficit lens, which is steeped in the settler colonial discourse of erasure. For instance, when compared to the non-Indigenous population, Indigenous peoples experience heart disease at a rate that is one and a half times higher, type 2 diabetes is three to five times higher among First Nations people (Health Canada, 2006), and Indigenous peoples have higher incidences of overweight and obesity (Katzmarzyk, 2008). Further, the settler colonial deficit analysis positions Indigenous women as experiencing higher levels of ill health related to chronic conditions (e.g., diabetes and obesity (Findley, 2011), and as being less likely to engage in physical activity (Browne et al., 2006). Settler colonialism requires Indigenous peoples' erasure in order to take the land (Wolfe, 2006); as such, when Indigenous peoples succumb to ill health, which the deficit analysis necessitates, then settler colonialism becomes further entrenched.

Recently, Kukutai and Walter (2015) quite convincingly explained that settler countries use Indigenous peoples' health statistics as evidence for how to effectively control and manage the populations through state policy methods. They further argued that,

Such data emerge from, and are given meaning through, the dominant frameworks of the settler state societies that produce and use them. Decisions on what data are collected, on whom, when, how, and in what format, are not simply matters of administrative choice.

Rather, they are social, cultural, and political artifacts with the power to define and exclude. (p. 317)

Statistical analyses of Indigenous peoples' health emphasize a settler colonial approach to understanding ill health through comparative analysis with non-Indigenous peoples, which does not necessarily resonate with many Indigenous peoples (Adelson, 2005). Additionally, despite the over-abundance of Western statistical analyses, in recent decades the health of Indigenous

peoples has failed to improve and in fact has worsened, as seen in the cases of type 2 diabetes and obesity (Gionet & Roshanafshar, 2013). Rather than accepting the worsened state of Indigenous peoples' health as inevitable, analyzed from a settler colonialism lens, Indigenous peoples' ill health is not inevitable, but is instead employed to support our erasure and can thus be resisted. Further, the settler colonial deficit lens results in applying settler colonial solutions [e.g., *Canada's Food Guide for First Nations, Inuit, and Metis* (Health Canada, 2007)] in attempts to address Indigenous peoples' health, which some (Akenakew, 2011; Dion Stout, 2015; Reading, 2009) have suggested is not as effective as Indigenous peoples finding their own solutions.

Indeed, Tuck and Yang (2014) have challenged Indigenous researchers to think critically about our participation in research that inherently views us as damaged, as it perpetuates a continuance of seeing ourselves as flawed when measured against mainstream or settler health. When the settler colonial deficit lens is used to analyze Indigenous peoples' health and/or to create settler "solutions" to Indigenous people's ill health or lack of wellbeing, it is a reification of settler colonialism that promotes damage-centred research (Tuck, 2009). In addition, the physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual elements that are crucial in considerations of health and wellbeing are typically not included within settler analyses of Indigenous peoples' ill health (Richmond, 2015).

To improve Indigenous peoples' health, Indigenous researchers (Ahenakew, 2011; Lavallée, 2008; Richmond, 2015; Stout Dion, 2015) argued that the lens needs to shift from a colonial one to Indigenous concepts of health and wellbeing through culturally-significant ontologies. The stories from Anishinaabeg (g – plural for people) women presented in this paper, who engage in physical activity that fosters wellbeing, challenge the settler colonial deficit lens.

This shift in analysis is important, as it centres Indigenous knowledge and lived experiences as the basis to restore wellbeing, which is fundamental in dismantling the settler colonial deficit lens (Richmond, 2015)

In consideration of disrupting the settler colonial deficit lens, I asked seven Anishinaabeg women how they are creating wellbeing for themselves, their families, and communities through engaging in physical activity. Additional questions included why they became physically active, what drove them to commit to physical activity, and why physical activity is important to them. Three key themes emerged from their stories: personal empowerment and confidence; wellbeing for oneself, family, and community; and the importance of group mentorship. Through the interviews, it became clear that as the women engaged in physical activity, they also enacted *gwesayjitodoon indo bimaadiziiwin*, or transforming oneself into a better life. Through Anishinaabeg-informed thematic analysis, I determined that the participants' stories show that they are passionately committed to their own physicality and wellbeing, which then reverberates to their families and communities. If we can each take up the practice of *gwesayjitodoon indo bimaadiziiwin*, I believe an immense community momentum for wellbeing can be achieved. Committing to *gwesayjitodoon indo bimaadiziiwin* may dismantle the settler colonial deficit lens that pathologizes us as ill to secure our eventual erasure.

The Anishinaabeg Women Participants

I interviewed seven Anishinaabeg women for my study. Five of them live in different parts of the province of Ontario, one lives in Minnesota, and another was living in Thailand at the time of the interview. Carrienne is from Waaskinigaa or Birch Island, Ontario, has two children, and one granddaughter. She has run multiple marathons and instructs cardio kickboxing, bootcamp, and step aerobics classes. Rachael is from Sandy Lake First Nation and

now resides in Thunder Bay, Ontario. She is an avid marathon runner. In addition to her three children, she has one grandson. Maria is a mother to three daughters and is from the Kitigan Zibi First Nation located in the province of Quebec, and she now resides in Ottawa, Ontario. In addition to running marathons, Maria also instructs rebounding classes and trains novice runners.

Janelle is from the Bois Fort Band of Chippewa in upper State Minnesota, U.S.A. In addition to raising her three boys, she runs multiple long distance races each year and is a founding member of the running group Kwe Pack, which is an Anishinaabeg women's running group. Kelly is from Nipissing First Nation and works at an urban Aboriginal health centre as the Healthy Living Coordinator in Ottawa, Ontario. Kelly is also a certified yoga practitioner and fitness instructor. Sarah is from Garden River First Nation located near Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, and now lives in Ottawa. She is an Olympic weightlifter who previously competed provincially and now trains recreationally. Ashley is from the Chippewa of the Thames First Nation and lives in Cambridge, Ontario, where she is also a teacher at MAS Academy of Martial Arts Training Centres. She is a highly decorated Muay Thaiⁱ champion and, at the time of our interview, she was living in Thailand in order to exclusively train and compete in Muay Thai. Although the women have their preferred form of physical activity, whether it is running, kickboxing, etc., they all cross train using addition forms of physical activity. Rachael, Maria, Janelle, and Carrienne are primarily long distance runners, but they also weight train or attend other physical activity classes. Ashley is a Muay Thai fighter, but she also trains in powerlifting, running, and functional strength training. Kelly tries to get outside as much as possible in addition to her yoga practice, and Sarah enjoys long walks to complement her Olympic weightlifting.

The women shared their reasons for why they began their journeys to being physically active, which eventually led them to the forms of physical activity they currently practice. Kelly,

Sarah, Rachael, and Maria all had similar experiences with being physically active as children, but ended up not feeling great about their bodies after gaining some weight as adults, due to university life for Kelly and Sarah, and pregnancies for Rachael and Maria. Carrienne shared that she was also very active growing up, but it was after the passing of her father that she noticed that she had gained weight and started to have health and stress problems, which led her to begin running. Similarly, Janelle began running to address health issues and depression. Ashley began her physical activity in combat sports because she was experiencing some bullying and she also wanted to enact positive lifestyle changes, which eventually led her to Muay Thai training.

Methods

As an Anishinaabe researcher, I used an Anishinaabeg research paradigm (McGuire-Adams, 2016) to guide my research process. An Anishinaabeg research paradigm is comprised of four interconnected dimensions: Indaadiziwin (Geniusz, 2009), or the Anishinaabeg way of being, informs my ontology; Biskaabiiyang (Geniusz, 2009; Simpson, 2011), or returning to ourselves, informs my epistemology; the Niizhwaaswi Kchtwaa Kinomaadiwinan (Benton-Banai, 1988), or the seven sacred gifts or seven grandfather teachings, informs my axiology; and Wiisokotaatiwin (McGuire-Adams, 2016), or gathering to for a purpose, informs my methodology.

My recruitment strategy for the interviews had two elements: key informant selection and word of mouth opportunities (Newman, 2010). My inclusion criteria were that the participants had to be Anishinaabeg women and they had to be engaged in what I have termed “decolonized physicality,” which is any form of physical activity that the participants specifically identified as using to foster wellbeing for oneself, family, and/or community.

I used storytelling as a method to engage in the interviews (Kovach, 2009; Wilson, 2008). Kovach (2009) recommended the use of Indigenous research methods such as stories or narratives, research/sharing circles, interviews, and even dreaming. She explained that for Indigenous peoples, stories are strong reminders of who we are and our belonging. Within the Indigenous research paradigm there is an “inseparable relationship between stories and knowing, and the interrelationship between narrative and research” (p. 94). I see the relevance in using stories as a research method, as we are taught that storytelling is the way our people transmit teachings, which also resonates with Anishinaabeg research paradigm. As such, for the interviews, I created a series of open-ended questions (e.g., what, if anything, influenced you to start being physically active? What, if anything, helps you to commit to being physically active? Has physical activity helped you to deal with any self-esteem issues? If yes, how so?) that assisted the Anishinaabeg women participants in sharing aspects of their stories regarding physical activity.

Anishinaabeg Protocols Used for the Research Process

Throughout the research process, I followed Anishinaabeg protocols. After the Anishinaabeg women agreed to take part in the interview and provided their informed consent (via signing the University of Ottawa Research Ethics Board consent form), I offered semaa (tobacco) to themⁱⁱ to not only thank them for agreeing to share their stories with me, but also to ensure that the manitous (spirits) would guide our intentions and assist us in remembering what was shared. Before starting the interview, I shared my Anishinaabe name, clan, and community in order to identify and acknowledge who I am. We then engaged in a conversational semi-structured interview, where they shared their stories in the way that best suited them, as opposed to being too structured and rigid. Most of the interviews lasted for an hour to an hour and a half.

After I transcribed the interviews, I sent them back to the women to have final review, where they had full control over editing in the transcript. This is not only an ethical research practice, but it also allowed me as an Anishinaabe researcher to engage in reciprocity and ensure that the women were actively involved in deciding how they shared their stories. I then began an Anishinaabeg-informed thematic analysis of the transcripts, which assisted me in identifying important themes arising from the stories.

Analysis

For Braun and Clarke's (2006) approach to thematic analysis, there are six phases: 1) familiarizing oneself with the data (including transcriptions); 2) generating initial codes; 3) searching for themes; 4) reviewing themes; 5) defining and naming themes; and 6) finalizing analysis and producing the report. Braun and Clarke (2006) further explained that "thematic analysis at the latent level starts to identify or examine the underlying ideas, assumptions, and conceptualizations – and ideologies – that are theorized as shaping or informing the semantic content of the data" (p. 84). Thus, as I engaged in thematic analysis, which was also informed by the Anishinaabeg research paradigm (ethical and spiritual guidance), I identified core themes that arose from the women's stories.

I continually reflected upon the aspects of the Anishinaabeg research paradigm, which gave me ethical guidance as I sought to learn from the participants' stories. Another central element of my Anishinaabeg-informed thematic analysis was to continually seek spiritual guidance. For instance, as I began my analysis, I visited the water and prayed for guidance; I offered semaa; I held onto my rockⁱⁱⁱ and kept it near me as I worked; and I took the time out from my analysis to engage in my own physical activity, going for a run or completing a session of Muay Thai. As I spiritually and physically engaged in Anishinaabeg-informed thematic

analysis process, core themes began to emerge from the stories. I documented the emerging themes by creating a manual coding system using different colour highlighters as I read through the transcripts. I then created a separate document where I compiled the codes into themes: 1) personal empowerment and confidence; 2) wellbeing for oneself, family, and community through physical activity; and 3) the importance of group mentorship. I will now present portions of the stories that each woman told to highlight the main themes and I will then discuss how their stories promote gwesayjitodoon indo bimaadiziiwin – transforming oneself into a better life.

The Stories

Personal Empowerment and Confidence

The women spoke about how their physical activity empowered them to have confidence. For instance, Carrienne shared that when she trained for and completed a marathon, an event she thought to be only for elite athletes, it made her feel “empowered in terms of understanding my own strengths.” Rachael explained that running helps to “release energy and have a positive outcome, [and to] just feel good about yourself.” Kelly emphasized how committing to exercise everyday empowered her to feel positive and to yearn to learn more:

I was really proud of my accomplishments and being able to stick with it and I felt so good. My confidence was better, my thoughts were just more positive and I think it was that kind of experience that really got me interested in learning more about physical activity.

Sarah explained how Olympic weightlifting provides her with a happy place: “I really love Olympic weightlifting and I [am] good at it. I love the speed of it. I love the strength part of it. I love throwing heavy [weights] around and mentally it is my happy place.” Janelle shared that running makes her “feel enough, feel proud, [and] feel confident.” For Muay Thai fighter,

Ashley, her multitude of championships brought media attention to her, whether it was interviews on the radio or other media sources. She explained that she “really had to practice positive thinking, positive self-talk, affirmations that give me the confidence to be able to do [media interviews].” Each of the women gained personal empowerment and confidence by engaging in physical activity.

Wellbeing for Self, Family, and Community through Physical Activity

Many of the women shared that they commit to being physically active for their own wellbeing, for the health of their children, and to motivate their community. For instance, Janelle explained that running fosters her personal wellbeing and it also sets a good example for her children and community:

I definitely use [running] as a tool to keep my body well, my mind well, and I really enjoy it. It makes me happy....I just like to continue [running]...to be a good example for my children and to be a good example for anyone in the community who thinks they can't. Essentially, it is just one foot in front of the other and it doesn't matter how fast you go, it doesn't matter how far you go, it's how you feel when you are done.

Carrienne shared that she engages in physical activity for her health and to show her children that they can be physically fit: “I've always done physical activities with them and I want them to continue as adults. I want them to be healthy. I don't want them to have to rely on Western medicine to help them move through life.” As a fitness instructor, her driving force is to “help people empower themselves to be better...and to prevent youth in community from getting juvenile diabetes and to not be sick.” Similarly, Rachael engages in physical activity to be active and healthy for her children, but to also show them that they can live a healthy, active lives.

Maria not only encourages her daughters to be physically active, but also her community of Kitigan Zibi First Nation. Every year, she and her sister coordinate a community run featuring 2km, 5km, and 10km races. She coordinates the run to raise awareness and support to find her missing niece, Maisy, and Maisy's friend Shannon^{iv}, and to promote fitness and health in her community. Many people, ranging from children to adults, participate in the annual run and it has become an important community event that attracts runners from around the region.

Kelly connected physical activity to mental wellbeing and pondered how it could be used to support other aspects of community wellbeing:

Exercise is the most underutilized antidepressant. I look at some of the work that I do, which is very health promotion-based and very fun. I compare that to some of the other programs like youth justice or mental health programming that can be very hard subjects to deal with. It can be very heavy. But imagine if we taught exercise as part of those programs where it's that wholistic view and we taught [clients] yoga or kettlebells, not with the mind to have bikini bodies, but more about how can you connect with your mind, your body, and your spirit and those things play a role in how you deal with some of the circumstances you are faced with in your life. If you are strong physically, how could that then translate to a strong mental approach that you are dealing with in life?

Rachael also found that the positive feelings she has after physical activity helps to "make life a lot easier" and argued that more people should start their day with physical activity.

The participants also connected physical activity connected to mental, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing. Maria and Janelle both use physical activity to foster mental wellbeing and to prevent depression. They each noticed that if they stop running, their thoughts have a tendency to

change from positive to negative. Through running, Janelle was able to stop taking medication for depression, while for Maria, running fosters good mental health.

For some of the women, wellbeing was also connected to their spiritual wellbeing. Janelle and Kelly both identified their physical activity as a cleansing act, similar to smudging. Janelle explained:

You know when we are having a tough time we put out our semaa, or we smudge, or we burn our sweetgrass? Well, going out for a run is just as important to me as all of that. It has moved from a physical self-care regime to a spiritual self-care regime.

Similarly, Kelly explained that whereas “some people will use smudging to clear energy...I use exercise to do that.”

Ashley saw parallels between her Anishinaabeg ceremonies and Muay Thai ceremonies: “Muay Thai is both spiritual and technical.” Prior to starting her fighting career in Muay Thai, Ashley attended sweat and Sun Dance ceremonies, began drumming, and learned more about the Anishinaabeg teachings and knowledge, which was an empowering time for as her “spirit was awakening.” She further explained how she was drawn to practice Muay Thai because of the spiritual, ceremonial, and ancestral aspects of the martial art:

When I found Muay Thai, seeing that there were traditional aspects and ceremony that was practiced, it is really what I connected to when I first started training and learning about it. So, not only was it technical, defensive and offensive, fitness, strength, there was also a large part of ceremony that is connected to the art. As I learned more and eventually competed, I was taught a wai kru ram muay ceremony, which is the dance that is done before the competitors face each other in the ring. Both opponents will do this. The dance is passed down from teacher to student, just as the knowledge of Muay Thai is

taught to you by your teachers and the dance itself pays homage and gives respect to the teachers, to the ancestors, and to lineage where you came from. It was truly powerful and beautiful learning the meaning of this dance. It really resonated with me at that time. Just the fact that it had a deeper spiritual meaning was why I drawn to it.

Ashley also shared that a key part of her daily training is to run in the morning. She explained that fighters run for conditioning, endurance, to keep oneself at an optimal weight, and gets an important aspect of training done early; however, for Ashley, running carries an additional spiritual element: “Spiritually, I feel when I run in the morning, I am connecting with the sun, and greeting the day with good motivational energy; [it] sets a good tone for the rest of my day and contributes to a positive lifestyle. Great feeling.”

The Anishinaabeg women in this study use physical activity as a method for obtaining wellness that includes spiritual, mental, emotional, and physical elements. As they engage in their own self-transformation, they also seek to foster the transformation of their families and communities.

The Role of Group Mentorship

The women shared similar experiences with either receiving mentorship or giving mentorship to others through physical activity. Carrienne spoke about the role of group mentorship and how it relates to empowering one another. For instance, she explained that in the boot camp classes she teaches, she informs everyone that her class is about empowering each other by encouraging one another. She also explained how empowering one another challenges our oppression:

[When] we empower each other to do well and moving past that, we're [also] deconstructing that colonial thought, that oppression where we are told as women to put

each other down...like that relational aggression and that lateral violence component...I see that my classes are a way of moving us out of it, even if it's just a few of us...physical activity is one way for us to move past that oppression and say well I'm just as good as the other person, I have strengths and I don't have to be part of that vicious cycle that we do to ourselves: putting each other down.

Carrienne further related how she challenges oppression, which she argued is experienced as lateral violence, in her classes by working out with her participants. She chooses to not just passively instruct her participants to work out, but rather to work out along with them. By becoming an equal participant, Carrienne disrupts the perceived or actual hierarchal coach/participant dynamic, which further reinforces group cohesion. An additional way she fosters group mentorship with her participants is by giving them positive feedback when she sees them gain new strength:

When I get the regulars coming and I tell them, “you're much stronger than you were before,” and you see that light in their eyes when you say that they're stronger than when they first came here, it changes it for them, you know? So when they go out, then they in turn believe that they are stronger, just from that physical activity.

The role of mentorship is a key element for Kwe Pack, which is a group of Anishinaabeg women runners located in the Fond du Lac Band of Superior Chippewa, in upper state Minnesota, U.S.A. In an effort to combat the prevalence of chronic disease and to live a healthier life for themselves, their families, and community, a group of Anishinaabeg women foster the regeneration of their health by running together. They run together because they “believe in the power of the group” (Birch-McMichael, 2015, p. 4), which creates a regenerative space that

fosters their commitment to physicality. Janelle, one of the original runners of Kwe Pack, further explained how the Kwe Pack members supports one another:

When you start running it's scary, it's unknown, but we just kind of support each other through that. We created a space where everyone can come as they are. We never turn an Anishinaabe woman away if they want to run with us. We take care of each other during the run, no one is left behind.

Kwe Pack supports each other with running, and through this, they foster group mentorship by building each other up in a safe and supportive space, where Janelle explained they share the same goal “of wanting to be healthy role models for our children and to continue to be healthy for ourselves.” Janelle further shared that they push each other to attain goals they once thought were out of reach:

Some of us thought we wouldn't be able to do a half-marathon, some never thought they could do a full marathon, some never thought they could do a 50K or 50 miles, and now there are two 50 milers in the group, two more attempting in the fall, and now there are three other ultra runners, and probably about thirteen others are marathon runners.

Receiving mentorship from others was a key aspect for the participants achieving personal goals and even becoming physically active. Ashley, Rachael, Sarah, and Kelly, explained that when they began taking up their physical activity, they had someone who either worked out with them or mentored them in their practices. For instance, at age 19, Ashley started Muay Thai training with her cousin; Rachael began running in her community of Sandy Lake with a neighbour; before Sarah started Olympic weightlifting, she and her Mother did Karate together for many years; and Kelly sought mentorship from a colleague and friend who “walked the talk” with nutrition and physical activity, which also influenced how she mentored

her clients as a Healthy Living Coordinator. Kelly explained:

I am more relaxed with my approach to physical activity. If I have a certain goal or something like that I know to train myself to do that, but now my interest is more teaching people about recognizing how food [and exercise] makes you feel and I get to do that with my work.

Mentoring and inspiring others resonated with Ashley in her practice of Muay Thai as well, which came through when I asked her what drives her to commit to her advanced training regime:

A few times people would reach out to me or come up to me and say, “that was an amazing fight and you inspired me to get in the ring.” So, inspiring others to do the same is a driver for me. Another would be giving back to people who are also on the same journey where they are competing or just learning for fitness and you know you have this skill, so being able to share and empower someone else through sharing what you know is a really positive experience – to be able to give back to others. Another drive for me is being able to connect with different First Nations communities and being able to inspire others, give them confidence, feed their strong spirit through learning Muay Thai, if I am present to teach them.

Finally, Maria shared that support, especially for Native people, is one of the key elements for successful uptake of physical activity: “[we] need to have support from [our] families...and just having that support on a daily basis is what makes a difference.” For example, Maria explained that she ensures her family is there to support her daughter, who competes in running, by attending each of her races.

Discussion

The stories from the Anishinaabeg women are powerful. They are infused with challenges, triumphs, life changes, resounding determination, inspiration, and hope. Each of the three themes - 1) personal empowerment and confidence; 2) wellbeing for oneself, family, and community through physical activity; and 3) the importance of group mentorship - promotes gwesayjitodoon indo bimaadiziiwin and challenges settler colonial deficit analysis. The women spoke about how their physical activity fostered their personal empowerment and confidence. While many of the women started exercising with the intent to lose excess weight, through their sustained engagement with physical activity, their intent morphed into fostering personal empowerment. Their physical activity caused them to engage in gwesayjitodoon indo bimaadiziiwin: through physical activity they transformed how they initially felt about themselves, gained fitness, confidence, and improved their overall wellbeing. This finding resonates with Lavallée's (2008) research, where Aboriginal women described how they achieved wholistic wellbeing through physical activity. I believe another strong factor in achieving gwesayjitodoon indo bimaadiziiwin that was shown through the women's stories is the connection between their physical activity and spirituality.

The women spoke about how engaging in physical activity is a cleansing act and a part of a spiritual self-care regime. Additionally, for Rachael and Ashley, exercising or running in the morning carried a significant meaning for spiritual wellbeing. Ashley's act of greeting the sun in the morning through running, or Rachael starting her day with being physical active, created positive feelings. The women's stories show that physical activity is directly associated with their spiritual wellbeing, especially when you feel a need to cleanse your wellbeing or connect to your spirituality, which reinforces gwesayjitodoon indo bimaadiziiwin. Brant Castellano (2015)

reiterated that spiritual health is “expressed and sustained in relationships with family and friends...and is spread abroad in service to the community” (p.34).

Indeed, once the women fostered their own physical and spiritual transformations, they were then able to encourage others to do the same. The women shared that they engage in physical activity to keep themselves well, and to set good examples for their families and communities. By committing to physical activity, the women provide examples of how to live well for their children and communities, and thus enact *gwesayjitodoon indo bimaadiziiwin* by living as examples. By being living examples of wellness, the women are helping their families and communities to do the same, by being instructors, mentors to others, or organizing community events.

The approach of “living as an example” can further influence a person to engage in her own physicality because of how powerful and inspirational their stories are. For instance, there were times while I was conducting this research, from the interview process through to the writing process, when I became so inspired by the women’s stories that I compelled to engage in my own physical activity. Chartrand (2012) illuminated how Anishinaabeg stories, both oral and written, carry the “power of story” (p. 152) and inspire the reader to take action. The feeling of wanting to take action happened to me as I read through the women’s stories as I analyzed their transcripts; I would take breaks to attend my Muay Thai class or go for a run. Having not run in many years, I only began running again after I interviewed the Anishinaabeg women. Their stories made me want to run; they gave me a surge of energy and inspiration. By becoming aware of how settler colonial deficit analysis requires us to be ill, and by taking up physical activity that engages in *gwesayjitodoon indo bimaadiziiwin*, I believe an immense community

momentum for wellbeing can be achieved, which will make a contribution to dismantling the settler colonial deficit lens.

The stories of the Anishinaabeg women also show that they are dismantling the settler colonial lens that positions them as deficient by practicing gwesayjitodoon indo bimaadiziiwin. The women all spoke about the need to be healthy for themselves and for their children. Carrienne specifically mentors people in her community in order to prevent them from developing diabetes and from becoming ill. This shows that they are aware of the settler colonial deficit analysis that pathologizes them as ill, as if illness is an inevitable; but they are challenging it by choosing to be healthy for themselves, which then reverberates to their families and communities. By becoming aware of how the settler colonial deficit analysis requires us to be ill, and by taking up physical activity that engages in gwesayjitodoon indo bimaadiziiwin, I believe an immense community momentum for wellbeing can be achieved, which will make a contribution to dismantling the settler colonial deficit lens.

Just as the women's stories inspired me to take action, their stories can assist other people to do the same. This could start a broad community momentum of gwesayjitodoon indo bimaadiziiwin with the goal to dismantle the settler colonial deficit lens. Creating supportive atmospheres, encouraging personal empowerment and confidence, and helping each other to achieve personal goals, are key elements in gwesayjitodoon indo bimaadiziiwin, which secure our health and wellbeing, not our erasure.

Conclusion

Indigenous women's perspectives on their wellbeing, achieved through physical activity, are imperative to identifying counter narratives to the health disparity research. Thus, this research is important as it presents the perspectives of Anishinaabeg women who are exemplars

of physical activity in order to discern ways to confront the settler colonial health deficit lens. Through Anishinaabeg-informed thematic analysis, the stories from the women inform our understanding of how physical activity that fosters *gwesayjitodoon indo bimaadiziiwin* challenges settler colonial deficit analysis that pathologizes Indigenous peoples as ill. Nurturing one another to achieve wellness and to live a good life awakens our Anishinaabeg values and is a process of *gwesayjitodoon indo bimaadiziiwin*, which can have reverberating positive effects for other Anishinaabeg and Indigenous communities. Richmond (2015) emphasized that Indigenous peoples' stories of success, healing, and wellbeing are needed to counteract the deficit analysis, and that they provide a hopeful future for Indigenous health research. The research presented in this paper created space for Anishinaabeg women to show how wellbeing is achieved, which provided a counter narrative to the settler colonial deficit analysis.

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Footnotes

ⁱ Muay Thai is a form of kickboxing that originated in Thailand, and has become popular in North America. This martial art is known for its use of elbows, knees, and clinch. For more information, see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muay_Thai.

ⁱⁱ In two instances I was not able to offer semaa as these interviews took place over Skype.

ⁱⁱⁱ I carry a teaching from my auntie that rocks are our ancestors. Therefore, when I am seeking direction I hold clutch one of my many rocks. Donald (2009) also explained that rocks provide us with guidance.

^{iv} Maisy and Shannon went missing 7 years ago from Kitigan Zibi First Nation. For more information, please see <http://www.findmaisyandshannon.com>.

Chapter 4:

Anishinaabekweg Dibaajimowinan (Stories) of Decolonization through Running

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Abstract

Indigenous women's perspectives on physical activity and the ways in which it fosters decolonization have yet to be considered from an Indigenous feminist perspective. Therefore, in this paper, we present four Anishinaabekweg (that is, Anishinaabeg women's) dibaajimowinan (personal stories) of physical activity, specifically running, and their views on its contribution to decolonization. This study used an Anishinaabeg research paradigm, storytelling, and Anishinaabeg informed thematic analysis. Findings from the dibaajimowinan revealed three themes: running as ceremony and healing; the significance of running as a group; and running for health and personal goals. The dibaajimowinan from the Anishinaabekweg runners show how decolonization through physical activity can occur, which is an important addition to the field of sociology of sport.

Keywords: Anishinaabeg women, running, decolonization, physical activity, colonialism

Almost every health indicator indicates that Indigenous peoples in Canada are overburdened with ill health (Reading, 2009). In particular, Indigenous women experience higher rates of physical inactivity and chronic diseases than non-Indigenous women and Indigenous men (Brown, McDonald, & Elliott, 2009; Public Health Agency of Canada, 2011). The underlying causes of Indigenous women's disproportionate burden of ill health are directly related to the impacts of colonialism (Bourassa, McKay-McNabb & Hampton, 2004; Loppie Reading & Wein, 2009). While it is well documented that physical activity can improve health (Foulds, Bredin, Warburton, 2011; Lavallée, 2007; Reiner, Niermann, Jekauc & Woll, 2013), scholarly accounts of Indigenous women's own understandings of the impact of involvement in physical activity on their bodies and their experiences of colonialism are scarce.

Having volunteered as a fitness instructor for urban Indigenous community organizations in various communities across Canada for eight years, the first author, who is Anishinaabe, (also known as the Ojibway, Algonquin, and Odawa people who reside in rural, reserve, and urban areas in Ontario, Quebec, Manitoba, and Minnesota, in addition to other global localities) witnessed how physical activity had a profound impact on her health and the health of participants in her classes. Importantly, she and other women participants began making connections between improved health and decolonization of their body. These insights promoted her, with the second author [non-Indigenous settler of Welsh and English heritage], to commence a program of research in this area.

In this paper, we employ Indigenous feminist theory to investigate how four Anishinaabeg women runners understand and resist the impacts of colonization on their bodies. First, we provide a review of literature on gender-based health differences between Indigenous women and men, Indigenous peoples' participation in sport and practices of physical activity,

and the importance of land in decolonization processes. Second, we provide an overview of the theoretical and methodological approaches that guided the data collection. Third, we present the three themes that emerged from the dibaajimowinan of the women: running as ceremony and healing; the significance of running as a group; and running for health and personal goals. Finally, we discuss the importance and implications of our findings.

Review of Literature

There are important gender-based health differences between Indigenous men and women. Indigenous women appear to be particularly vulnerable to ill health. For instance, First Nations women in Canada who live off-reserve are less likely to engage in physical activity and experience higher rates of ill health than their male counterparts (Browne et al., 2009; Bruner & Chad, 2013; Native Women's Association of Canada, 2007). Furthermore, First Nations people in Canada experience type 2 diabetes at a rate that is three to five times greater than the general Canadian population (Health Canada, 2006), with Aboriginal females having a greater prevalence of type 2 diabetes than Aboriginal males (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2011). Findley (2011) also found that while First Nations people living off-reserve are more physically active than the non-Aboriginal population, they nonetheless experience poorer health, specifically regarding obesity and other chronic diseases. To that end, data from 2011 showed that Aboriginal women have higher inactivity rates (Bruner & Chad, 2013; Findlay, 2011), higher overweight and obesity (Bruner & Chad, 2013), and suffer from "poorer health than non-Aboriginal women in Canada...and more chronic diseases than Aboriginal men" (Bourassa, McKay-McNabb, & Hampton, 2004, p.23)

Findlay (2011) has argued that when key social determinants of health are addressed (e.g., poor housing and lower income), physical activity still does not correspond to improved

health for First Nations people. Indeed, Bruner and Chad (2013) have noted that the sociocultural factors that influence physical activity have not been adequately researched from the perspectives of Indigenous women themselves. Their study, which focused on the attitudes, beliefs, and practices of physical activity among First Nations women, found that while participants believed physical activity is important for good health, lack of time, lack of community opportunities, and environmental factors are barriers to them practicing physical activity.

Research concerning women's physical activity is extensive and has spanned multiple areas: participation in sport (Thompson, 2002); femininity ideology and sport (Roth & Bascow, 2004); physical activity and health (McDermott, 2010); bodies, gender, and health (Kuhlmann & Babitsch, 2002); women's physicality (McDermott 1996, 2000); and the body, femininity, and disability (Inahara, 2009). While this research has broadened understandings of sport, physical activity, gender, and embodied practices, by in large, it has been conducted through a white, mainstream lens.

More recently, Indigenous and non-Indigenous sport, physical activity, and health scholars have brought much needed attention to Indigenous peoples' participation in sport and physical activity (Forsyth & Wamsley, 2006; Forsyth & Giles, 2013; Hall, 2002; Ferguson & Philipenko, 2016; Salamone, 2013; Tang & Jardine, 2016) and Indigenous women's participation in particular (Bruner & Chad, 2013; Coppola, Dumler, Letendre & McHugh, 2016; Giles, 2004; Lavallée, 2008; McHugh, Coppola, & Sabiston, 2014; Paraschak & Forsyth, 2010). The ways in which physical activity and sport involvement might be used as a tool for decolonization has largely escaped scholarly attention, though the ways in which it has been used as a tool of colonization has received considerable attention.

While sport can replicate and is infused with colonial and nationalistic values that further the assimilative goals of Canada (Forsyth & Wamsley, 2006), it has also been used as a means of resistance. Within Indian Residential Schools, students subverted the outright assimilatory purpose of sport by taking up the physicality of it and using it as way to celebrate their athletic achievements (Bloom 2000; Forsyth, 2013; Forsyth & Wamsley, 2006). Similarly, O'Bonsawin (2015) analysed how Indigenous athletes faced systemic oppression when participating at the Olympics, especially in those moments when they show resistance to nationalistic values (e.g., Damien Hooper wearing a t-shirt featuring his Indigenous Australian flag when entering the boxing ring and Alywin Morris' raising an eagle feather while being presented his medal.) Indeed, sport has the paradoxical potential to oppress Indigenous bodies, while at the same time providing a space where personal empowerment can be achieved, which then may assist in resistance to and regeneration from the effects of colonialism on Indigenous peoples' bodies (Forsyth & Wamsley, 2006; Hovey, Delormier, & McComber, 2014; Ritenburg et al., 2014). A central component to achieve regeneration is representing Indigenous peoples on the land (Coulthard, 2014; Wildcat, McDonald, Irlbacher-Fox, & Coulthard, 2014), which can occur through remembering ancestral stories.

Ancestral stories provide Indigenous scholars with insights to help with restoring important connections to the land (Oliveira, 2014) and a pillar for Indigenous ways of being (Geniusz, 2009). Stories can “direct, inspire, and affirm ancient codes of ethics” (Simpson, 2014a, p. 8), which can then be applied in current understandings, places, and practices (Doerfler, Sinclair, & Stark, 2013; Geniusz, 2009). They also contribute to envisioning and creating realities that challenge the permanence of settler colonialism in Indigenous territories and promote decolonization (Jobin, 2016; Simpson, 2014a).

Decolonization

Decolonization is an important factor for creating well-being and personal transformation as Wilson (2004) clarified,

Decolonization becomes central to unravelling the long history of colonization and returning well-being to our people. ...decolonization entails developing a critical consciousness about the cause(s) of our oppression, the distortion of history, our own collaboration, and the degrees to which we have internalized colonialist ideas and practices. Decolonization requires auto-criticism, self-reflection, and a rejection of victimage. Decolonization is about empowerment – a belief that situations can be transformed, a belief and trust in our own peoples' values and abilities, and a willingness to make change. (p. 71)

To this end, there has been much scholarly attention on how colonialism affects Indigenous minds (Wilson & Yellowbird, 2005), Indigenous values and the destruction of Indigenous community ethics (Alfred, 2005), and reconciliation (Coulthard, 2014). Yet, there has been a lack of attention on how decolonization can be applied to Indigenous bodies, especially from an Indigenous feminist lens.

Mihesuah's (2005) text, *Recovering our Ancestors' Gardens: Indigenous Recipes and Guide to Diet and Fitness*, is a source that connects the effects of colonization to Indigenous bodies. Mihesuah (2005) advocated that Indigenous peoples return to ancestral ways of eating and exercising, including running, as a way to combat the negative effects of the colonial diet on Indigenous peoples. She encouraged Indigenous peoples' return to their ancestors' teachings regarding food and fitness to regenerate Indigenous peoples' health and wellbeing. Certainly, the processes of decolonization require that Indigenous peoples consciously - or mindfully -

reconnect to our respective Indigenous values, ethics, and teachings while simultaneously challenging the effects of colonialism in our lives and bodies. Recent literature that has focussed on decolonization for Indigenous peoples has been envisioned in a variety of ways: healing (Goulet, Linds, Episkenew, & Schmidt, 2011); health promotion (Mundel & Chapman, 2010); embodied decolonization (Reitenburg et al., 2014), and community decolonization applied to chronic disease (Birch-McMichael, 2015; Hovey, Delormier, & McComber, 2014). Very little of it, however, has been conducted through an Indigenous feminist lens.

Decolonization processes are embodied experiences, which also regenerate community wellbeing. Reitenburg, Young Leon, Linds, Naduea, Goulet, Kovach, and Marshall (2014) explored how decolonization is embodied in Canada and Aotearoa/New Zealand. The authors reflected on the how Indigenous bodies experience decolonization with regard to Indigenous methodologies: Indigenous knowledge as embodied knowledge; embodied decolonization through theatrical performance as physicality; decolonizing the body through Indigenous ways of knowing and knowledge specific to dancing, drumming, singing and ceremony; and through revitalizing Maori birthing practices. Each example showcased, “the commitment to centering the body in the process of decolonization and indigenization along with an affirmation of bodily wisdom and experience as a critical component of Indigenous methodology” (Reitenburg et al., 2014, p. 77). In sum, decolonization processes involve Indigenous peoples supporting each other to overcome the negative ramifications of colonialism on their bodies, specifically regarding ill health. Further, Coppola, Dimler, Letrendre, and McHugh (2016) explained that by “focusing on Aboriginal peoples’ positive experiences, it is possible to identify resources and strengths for promoting well-being” (p. 2). Paraschak (2013a) also emphasized the importance of looking to “existing strengths [that] are identified by individuals within a group or community” (p. 97) in

order to then challenge poor health statistics. Given Indigenous women's over-representation in statistics that indicate poor health, there is an urgent need to understand how Indigenous women themselves understand how they can foster decolonization through physical activity.

Given the noted gaps in the literature, this research study focused on the dibaajimowinan of Anishinaabekweg runners who maintain a high level of physical activity for the explicit purpose of fostering their health and wellbeing. The choice of Anishinaabekweg runners is deliberate. Historically, the Anishinaabeg had female and male runners called michitweg, who were messengers between communities and were highly respected (Rasmussen, 2003). The michitweg ran distances ranging between a dozen miles to over a hundred miles to reach communities through a system of woodland trails that created an "intertribal relay system" (Rasmussen, 2003, p. 14). The michitweg often took up a ceremonial role by being offered semaa (tobacco) and prayers, especially when a person in community was ill; the michitweg were summoned to run to other communities to contact healers. Similarly, the Iroquois Confederacy, including other Native American tribes, included running messengers who carried important messages and news to other communities (Milroy, 2013; Nabokov, 1981). The michitweg shows that there may be an ancestral element to understanding the importance of running. Using Indigenous feminist theory and an Anishinaabeg research paradigm, we explore the ways in which four Anishinaabekweg runners relate their physical activity to their health and decolonization.

Theoretical Framework

Suzack, Huhndorf, Perreault, and Barman (2010) have argued that feminism, especially in academia, remains white-centred; therefore, they stated that Indigenous feminist theory is needed to offer a space to conceptualize theories and practices specific to Indigenous community

interests. Indigenous feminist theory has gained considerable momentum in the last two decades with the publication of edited volumes and special issue publications (Goeman & Denetdale, 2009; Green, 2005; Suzack et al., 2010). During this time, Indigenous feminisms began to be articulated through the examination of topics such as Anishinaabeg womanhood (Anderson, 2000; Laduke, 1997; Solomon, 1990); feminist and Indigenous approaches to decolonization (Green, 2007; Jaimes & Halsey 1992; Mihsuah 2003); and community, political, and legal strategies in addressing oppression (Monture-Angus, 1995, 1999; Ouellette, 2002; St. Denis, 2007; Simpson, 2011; Trask 1996).

Suzack et al. (2010) have suggested that a “single, normative definition of Indigenous feminism remains impossible because Indigenous women’s circumstances vary enormously throughout colonizing societies, where patriarchy dominates, and in Indigenous communities with distinct histories and cultural traditions” (p. 2). This statement is informative, as it reveals that there is no melting pot that results in a uniform, pan-Indigenous feminism. While there is no one monolithic definition of Indigenous feminist theory (Goeman & Denetdale, 2009), Arvin, Tuck, and Morrill (2013) explained that, broadly, it develops the understandings, practices, and connections between settler colonialism, heteropatriarchy, and heteropaternalism. Further, Indigenous feminist theory brings attention to the gendered process of settler colonialism through an intersectional analysis of gender, sexuality, race, Indigeneity, and nation. Intersectional analysis is needed to disrupt the continuance of settler colonialism in colonial nation states, which necessarily contains Indigenous ways of thinking/being in order to create decolonial thinking and practices of social justice, society, and individual/community regeneration (Arvin et al., 2013; Huhndorf & Suzack, 2010). This speaks to the need to continue building an Indigenous feminist inquiry from Indigenous contexts; as Indigenous feminist scholars, we bring our unique

experiences from within our Nations, our communities, and our families to then challenge colonialism, which then adds to the field of Indigenous feminist theory.

Indigenous women have all experienced colonization and the imposition of patriarchy, which Suzack et al. (2010) have attested, “transformed Indigenous societies by diminishing Indigenous women’s power, status, and material circumstances” (p. 3). Arvin et al. (2013) have explained that they use the term “Native” feminist theoryⁱ instead of Indigenous feminist theory to denote that this decolonial work is not the sole responsibility of Indigenous peoples or Indigenous women or feminists; rather, it is the responsibility of all people who to seek to challenge settler colonialism to envision a decolonial future.

A central component to broadening feminist understandings of the work of decolonization is to look to the stories of Indigenous women who are enacting decolonization in their everyday practices. Certainly, there were many early critiques from Indigenous women scholars such as Jaimes and Halsey (1992) and Trask (1996) that feminism was too white, too academic, and not located in Indigenous language or community. It has become widely accepted that Indigenous feminist theory is a valuable tool to uncover how colonialism and patriarchal values has become imbedded within our traditions, teachings, values, and relationships (McGuire-Adams, 2009; Phillips, 2012). To this end, LaRocque (2007) explained that Indigenous women “must be both decolonizers and feminist” (p. 68) in order to uncover how colonialism has impacted our Indigenous ways of thinking and practices.

While Indigenous feminist theory has produced relevant knowledge on such issues pertaining to culture, activism, politics, for instance, the field has yet to consider physical activity pertaining to health and associated practices of decolonization. Notably, Anderson (2011) and Simpson (2011) clarified that decolonization for Indigenous women includes a remembering of

our stories, to be then be applied to fostering wellbeing, healing, regenerate our connections to our lands. This study adds to Indigenous feminist theory and the sociology of sport by focusing on how Anishinaabekweg are experiencing decolonization through physical activity, specifically running.

Methodology

While Indigenous methodologies have become popular ways to conduct research with Indigenous peoples, pan-Indigenous approaches lack grounding in any one particular Indigenous group's knowledge, land, language, and practices. As a result, we have chosen to use an Anishinaabeg research methodology, which employs principles of Anishinaabe-inaadiziwin (way of being) that are given to Anishinaabeg through our dibaajimowinan (personal stories) (Geniusz, 2009). Stories have long been used as teaching tools (King, 2003). As King (2003) explained, once we have heard a story, we then may choose to learn from it, and continue to share it, which signals the importance of stories in generating current and future perceptions about our life. Further, Anishinaabeg stories are “useful Anishinaabe methods of gathering knowledge when rooted in the Anishinaabe worldview” (Simpson, 2000, p. 181), and are thus a key component of the Anishinaabeg research paradigm employed within this research (McGuire-Adams, in press), which was developed based on Wilson's (2008) instructional framework for developing Indigenous research paradigms.

The components of an Anishinaabeg research paradigm (McGuire-Adams, in press) are ontology - Inaadiziwin (Geniusz, 2009); epistemology - Biskaabiiyaang (Geniusz, 2009; Simpson, 2011); axiology - Niizhwaaswi kchtwaa kinomaadiwinan (Benton-Banai, 1988), and methodology - Wiisokotaatiwin (McGuire-Adams, 2009). The first author pieced together Anishinaabeg gikendaasowin (knowledge) from Anishinaabeg scholars to create a space from

which to engage in research that both centered Anishinaabeg inaadiziwin, and to foster reciprocal relationships with the research participants. For instance, inaadiziwin, which means the Anishinaabeg way of being, is represented by the dibaajimowinan from the participants; biskaabiiyang, which means returning to ourselves, is represented by the ancestral stories that guide the research and includes decolonization; niizhwaaswi kchtwaa kinomaadiwinan, which are the seven sacred gifts or seven grandfather teachings include: nbwaakaawin (wisdom); zaagidwin (love); mnaadendimowin (respect); aakwade'ewin (bravery); gwekwaadiziwin (honesty); dbaadendziwin (humility); debwewin (truth), were enacted by the first author's relationship with the research participants; and wiisokotaatiwin, which means gathering together for a purpose, fosters a sense of community within the research. By grounding the research within an Anishinaabeg research paradigm, an Anishinaabeg presence is built in academia and connects mindfully and spiritually to the first author's role as an Anishinaabe researcher and also to her participants, communities, family, ancestors, manitous (spirits), and to Gitchimanitou (the Great Spirit).

Methods

The first author recruited seven Anishinaabekweg by word of mouth opportunities and key informant selection (Newman, 2010). Only four of the participants were runners; thus, in this paper we focus only on those participants. The research method of storytelling was used to guide the interviews (Kovach, 2009), and a list of open-ended questions was used to assist the women in sharing their dibaajimowinan. Anishinaabeg and Western research protocols were followed: offering of semaa and the first author's Anishinaabe name, clan, and community, and approval was secured from the Research Ethics Board at the University of Ottawa. As per their signed consent forms, and recognizing the importance of crediting expert knowledge, each participant is

identified by her name and First Nation community.

Carrienne, a mother of two, is from Waaskinigaa or Birch Island, which is located on the northeastern shore of Lake Superior. She started running 10 milers and then advanced to half-marathons, marathons, and then completed an ultra-marathon. In addition to being a marathon runner, Carrienne is a fitness coach and runs multiple fitness programs in her community.

Racheal is a mother of three who has been running for most of her adult life and has completed multiple marathons. She is from Sandy Lake First Nation and currently lives in Thunder Bay, Ontario. Maria is a mother of three from the Kitigan Zibi First Nation, and she has run multiple marathons. Further, Maria is also a certified Rebounding instructor and mentors beginner runners. Janelle is a mother of three from the Bois Fort Band of Chippewa in upper State Minnesota. She has been running marathons, 50 milers, and 100 milers for the past few years, and, also mentors beginner runners. The interviews were one to two hours in length. Three were conducted in person and one was conducted over Skype.

Results

Anishinaabeg-informed thematic analysis (McGuire-Adams, 2017) was used to analyze the dibaajimowinan from the participants. Coupling thematic analysis (Braun & Clark, 2006) with the Anishinaabeg research paradigm, the first author correspondingly sought spiritual guidance, through her spiritual practices and physical activity, and continually reflected upon the Anishinaabeg concepts included in the research paradigm to analyze the participants' dibaajimowinan. As the first author engaged in the Anishinaabeg-informed analysis process three themes emerged: running as ceremony and healing, which signals the importance of running on the land; the significance of running as a group with other women that helps to inspire others; and running for health and personal goals.

Running as Ceremony and Healing

The Anishinaabekweg participants told stories about how their running, specifically, was an act of healing and ceremony. For example, Carrienne explained that, for her, running marathons is comparable to completing a Sun Dance ceremony:

Running is my ceremony and when I [train for a marathon] it takes months – just like preparing for the Sundance – you have to prepare for what was going to happen. I endure an awful lot when I run; there's the heat or it's raining, or it's cold. I'm enduring that as I'm going through. As I start I'm offering my [prayers] and as I go I'm talking to the trees and the rocks and listening to what's around me and I'm constantly praying for people. I'm praying for those that can't run; I'm praying for those murdered and missing women...So at the finish line, I then feel really, really empowered because I've done my ceremony. I've taken my time to prepare and then I go through that journey...and they say it's the runner's high, but it's not: it's the sense that I've done my ceremony.

Racheal, another marathon runner, explained that running helps her to heal by overcoming and releasing stress:

I found running cleared my head - like I can feel my heart again and feel everything negative [leave] through my breath and through my sweat. And sometimes I just ran so hard and fast I would end up crying at the end of my run. It is a way for me to release what [stressors] were going on...and I found myself connecting with the Creator.

Personal healing also resonated with why Maria chooses to run. She explained that when she does not run, she begins to feel down or depressed to the point that she “noticed my thoughts were negative and I didn't feel good about myself, then everything was becoming negative. But when I started exercising it all went away...I made exercise a priority because it affected my

mentality.” Similarly, Janelle uses running as way address issues of depression and gain wholistic wellbeing. She explained,

I used to have to run to live; now I live to run. I have run since I was in junior high, but as an adult, I needed to get back to running just out of health reasons. I was struggling with depression at the time, really bad depression, but was able to get off medication with just running and diet.

Carrienne, Racheal, Maria, and Janelle also use running as a means to connect with ceremony. Carrienne directs her thoughts, prayers, and her physicality to those she wants to help. Racheal, Maria, and Janelle run, at times, to engage in a personal healing ceremony and to overcome negative feelings. Through their dibaajimowinan, the Anishinaabeg runners signaled the important healing aspects of running in their Anishinaabeg territories. All the women shared how their act of running enabled a spiritual connection with the land within their territories; for them, running cannot be separated from being on the land because running takes place, most often, outside. Carrienne specifically mentioned how she connects to the land around her when she runs by listening to what is around her and making a connection to the trees and rocks. Racheal mentioned that she would often connect with the Creator when she ran for her personal healing in her community of Sandy Lake.

Running as a Group with other Women

Racheal shared that a group of her friends run together and they enter community running events under the team name I Am Team Anishinaabe. She shared that running as a group feels like a family:

[Running together] is pretty important. Right now [in December], we're all doing our own things, either going to the gym or going to Unleashed Fitness or Bootcamp. But by

March/April we start running together once in a while on Saturday or Sunday mornings, early - we don't get to sleep in! We're just committed to try to run with each other at least once a week. It's like a family. Even though we're not blood related and we don't always have to talk to each other, [we] motivate each other to keep going or [see when] we need to take some time off.

Running together as a group provides motivation for the runners and creates a community of support. For instance, Janelle runs with other Anishinaabekweg in a group named Kwe Pack, where they support each other with running. The group started with five women and, over time, it grew to a core group of 25 women. In order to coordinate their running schedules, they created a closed group Facebook page that has upwards of 100 members. An essential component of Kwe Pack is supporting each other:

Essentially is started out with five of us and it really grew...we just really connected and kind of shared the same the goal of wanting to be healthy role models for our children. And continue to be healthy for ourselves. It just occurred to me to be a domino effect, like one friend invited another friend, and we all just connected and we all got to be good friends. We all support each other, we provide information to each other, we push each other to do things we never thought we would.

The Kwe Pack members have gone onto run in races together including 5km runs, full marathons, and ultra-marathons. An important element of storytelling in research, is to engage in a reciprocal sharing of stories (Wilson, 2008). As such, during the interview, the first author shared the story of the michitweg with Janelle and her response indicated how the Kwe Pack connects with the term: "That is the first time I have heard of [michitweg], and it's really amazing how we are still doing this without knowing it. A lot of us don't know [about the

michitweg], but we are just doing it ‘cause it’s so natural for us to do!” Maria also connected her motivation to exercise as being part of a group atmosphere:

When you are not motivated to do it on your own being part of a group and connecting with other Native people is really important for your mentality...It’s much more than just exercise, it’s much more than just ‘getting things out.’ It’s having that connection with other Natives and feeling part of the Native community.

The Anishinaabekweg runners spoke about how their engagement in physical activity also empowered their families to become active. They all shared that their children, friends, partners, and/or family took up running or working out as a result of seeing them commit to running.

Running for Personal Goals and Health

The Anishinaabeg runners shared that running means a great deal to them in terms of achieving personal goals and health. Carrienne explained that a big part of her commitment to running comes from striving for the next race. Similarly, Racheal explained that planning and preparing of her next race is what keeps her committed to running; she carries a competitive spirit, which is not directed toward any other runner, but it enables her to improve her running completion times. Maria also explained that when she runs, her physical activity motivates her to achieve other life goals she sets for herself.

I can see how good and positively [running] affects you. For me with the distance running, I think about goals [while running] and you really think you can do anything and that's why I continue to do marathons, because I had these feelings that I could do anything...with my life goals.

In addition to setting and achieving specific running goals, the Anishinaabeg runners shared that they run for their health. Janelle provided her thoughts on how she has seen running help other Kwe Pack runners improve their health:

I have seen people in our group who were type 2 diabetic, or borderline diabetic, [or had] high blood pressure. And I've also seen [some people] use running in their recovery process (from alcohol) and that is really amazing. I didn't realize that until you are running with someone and they say, "did you know this about me?" And I am like, "Wow!" Because everyone has their own story and that is really amazing and powerful and that is how we hold each other up.

Further, as the Anishinaabeg runners are all mothers, they all explained that they run so their children may see them be healthy and active, thus setting a good example. Racheal explained,

Teaching [my] kids [about] a healthy active life is a big thing for me. Even though they're not following in my footsteps right now, my middle child would run with me once in a while or she would try to come to the gym with a couple times...she sees me [being active] is what I do, so yeah, [I] just trying to be active for my kids.

Discussion

While Indigenous feminist theory engages in important intersectional analyses, the core argument of this paper is that physical activity as a process of decolonization is missing from Indigenous feminist analysis and the sociology of sport, which is where we focus the discussion. This study makes a departure from viewing sport and physical activity as site of colonialism and instead makes a significant contribution to the field by connecting Anishinaabeg women's physical activity to decolonization, which also occurs from a strength and hope-based

perspective (Paraschak, 2013b). As mentioned above, Indigenous peoples' poor health is a result of colonialism (Bourassa, McKay-McNabb & Hampton, 2004; Loppie Reading & Wein, 2009). The field of Indigenous health research has used a deficit-based approach extensively when analyzing the poor health experienced by Indigenous peoples. What is required, however, is a strengths-based perspective that focuses on what is working well for Indigenous peoples to then encourage hope in others (Paraschak, 2013b; Paraschak & Thompson 2014). As decolonization requires a refusal of victimage and a regeneration of Indigenous values and abilities (Wilson, 2004), the Anishinaabekweg in this study showcase a strengths-based resistance to the impacts of colonialism and are decolonizing by mindfully connecting to their physical activity to ceremony, healing, inspiring others, and achieving personal health and wellbeing.

Importantly, Indigenous feminist theorists have clarified that the end goal of settler colonialism is to make Indigenous people disappear: without Indigenous people to contend with, the colonizers can finally claim full control over our lands (Arvin et al., 2013; Gunn Allen, 1986; Simpson, 2017). The dibaajimowinan from the Anishinaabekweg demonstrate how physical activity that is connected to territory is a process of healing, regeneration, and a reconnection to lands, and therefore, the Anishinaabekweg in this study are also challenging settler colonialism. The Anishinaabekweg runners interviewed as part of this study are modern day michitweg or oshki-michitweg (new runners); the new messages they carry are health and wellbeing, as seen for example in the Kwe Pack. The Kwe Pack choose to run on their ancestral trails as doing so directly connects them to the ideals of their ancestors' vitality. In a media story, one of the members of Kwe Pack explained that when she runs on their ancestral trails, she can feel the ancestors with her because they are on the very same trail system that their ancestors also used (StandingCloud, 2015).

Coulthard (2014) explained that an approach to resurgence from settler colonialism is to connect with our lands, and land based practices, either individually or collectively, which could “take the form of ‘walking the land’ in an effort to refamiliarize ourselves with landscapes and places that give our histories, languages, and cultures shape and content” (p. 171). Importantly, reconnecting to the land through land-based practices like running is an act of healing and decolonization for Indigenous peoples (Radu, House, & Pashagumskum, 2014). Anishinaabeg health and wellbeing is fundamentally connected to our territories; territories contain ancestral stories and are imbued with Anishinaabeg reciprocal relationships to all animate beings; territories are where Anishinaabeg identities, culture, teachings, and stories are found. This is why the research participants spoke about how they find healing while running and by reconnecting to their territories and, in so doing, the women create a community committed to health and wellbeing; the act of running on the land, thus, re-presences Anishinaabeg on the land, which also fosters personal decolonization through physical activity, and creates a community of support.

Findings from this study show that running creates a community of people directly engaged in supporting and inspiring one another in realizing their goals; more specifically, the group dimension of Anishinaabeg running creates a decolonial, Indigenous feminist space where Anishinaabekweg fostered a love of themselves and each other, which creates a community of support. Anishinaabeg, and other Indigenous women, have continually created communities of support for each other through visiting, for instance, which works in tandem with fostering their individual and collective strength (Goudreau, Weber-Pillwax, Cote-Meek, Madill & Wilson, 2008; Napoli, 2002). As a result of creating a community by running together, they practice decolonization by mindfully connecting their physicality to creating healthy and strong bodies.

This finding indicates that creating a community through physical activity may assist some women in overcoming the noted barriers (Bruner & Chad, 2013) in maintaining physical activity and health, and enable them to foster decolonization.

Additionally, the Anishinaabekweg runners reported engage in running for the purpose of ceremony. While Coppola et al. (2016) discussed the link between cultural practices such as sundancing or powwow dancing to foster overall wellbeing of Indigenous women, for many people it is not easy to attend such ceremonies. By running, Anishinaabekweg create a space to engage in ceremony that fits within their everyday lives. By using physical activity as a way to connect with healing and ceremony (Lavallée & Lévesque, 2013), they are generating a form of decolonization directed through physical activity, which is attentive to their personal practices of healing, is connected to the wellbeing of their communities, and is connected to ancestral practices.

Running on trails fosters decolonization through physical activity as it directly connects Anishinaabeg to their ancestors, as their ancestors ran on these very same trails, as seen in the example of michitweg and oshki-michitweg. By Anishinaabeg engaging in decolonization through physical activity, which takes place on their lands, they exercise the important practice of resurgence by re-presencing their bodies on their land, and fosters community regeneration. As noted by the participants, such practices of resurgence reverberate to children and community as seen in the family of the research participants who were inspired to begin running, for instance.

Importantly, we recognize that running is not an activity that is available to all Indigenous women. Further, we acknowledge that not all Indigenous women runners connect their running to decolonization. What we argue, however, is that for some, running can be an

important part of the decolonization process. Rather than focusing on deficit-based approaches through which sport and physical activity can promote and reaffirm colonialism, it is important to consider the ways that sport and physical activity promotes a strengths-based perspective (Paraschak & Thompson, 2014) through decolonization and resurgence.

Conclusion

The Anishinaabeg runners' dibaajimowinan of decolonization through physical activity make significant contributions to understanding ways in which decolonization and the challenging settler colonialism can occur. As they support each other, achieve health and personal goals, and inspire others within their family and community in becoming physically active, they further challenges settler colonialism by not succumbing to chronic diseases or physical inactivity. Ultimately, the Anishinaabekweg commitment to decolonization through physical activity is an example of how personal decolonization through physical activity can be achieved in a way that is rooted in their self-identified needs, knowledge, and cultural practices.

Glossary

Anishinaabekweg – Anishinaabeg women

Biskaabiiyaang – returning to ourselves

Dibaajimowinan - personal stories/teachings (dibaajimowinan is plural)

Gikendaasowin - knowledge

Gitchmanitou – Great Spirit

Inaadiziwin – Anishinaabeg way of being

Manitou – spirit

Michitweg – Anishinaabeg runners

Niizhwaaswi Kichtwaa Kinomaadiwinan – Seven Sacred/Grandfather Teachings

Nbwaakaawin (wisdom);

Zaagidwin (love)

Mnaadendimowin (respect);

Aakwade’ewin (bravery)

Gwekwaadiziwin (honesty)

Dbaadendziwin (humility)

Debwewin (truth)

Oshki-michitweg – new Anishinaabeg runners

Semaa – tobacco

Wiisokotaatiwin – gathering together for a purpose

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Footnote

ⁱ Throughout this paper, we have elected to use the term Indigenous feminist theory due to its dominant use within the literature, though we agree with Arvin et al.'s (2013) point.

Chapter 5:

“This is what I heard at Naicatchewenin”: Disrupting Embodied Settler Colonialism

This paper is currently under review with *Decolonization, Indigeneity, Education, & Society Journal*

Abstract

Through an Indigenous feminist lens, in this article I consider how Anishinaabeg stories are tools that disrupt embodied settler colonialism, which is experienced as historical trauma, grief, ill-health, and substance abuse. I explored the question, “how is settler colonialism manifested upon Anishinaabeg women’s bodies?” with eight Anishinaabeg Elders from Naicatchewinin First Nation. The Elders’ stories revealed that as we heal from the effects of colonialism by making changes from within, connect to our ancestral stories of physical strength, and apply them in our everyday practices of healing, we simultaneously disrupt embodied settler colonialism.

Keywords: Anishinaabeg women, Anishinaabeg stories, historical trauma, colonization, physical strength, decolonization.

Every summer my partner, my son, and I visit our family and territory in Treaty Three and Robinson-Superior Treaty territories (Anishinaabeg territory spans Ontario, Manitoba, and Upper State Minnesota). As we live in an urban space, visiting home is regenerative and healing; it is as if we connect to a battery to be re-charged to then go back to the urban setting. We visit with friends and family, connect to our land, and, as an Anishinaabe student, I visit with my Elders and ask for their guidance in my research. In early September of 2016, my partner and I visited with our Elders from Naicatchewenin, a small Anishinaabeg community in northwestern Ontario, about an hour's drive west of Fort Frances, Ontario. Naicatchewenin is known amongst the Anishinaabeg in our territory as a community that has worked to maintain our stories, teachings, and ceremonies, despite the violent attempts at erasure. The residents maintain shaking tent and sweatlodge ceremonies, a Midewewin lodge, host an annual powwow that draws people from all over Canada and the United States, and they use their traditional round house, which is where I met our Elders. Gilbertⁱ, one of the Elders, said, "As far back as I can remember, there is always people that come to Naicatchewenin to seek spiritual advice, such as what you are doing." The Elders then shared their own stories - stories that I have their permission to share with you, the reader.

The purpose of this article is to share what I learned from Naicatchewenin First Nation's Anishinaabeg Elders' stories of embodied settler colonialism and women's physical strength as I explored the question, "how is settler colonialism manifested upon Anishinaabeg women's bodies?" Early in my research on physical activity and decolonization, I began thinking about how embodied settler colonialism can be or is disrupted - what would happen if or when Anishinaabeg women mindfully engaged in revitalizing the physical strength of our ancestors in our own bodies? As we willfully strengthen our bodies, which are intrinsically connected to the

land and our ancestors, can we simultaneously contest settler colonialism through our strong bodies? Further, as we connect to our ancestral stories, can we also disrupt how embodied settler colonialism requires our ultimate erasure (Veracini, 2013)? The Elders' stories show that the effects of settler colonialism are related to the experience of historical trauma, grief, ill-health, and substance abuse. Additionally, they shared that Anishinaabeg women were physically strong in the past because strength was an active part of living on the land and in providing for their families. Their stories emphasized healing as we seek to personally decolonize and, further, that our stories of physical strength are important to challenge embodied settler colonialism. Thus, our stories are tools to prevent our erasure, which is the intent of settler colonialism (Simpson, 2017).

This article has three main sections. First, I discuss Indigenous feminist theory to show that settler colonialism necessarily requires the erasure and weakness of Indigenous women; I situate historical trauma, grief, ill-health, and substance abuse within the literature to provide a deeper understanding of embodied settler colonialism. Indigenous stories are then discussed to show their importance in disrupting embodied settler colonialism. Second, I explain the research method I used to interview the Anishinaabeg Elders. Third, I present the stories from Anishinaabeg Elders, which feature their perceptions regarding trauma, grief, healing embodied settler colonialism, and women's physical strength; more specifically, the Elders' shared stories of their mothers' and grandmothers' physical strength that was gained from trapping, cutting wood, collecting medicine, and paddling. I conclude by asserting that the stories of women being strong on the land signals a relational accountability to our ancestors that creates a responsibility within us to integrate these stories into our lives, which also helps us to heal from embodied settler colonialism.

Indigenous Feminist Theory

Indigenous feminist theory offers a space for scholars and communities to critically analyze how settler colonialism affects Indigenous women (Suzack, 2015). To this end, Indigenous feminist theorists focus on understanding how Indigenous women have an inherent connection to land, and uncover how colonizers enact violence against Indigenous women because of our connection to land (Anderson, 2010). Anderson (2011) provided an example of how this occurs by linking settlers' sense of entitlement to Indigenous land and, by extension, their sense of entitlement to Indigenous women's bodies. She explained, "the conflation on a symbolic level of Canadian identity with settler access to Native women's bodies places real Native women in a situation of constant danger and vulnerability to sexual and physical violence" (p. 178), with the ultimate purpose being to enact the "violent erasure of Native women altogether" (p. 179). Similarly, Barman (2010) noted that during colonization, settlers "depicted Indigenous men in terms of their physicality and Indigenous women in terms of their sexuality" (p. 93). Colonizers felt the need to show dominance over Indigenous women through sexual assaults, which also signified the dominance that was taking place on the land, and which is rooted in colonial heteropatriarchal ideologies.

Indigenous feminist theorists have argued that heteropatriarchy finds expression through images of men being "strong, capable, wise and composed," while the images of females are "weak, incompetent, naïve and confused" (Arvin, Tuck, & Morrill, 2013, p. 13). Certainly, in order to implement heteropatriarchy via colonization of the land, all semblances of matriarchal societies and the authority of Indigenous women had to be suppressed at best, and erased at worst, through enforced Christianity and residential schools (Gunn Allen, 1986). Likewise, Dillion (2015) theorised that settler colonialism necessarily requires violence against Indigenous

women and girls. She explained, “Indigenous girls carry history, memory, and otherwise futures within their bodies, within their varied experiences of colonial occupation and their resistance to it” (p. 14). Therefore, Indigenous women who resist embodied settler colonialism pose a direct threat to its maintenance, which fundamentally requires the erasure of Indigenous people generally (Arvin et al., 2013; Veracini, 2013), and Indigenous women specifically (Anderson, 2011; Dillion, 2015; Simpson, 2014; Simpson, 2017).

Indigenous feminists theorize that Indigenous women are credible threats to on-going settler entitlement to Indigenous territories and are actively targeted for silence, and even death, because of their connection to land (Anderson, 2011; Simpson, 2014; Simpson, 2017). For instance, the nearly 1200 missing or murdered Indigenous women and girls in Canada are associated with the logic of settler colonialism (Anderson, 2011; Simpson, 2014; Simpson, 2017), which is also reflective of how Indigenous women’s bodies are casualties of settler colonialism. Simpson’s (2017) important article, “The State is a Man: Theresa Spence, Loretta Saunders and the Gender of Settler Sovereignty,” emboldens the link between the violent erasure of Indigenous women’s bodies and the ongoing dispossession and theft of our territories. She explained that our lives as Indigenous women are anomalies because we are meant to disappear by any means necessary (e.g., state mechanisms, murder, etc.). A distressing example of how violence is tethered to settler colonial erasure occurred in Thunder Bay, Ontario. During the 2013 Idle No More Movement, an Anishinaabekwe was abducted and sexually assaulted as a direct settler colonial response to the Movement (Simpson, 2014). The woman disclosed to the media that while she was being assaulted, the perpetrators linked their assault to the ongoing Movement (Porter, 2013). The examples of violence against Indigenous women are pervasive (e.g. refer to the CBC News investigation into missing and murdered, CBC News, 2016.), as is the colonial

violence enacted against the LGBTQ2IA communities (Hunt, 2016). In response to the murder of Loretta Saunders in 2014, Indigenous feminist Leanne Simpson (2014) argued that violence enacted against Indigenous women is not a matter of individual assaults, but “a symptom of settler colonialism, white supremacy and genocide, [and further], gender violence and murdered and missing women are symptoms of the dispossession of Indigenous peoples from our territories” (para. 18). As Dillion (2015) showed, while Indigenous women and girls only make up a small fraction of the overall Canadian population, we are eight times more likely to die of homicide when compared to non-Indigenous women. Indigenous feminist theorists have clearly illustrated that settler colonialism is violent and murderous (Simpson, 2017), and it is also embodied, as seen, for instance, in the ill-health, trauma, grief, and substance abuse many Indigenous peoples experience.

Embodied Settler Colonialism

Indigenous women’s ill-health cannot be separated from the context of colonialism (Browne, Smye, & Varcoe 2005; Browne, McDonald, & Elliott, 2009). Prior to colonization, Indigenous peoples had to be physically strong in order to live a healthy life on the land. Settler colonialism removed Indigenous peoples from their lands, which caused lasting reverberations within our communities, families, and our bodies. As the land is Indigenous peoples’ territories inscribed with our stories of wellbeing, settler colonialism causes a violent “disruption of Indigenous relationships to land...that is reasserted each day of occupation” (Arvin et al., 2013, p. 5). The removal of our bodies from the land is related to the ill-health Indigenous women experience in nearly every category of examination (Bourassa, McKay-McNabb, & Hampton, 2004). Previous research on Indigenous women’s ill-health is contextualized within a historical and socio-economic context, and shows that cultural identity and community-based program

initiatives as protective factors to ill-health (Halseth, 2013; Wilson, 2004). Still, further analysis is necessary to understand how our bodies are effected by embodied settler colonialism, in addition to the ill-health we may experience. Viewing our ill-health through the lens of settler colonialism, we can see that Indigenous peoples' ill-health supports our erasure, and this is especially true for Indigenous women. As we eventually succumb to diabetes, heart disease, cancer, etc., settler colonialism becomes, and is, an embodied experience. Consequently, when Indigenous women die of ill-health or chronic diseases, we are also fulfilling the logic of settler colonial erasure.

Embodied settler colonialism also has profound cumulative and intergenerational effects, which is correspondingly discussed in the literature as historical and intergenerational trauma. Brave Heart (1993, 2003) contextualized the historical trauma, grief, ill-health, and substance abuse experienced by many Indigenous peoples as effects of colonialism. For instance, she explained that when people succumb to ill-health, alcoholism and other substance abuse, their deaths amplify the trauma and grief Indigenous peoples are already living with due to “historically traumatic losses across generations” (Brave Heart, 2003, p. 8) because of genocide. Kirmayer, Gone, and Moses (2014) agreed and concluded, “the traumatic events endured by communities negatively impact on individual lives in ways that result in future problems for their descendants” (p. 307). Recently, scholars have found that Indigenous informed healing, coupled with strategies for resilience, can disrupt the collective, cumulative, and inter/transgenerational impacts of colonialism (Hatala, Desjardins, & Bombay, 2016; Hartman & Gone, 2014; Kirmayer et al., 2014). However, as settler colonialism requires our ultimate erasure to secure our territories, trauma, grief, substance abuse, and ill-health, are all used as tools of embodied settler colonialism, which contributes to our eventual erasure.

Remembering and connecting with our Indigenous stories is a recognized way to address and heal from embodied settler colonialism (Brave Heart, 2003; Hatala, Desjardins, Bombay, 2016). For instance, Hatala et al. (2016) explored resilience and wellbeing through interviews with Cree Elders who explained that stories, “helped people find meaning amid distressing historical and contemporary experiences” (p. 1920). Similarly, Anishinaabeg stories are significant when one engages in healing to disrupt embodied settler colonialism. Minor (2013) clarified that storytelling is a “medicinal practice tied to the strength of the earth and helps Indigenous peoples combat the omnipotent horrors of colonialism, and therefore serves as an anti-colonial and liberatory device” (p. 322). Indigenous feminist theorists have further emphasized the role our respective Indigenous stories have in disrupting the hegemony of settler colonialism, as our stories are tools to vision decolonization (Laduke, 1997; Simpson, 2011; Suzack, Huhndorf, Perreault, & Barman, 2010).

Method

Following Anishinaabe protocolⁱⁱ, the Elders and I met in the Naicatchewenin round house. I offered semaa (tobacco), introduced who I was, my clan, my community, and shared my stories to show my truthⁱⁱⁱ. This protocol is important as it showed the Elders where I come from and showed my purpose in seeking help from Naicatchewenin. I chose to visit with the Elders in Naicatchewenin, as I have a previous connection to the community. Kovach (2009) and Wilson (2008) emphasized the importance of using sharing circles in Indigenous research, as Kovach explained, “[Indigenous peoples] don’t have focus groups, we have circles” (Kovach, 2009, p.152). Wilson (2008) also promoted talking circles as an appropriate method of data collection when engaging in Indigenous research. Thus, I used sharing circles as my research method. Sharing circles involve participants sitting in a circle to engage in respectful discussion regarding

a topic; each person can talk about the subject while the other participants listen respectfully (Wilson, 2008).

Eight Elders participated in the circle; some Elders chose to share more than others, and some chose to listen, which is common in sharing circles. There were four women and four men who participated, all of whom live in Naicatchewenin. Although my research focussed on Anishinaabeg women, I interviewed Elders irrespective of their gender identity, as they all carry stories that were important for this research. The Elders agreed to be audio recorded for the purposes of producing confidential transcripts. With the participants' permission, I shared the completed transcripts with a member of the Chief and Council who coordinates communications with the Elders, along with the original recording of the sharing circle to be kept and/or used by the community. Gilbert instructed me to share the Elders' stories to help with our collective learning as Anishinaabeg now and into the future. He said, "Share with them: *this is what I heard at Naicatchewenin*. What you are hearing up to this point in time, this is real."

To better understand how to create resistance to embodied settler colonialism, I asked the Anishinaabeg Elders from Naicatchewenin how our ancestral stories of women showing physical strength on the land might help with this resistance. The Elders immediately began to share stories of historical trauma, grief, and healing. It was only after this that they began to share stories of Anishinaabeg women's physical strength on the land. Upon reflection, and in seeking guidance (by offering tobacco to manitouwag - spirits), I came to the realization that to challenge embodied settler colonialism we must seek healing. It is only after we have attended to our personal healing can we absorb and apply our ancestral stories in our lives. In the next section, I present the stories of the Elders. I purposely chose to braid the results and discussion of

the sharing circle so as not to compartmentalize the learning that occurred, which resonates with the process of learning in a cyclical way.

Settler Colonial Grief: “Historical trauma....our blood remembers”

The Elders were keenly aware of how settler colonialism is felt, embodied, and carried through grief and historical trauma. Anna shared how she experienced grief resulting from residential school and its impact on her and her community,

I have grief over [not being taught by my grandma] because I lost learning about the plants because I was sent to the residential school. For me, with my culture, I believe in our traditional ways, but also, I’m caught in the middle with the bible and stuff like that ‘cause that is what we were taught... I am still fluent in my language, even though we went to residential school and we were beaten when we spoke our Ojibway language, Anishinaabemowin. And I still speak fluently, but I also, I don’t know how to say this, but I am stuck in that Indian residential school era. I am beaten by English. I want to speak English more than Ojibway. Today my children, they understand a little bit, some are trying to speak, but they would ask me, “Why didn’t you teach us to talk Anishinaabemowin?” I felt that I couldn’t even tell them because it was taboo to even speak about it. I know that being a residential school product, I have come a long way...I wasted 34 years of my life; I drank for 17 years and smoked for another 17 years. In 2000, that is where I put everything away, the cigarettes, the pot, the hash. It was back in ’85 I put the bottle down, but 34 years I wasted my life. Struggling. Struggling. Looking. Searching....for me also, grief is such a big thing in our communities, families, and individuals...grief hits us all and that is something that we need to heal from. At least get

to a better place with [addressing our] grief. It isn't just the old people; it is everybody in the community. Grief hits everyone in the community.

Anna went on to describe historical trauma and its intergenerational effects:

We all carry hurt...my children they have a lot of anger and that anger comes from that hurt and fear...as Anishinaabe people we carry a lot of trauma. It is historical trauma. For me, my dad went to residential school, I went to residential school, me and my brothers. That is two generations and that still flows through to my grandchildren's blood. It is in our blood. Our blood remembers that pain that hurt, that anger. That is why it is still there. It is in our blood. For me, I want that to stop. That is how we heal - when someone stands up and says, "that is it, that is enough. Enough. No more."

Anna experienced grief because she was taken away to residential school. Her experience further shows how settler colonialism forcefully, and violently, removed a young girl from her loving teacher, her grandmother, disrupting the transmission of knowledge about medicinal plants. Anna grieved the loss of not only her connection from her grandmother, but also her connection to the land, both of which had intergenerational effects. Her grief caused her to engage in substance abuse and feel the tension between the indoctrination of Christianity and English and the pull towards her Anishinaabe identity and language. Nicolai and Saus (2013) explained such feelings as historical trauma: "symptoms of historical trauma include somatic, psychological, physical, and spiritual problems relating to the unresolved grief cause by colonization and presenting as high rates of depression, anxiety, suicidal behavior, substance abuse, disrupted relationships, diagnosable disorders and various other symptoms" (p. 58). Researchers have noted the link between a survivor's attendance at residential schools and the lasting reverberations to not only their own health and wellbeing, but to consecutive generations'

(Bombay, 2015; Bombay, Matheson, & Anisman, 2014; Loppie-Reading & Wein, 2009).

Clearly, our Elders have not been immune to the effects of settler colonialism; often, they were on the front lines in experiencing the trauma, which has had intergenerational reverberations on health.

Gilbert shared that he learned how impactful grief is in our families and linked it to the ill-health, such as cancer, Indigenous peoples often experience:

And one of the things I heard in my travels, with grief, when people were talking about grief [was that] if you don't deal with that grief when you are grieving, if you just keep it inside, that cancer is going to break out in your weak areas. And that is what is pushing it - that grief that you are carrying, 'cause that cancer doesn't know how to dissolve that grief, cause it's not visible...That is why a lot of times our people, when they don't deal with their issues, they catch that cancer...That is why grief is so important: when you are grieving you have to grieve properly and not to hold it down...If you don't deal with grief in a proper way, you are going to get sick.

Research has shown a connection between the psychological distress of colonialism and chronic diseases, including cancer, heart disease, and stroke (Reading, 2009). For instance, a 2016 study amongst Apsáalooke (Crow) people in the United States found that historical trauma and loss experienced because of colonization directly “impacted the development and management of chronic illness among Crow people” (Real Bird, Held, McCormick, Hallet, Martin, & Trottier, 2016, p. 206), specifically diabetes and other common chronic diseases. This resonates with why Gilbert recognized the connection between unresolved grief and illness, such as cancer. According to the literature, historically, Indigenous peoples experienced lower cancer incidences and mortality in comparison to non-Indigenous people (Nishri, Sheppard, Withrow, &

Marrett, 2015); however, cancer rates are increasing (Reading, 2009), and one study showed that survival rates of cancer are poorer among First Nations people when compared to Ontario's general population (Nishri, Sheppard, Withrow, & Marrett, 2015). Indeed, Brave Heart (1998) explained that for Indigenous peoples, "historical unresolved grief involves the profound, unsettled bereavement that results from generations of devastating losses" (p. 288), which results in cumulative anguish that effects physical, emotional, spiritual, and mental wellbeing.

Healing Embodied Settler Colonialism: "It Starts from Within You"

While Anna and Gilbert described how they have personally experienced trauma and grief, they also talked about healing. Gilbert shared how he has seen healing take place in the community, which stopped some of the substance abuse, but he noted, "we are not quite there yet. We still have problems...drugs, addictions." He explained further,

We have come a long way in our own healing. The people that are sitting around here [in the sharing circle] are sober people. Some of us have many years of sobriety, which we didn't have forty or fifty years ago. And that is the kind of message we want to leave [with] the young lady sitting with us, who is going around collecting [stories about] what would help people to live a better life. That's what I am hearing, that is what she is searching for, and how do you do it? We all know how you do it; it starts from within you. That is what you have to tell people: it starts from within and then it grows from there.

Anna shared that she engaged in a lot of personal healing work to move through the historical trauma and grief in order to foster forgiveness,

For me, in my own healing journey, I have been to many treatments, many ceremonies, and I am really happy where I am today. I like to think I am in a good place anyways. I

have come a long ways with my sobriety...But today, I believe the culture is our healing. There is healing in our culture...you have to forgive and accept what happened to you. It is very important to our young people. I see so many of our young people stuck in addiction. That is part of our historical trauma. Our young people need to understand where we came from.

Gilbert and Anna showed that healing from within is necessary to challenge embodied settler colonialism, which is experienced as historical trauma, grief, ill-health, and substance abuse, is not easy, but it is necessary to foster healing. Gilbert shared that even though he lives a healthy life, he still struggles sometimes:

It is so true too when Elders say life is not easy. It's true. For me, being sober for many years, I still have stumbling blocks that I run into. Sometimes these stumbling blocks are so powerful, where I want to give up, to hell with everything. I will just quit doing what I am doing...sometimes I come close thinking the hell with all of this, miiyah, enough. Just let go of everything. But, that is what life is all about it, [the] Anishinaabe way of life, and that is what our Elders always talk about: life is not easy.

The historical trauma brought on by settler colonialism is embodied and manifests in substance abuse, unresolved grief, illness and chronic diseases, which is directly connected to our forced displacement from the land (Loppie-Reading & Wein, 2009; Reading, 2009). Despite the lasting effects of embodied settler colonialism, the Elders showed resiliency and chose to heal through connecting with culture, forgiveness, and gaining sobriety and this healing starts from within. This resonates with what Brave Heart (2003) explained is necessary to resolve our historical trauma and grief, which is the reconnection with ceremonies and traditional culture. She stated that Indigenous peoples should “foster a reattachment to traditional Native values”

(Brave Heart, 2003, p. 11) and a connection to pre-traumatic past. Similarly, Piyēsiw, a Cree Elder interviewed as part of Hatala et al.'s (2016) study, explained that Indigenous peoples were able to survive colonization due to "[our] ability to align with ancestral spirits and narratives" (p. 1921). Restoring Indigenous values and remembering the stories of our ancestors are key components of recovering from the trauma brought by settler colonialism. As such, I asked the Elders from Naicatchewenin to share their memories of their Anishinaabekweg ancestors showing strength on the land.

Women's Physical Strength: "It was just the way of life"

The Elders shared that for their mothers and grandmothers, their physical strength came from working on the land through trapping or working in the bush. Delia explained that her mom began cutting pulp wood in the bush to support the family, as her father died rather young.

Similarly, Luke's mother trapped animals to feed her family. He explained,

My mom [trapped] to feed us. She trapped but not beaver, just muskrat...yeah, she worked in the bush too. I used to go and help her, but I wasn't even that big...She cut jack pine there with a handsaw. They had to pile it up so they could scale it...most of the time I kept my sister and the other little guy. She was strong though. She did anything that those guys did for work in the bush and they'd all load [the wood] up on sleighs before spring, leave them on the lake, she helped those too, to load the sleighs, 8-foot wood.

Anna shared that she used to help her aunt with collecting muskrats:

She used to go out and set traps and she would get me to help her. She would walk that whole river and go check her traps. She would carry a packsack and carry those muskrats

home. I used to walk with her. It was quite a walk; it took almost all day to go and check all the traps on the river.

Delia's and Luke's mothers were physically strong enough to cut and load wood, and for Luke's mother, she specifically maintained a physicality that was on par with the men with whom she worked. Also, Luke and his siblings were brought into the bush with their mom while she worked. This resonates with Anna's experience with her aunt. Anna also shared that she learned how to paddle from her:

My little grandma was a very powerful woman. She knew plants and this is how she helped people...what I remember, for me that was the happiest time of my life, being around my grandma, playing, learning, and that is how kids learn... and that is where I learned unconditional love. My grandma, to me, she loved everybody. It didn't matter who came to her for help. If it was someone who did something wrong to her, she still helped that person...I remember, I don't know what the plant was, but she would be gone all day to go and pick this plant 'cause it grew way out in the bush, and she would go walk and pick that plant for that person...But she taught me a lot of things...I remember we lived on the other side of a point with my grandma and when we would come to powwows we would paddle around the point. She made me a little paddle so I could help paddle. And this was when I was six or eight. I was eight when I was taken away from here. But in that time I learned how to paddle, with my own little paddle, and [I felt] so good to know that I could paddle as a little girl.

Gilbert clarified why women trapped or worked in the bush:

They did what they had to do to survive. That is a survival skill, same thing working in the bush - they had to do it...And back then too, when we were living that way, we didn't

think “oh, this is tough.” When we think back now, we see how hard life was, but at the time when it was happening, we didn’t think it was hard. It was just the way of life. For our ancestors, being physically strong was a part of everyday life. The Elders remembered the physical strength their mothers, grandmothers, and aunties had and that it was an important part of Anishinaabeg being and providing for one’s family.

Anderson (2010) shared a similar story that highlighted the practice of teaching through notokwew maciwin (old lady hunting) as described by Cree/Metis Elder Maria Campbell:

Campbell remembers that it was the grandmothers who were the first teachers of hunting and trapping. Children as young as three or four would go out with their grandmothers to set snares because it was the grannies’ job to teach children to be thankful, respectful, and gentle with the animals at this time and in this context. Old ladies were deemed to be the most appropriate first teachers of hunting because of their experience and wisdom as life givers. (p. 82)

This knowledge is applicable to other Indigenous nations, not just to Cree or Anishinaabeg, as Indigenous grandmothers carried an important teaching role for their families, in particular their grandchildren. Further, this story from Elder Maria Campbell showed that even in their older years, many elders maintained a level of physical strength and fitness that would necessitate their continued land-based practices, which resonates with the Elders’ from Naicatchewenin accounts of their mothers and grandmothers.

Physical strength was an important quality to foster in girls and women when living on the land. Hunting, trapping, collecting medicine etc. are all forms of physical strength on the land and require agile, strong bodies. Treuer (2001) further explained that Anishinaabeg who lived on the land embodied “wajebaadizi, which means to be spry, peppy, and full of life” (p. 204). He

gave the example of an Anishinaabekwe Elder who grew up in a traditional Ojibway life, and even into her seventies had a strong body, had her wits about her, and “rarely complained of any physical condition” (Treuer, 2001, p. 204). Importantly, the Elders’ stories challenge heteropatriarchal beliefs about women’s bodies being inferior and weak. Having strong bodies allowed our ancestors to take care of themselves, their families, and others in their community. The physical strength Anishinaabekweg fostered from being on the land was disrupted by the settler colonial agenda that forcefully removed our bodies from the territory, via residential schools, relocation to reserves, etc., the results of which directly inform how settler colonialism is embodied.

I had the privilege of learning from the Elders when I asked them if they could share their ancestral stories of women being strong on the land. And in typical Anishinaabeg manner, they did not directly answer my question, but led me to where I needed to go: To challenge embodied settler colonialism, Anishinaabeg should attend to our historical trauma, grief, ill-health, and substance abuse. I am cognizant that Anishinaabeg experience a broad range of embodied settler colonialism. For instance, there are many people who do not have issues with substance abuse; however, the collective trauma we have experienced and continue to experience because of settler colonialism cannot be overstated. Through their stories, the Elders taught me that addressing embodied settler colonialism is not just a matter of remembering our ancestral stories; rather, we must first address the foundation of our disconnection and then resist embodied settler colonialism through remembering and applying our stories of strength in our lives. Further, when we listen to our ancestral stories, we enact a process of personal decolonization and resilience; we heal and come to know our bodies as strong by listening and applying the stories of the physical strength of our Anishinaabekweg ancestors in our everyday lives. Thus, what unfolds is

a sense of our bodies through our storied Anishinaabeg images of strength, which ultimately disrupts embodied settler colonialism and fosters the revitalization of other Anishinaabeg and Indigenous peoples. This lens causes a willful contention to embodied settler colonialism and is an enactment of Anishinaabeg stories in our lives.

Conclusion

Indigenous feminist theorists have examined how Indigenous women have been and are connected to and removed from the land, which functioned to secure settler colonialism. What had yet to be considered in Indigenous feminist analysis is how it is embodied. To this end, I shared Anishinaabeg stories by presenting the results of a sharing circle with Elders, which sought to understand how settler colonialism is manifested in Anishinaabeg women's bodies. The Elders' stories demonstrated that the removal of our bodies from the land had devastating effects such as trauma, grief, ill-health, and substance abuse, which are experienced as embodied settler colonialism. Anishinaabeg stories are central to creating an Anishinaabeg future where we embody wellness, strength, and regeneration. Our Anishinaabekweg ancestors exhibited wajebaadizi: they were physically strong, capable, self-determined and their bodies were materialized through living on the land. Thus, as Anishinaabekweg seek out ancestral stories on our decolonial and healing journeys, we may also learn to apply these stories in our everyday lives. As Johnson-ba (1976) taught his readers 41 years ago, "It was from their ancestors that the Anishinaabeg inherited their understandings of life and being, all that they were and ought to be" (p. 27).

Future research may look to forms of physical activity that are consciously connected with ideals of ancestral strength and/or practiced on the land, which may further enact a powerful resistance to embodied settler colonialism. In addition, as a cis-gendered, able-bodied,

Anishinaabekwe who used this lens from which to hear the Elders' stories, I cannot share how embodied settler colonialism is experienced by our LGBT2QIA community members, and community members with disabilities. As such, areas of future research include understanding and broadening embodied settler colonialism including: LGBT2QIA stories of strength and Indigenous disability theorizations of the body. Finally, as I continue to listen, collect, and share our Anishinaabekwe stories of physical strength, I recommend that you, the reader, also seek out your own stories to support your journey to deconstruct embodied settler colonialism, because, as the Elders said, "it starts from within."

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Footnotes

ⁱ As per their signed consent forms, some Elders chose to remain anonymous, and in these instances, I have assigned pseudonyms.

ⁱⁱ I also received an ethics certificate from the Research Ethics Board at (blinded university) to conduct this research.

ⁱⁱⁱ As Pitawanakwat (2013) explained, our Anishinaabeg stories include “a commitment of truth” (p.372), whereas English (colonial) understandings of stories “connote falsehood, rumour, or spin” (p. 372).

Chapter 6:

Wiisokotaatiwin: Kettlebell Training, Critical Dialogue, and Creating Wellbeing through Physical Activity

Abstract

Recently, Indigenous health scholars have argued that Indigenous-led research may play an important role in identifying more sustainable ways to foster wellbeing and health in Indigenous peoples than Eurocentric approaches. The need to focus on the wellbeing and health of Indigenous women is particularly vital, as Indigenous women experience more ill health when compared to Indigenous men and non-Indigenous people. Further, Indigenous women's viewpoints on their health are imperative in identifying strategies to resist ill health. In this paper, I examine the results of Wiisokotaatiwin (an Anishinaabe term that means gathering together for a purpose), a seven-week process that I, an Anishinaabe researcher, led. Through this process, 12 urban Indigenous women participated in a program that used physical activity as a way to bring women together to discuss the connections between colonization, decolonization, physical activity, and health and wellness. Results from the study indicated that Wiisokotaatiwin enabled the creation of community and critical dialogue, which resulted in the challenging of the participants' marginalization and an enhancement of their wellbeing.

Western-based analyses of Indigenous peoples' health have exposed disparities in such areas as chronic diseases and indicators of wellbeing when compared to non-Indigenous peoples' health. For instance, Indigenous peoples report poorer health and high rates of chronic health conditions (Gionet & Roshanafshar, 2013). Further, health research indicates that Indigenous women experience an alarming rate of chronic diseases and are less likely to report their health as excellent or very good when compared to Indigenous men and non-Indigenous people (Arriagada, 2016). Yet, despite extensive research, few improvements of Indigenous peoples' health have occurred (Reading, 2009). In response to the persistence of health disparities, the field of Indigenous health research is focusing on Indigenous peoples' perspectives to identify meaningful ways to address health disparities (Ahenakew, 2011; Tobias, Richmond, & Luginaah, 2013). Further, Indigenous health researchers argued that for health disparities to improve, a concerted focus on Indigenous knowledge of health and wellbeing must occur to restore wellbeing (Ahenakew, 2011; Reading, 2009; Loppie Reading & Wein, 2009), particularly in the realm of physical activity (Lavallée, 2008).

Although there is a growing body of literature that has focused on Indigenous youth's experiences with physical activity (Johnston Research, Inc., 2011; McHugh, 2011), non-Indigenous female youth and physical activity (Forneris et al., 2013; Pfaeffli & Gibbons, 2010), and adult non-Indigenous women's experiences of physical activity (Castelnuovo & Guthrie, 1998; McDermott 1996 and 2000), there is little known about Indigenous women's participation in physical activity that is specifically for women in urban settings. More specifically, there are very few studies where authors have sought knowledge directly from Indigenous women regarding their physical activity in an urban setting. One notable exception is Lavallée's (2008) study, which focused on the impacts of martial arts training on the wellbeing of Indigenous

women in Toronto, Canada. The aim of her study was to determine if Indigenous women's involvement in physical activity had an impact on their overall sense of wellbeing. The Indigenous women who participated in her study reported that through their physical activity, they fostered a sense of belonging and community, which assisted in the reclamation of their identities as Indigenous women.

Lavallée's (2008) findings resonate with Thompson, Wolfe, Wilson, Pardilla, and Perez's (2003) study that focused on urban and rural Native American women's experiences of physical activity. Thompson et al. (2003) found that social support was an important factor for Native American women's participation in physical activity. The authors described social support as Native women knowing other people within their family/social network who exercised and seeing people in their neighbourhoods exercise. The authors suggested that "social support for Native American women is a critical factor that should not be ignored when physical activity programs are being developed" (Thompson et al. 2003, p. 59), and they emphasized the need for physical activity opportunities designed specifically for Indigenous women. Connecting individual wellbeing to overall community wellbeing is another important aspect for Indigenous women's participation in physical activity.

A study with primarily Choctow women who participated in Yappalli, which is a re-creation/memorial walk of their ancestral forced removal routes, demonstrated that their individual wellbeing is linked to the broader health of their community (Schultz, Walters, Beltran, Stroud, & Johnson-Jennings, 2016). Indeed, the authors noted, "many Indigenous approaches [to physical health practices] tend to individuals as components of the whole with obligations to give, teach, or share with community. In many Native communities, individual experience is inextricably linked to the collective" (p. 27). Together, Lavallée's (2008),

Thompson et al.'s (2003), and Schultz et al.'s (2016) research have shown that for Indigenous women, participation in physical activity is interconnected with social support and community. Furthermore, specifically in Canada, the historical colonial policy to forcefully remove Indigenous women and families from their territories (from the 1800's onward) resulted in intergenerational ill health that continues to this day (Daschuk, 2013).

The role of community and physical activity in generating wellbeing has been the topic of several recent studies. McHugh, Coppola, Holt, and Anderson (2015) sought to better understand how urban Indigenous peoples conceptualize community, specifically within the sport and physical activity realm. The study highlighted that for urban Indigenous peoples, "sport is community" (p. 82), where one can connect, build friendships, and enhance belonging, which shows the importance of physical activity to foster community. Further, Howell, Auger, Gomes, Brown, and Leon (2016) showed that when urban Indigenous peoples came together in a series of health circles to discuss their health and wellbeing, it fostered a sense of community. The participants, who were urban Indigenous community members of Vancouver, Canada, further reported that attending the health circles generated an improvement in their wholistic health. While the study focused on the importance of physical activity, it did not include a physical activity intervention. In another study, Tobias and Richmond (2016) interviewed local male and female Anishinaabe Elders in two communities in Ontario to determine strategies for environmental repossession. They found that the development of culturally relevant, community-based exercise programs can be an important strategy in improving Indigenous peoples' physical health and wellbeing (Tobias & Richmond, 2016).

While there is some literature concerning physical activity and urban Indigenous peoples, particularly concerning the importance of community settings, little is known about what urban

Indigenous women think about colonization, decolonization, and specific ways to address health and wellbeing, while simultaneously engaging in directed physical activity. Thus, I implemented a research project using Anishinaabeg methodological tools to explore how directed physical activity, coupled with critical dialogues regarding colonization, decolonization, health and wellbeing, ancestral stories, and other aspects of physical activity, may influence urban Indigenous women.

Methods

Relationships

I am an Anishinaabe woman from the Turtle Clan from Bingwi Neyaashi Anishinaabek. The Odawa Native Friendship Centre is a non-profit organization that delivers a wide spectrum of programs and services to Indigenous peoples living in Ottawa-Carleton region in Eastern Ontario. The Centre represents a community-based and directed Indigenous organization that serves the interests of urban Indigenous peoples, inclusive of First Nations, Métis, Inuit, and non-status peoples, in the areas of social, cultural, recreational, economic, and community development.

Prior to starting the research, I had a pre-existing, six-year relationship with the Centre and Program. Between 2010-2017, I led (with my partner) the volunteer-driven kettle bell training program as part of the Centre's regular monthly schedule. As a result of our long-standing, respectful, and reciprocal relationship, the Centre was excited to be invited to be the community partner in my research. The Centre offered the space to host Wiisokotaatiwin (detailed below), assisted with participant recruitment, and was invited to use the results of the research to assist with creating new physical activity or other specialized programming in the future.

Anishinaabeg Research Paradigm

As an Anishinaabe researcher, my research was guided by an Anishinaabeg research paradigm, which I explain briefly in this article. A comprehensive discussion of the Anishinaabeg research paradigm is included in chapters two and four in this dissertation. The paradigm brings together five elements of Anishinaabeg gikendaasowin (knowledge) that I continually reflected upon while conducting and analyzing the research: gikendaasowin (knowledge which includes Anishinaabeg stories/theory), Anishinaabe-inaadiziwin (ontology) (Geniusz, 2009), biskaabiiyang (epistemology) (Geniusz, 2009; Simpson, 2011), niizhwaaswi kchtwaa kinomaadiwinan (axiology) (Benton-Banai, 1988), and Wiisokotaatiwin (an Indigenous research methodology and an applied research method). Together, the five elements guided me in my role as researcher.

Indigenous research methodologies have become a common research approach for many Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers (Halas, 2011; Kovach, 2009; Lavallée, 2008; Pedri-Spade, 2016). Recently, Tobias, Richmond, and Luginaah (2013) identified that Indigenous methodological approaches, when respectful of community-based approaches to research, should create opportunities to explore how Indigenous health disparities may be addressed. Wiisokotaatiwin does just that.

Wiisokotaatiwin is both an Indigenous research methodology and an applied research method. As part of my Masters research, I developed the concept of Wiisokotaatiwin as a tool to engage in consciousness raising by using bell hooks (2000) vision of consciousness-raising groups and Freire's (2000) promotion of critical dialogue. Freire (2000) explained that dialogue is key to transformation or praxis, which necessitates critical thinking about our realities with the goal of ultimately transforming them. Similarly, hooks (2000) showed how critical

consciousness is a necessary element required to engage in personal transformation, with a special focus on bringing women together to engage in feminist consciousness-raising. To advance the development of Wiisokotaatiwin as an Indigenous research tool for my doctoral research, I used the tenets of Indigenous research methodologies, which include processes of decolonization, using Indigenous narratives and worldviews, and practicing relational accountability to the research participants and/or Indigenous community (Kovach, 2009; Rigney, 1999; Smith, 2012; Wilson, 2008).

Importantly, Wilson (2008) emphasized that Indigenous peoples can develop methodologies, and corresponding research methods, that follow “our codes of conduct, and honours our systems of knowledge and worldviews. Research by and for Indigenous people is a ceremony that brings relationships together” (p. 8). Further, I agree with Wilson (2008), who emphasized that Indigenous words contain huge amounts of information “encoded like a ZIP file within them” (p. 13). Wiisokotaatiwin is such a word. While I developed Wiisokotaatiwin as an Indigenous research methodology within the broader Anishinaabeg research paradigm, for this study, I sought to also implement it as a research method. Wiisokotaatiwin, as an Indigenous methodology, uses gikendaasowin and decolonization as an approach to conduct my research. As a research method, Wiisokotaatiwin is a tool that can be used to gather knowledge. Therefore, through Wiisokotaatiwin, the methodology and research method are inherently linked. By using Indigenous methodologies and methods in research, as Indigenous scholars, “we re-write and we re-story ourselves” (Absolon, 2011, p. 21) by using our ways of research to produce knowledge. The objectives of Wiisokotaatiwin in this study were two-fold: bringing urban Indigenous women together to discuss questions concerning Indigenous women’s physical activity and

wellbeing etc.; and determining if or how directed physical activity, in this case kettlebell training, can play a role in facilitating critical dialogues regarding health and wellbeing.

Based on the gaps in literature regarding urban Indigenous women's perceptions of their physical activity, I developed a list of guiding research/discussion questions for each of the seven weeks in which we would gather, which I emailed to the participants in the first week. The guiding research/discussion questions of Wiisokotaatiwin included - but were not limited to - the following: 1) What do you think about physical activity, and is it important to you? 2) Do you know of any ancestral or current (family or community) stories of women being physically strong? 3) In thinking about your own experiences, how does colonialism impact you, especially regarding health and wellbeing? 4) Have you thought about personal decolonization, if so, what does it mean to you? 5) How has your participation in Wiisokotaatiwin affected you? Open discussions were important for fostering critical dialogues about these issues. As such, while the research/discussion questions guided the sessions, the participants were also free to discuss other topics they felt were important. Wiisokotaatiwin occurred for approximately two hours per week over a seven-week period from October 16, 2016 to November 27, 2016. Each session entailed participation in a kettle bell workout and, immediately after, meeting in a circle to engage in a critical dialogue pertaining to the research questions. Each week, I led the kettle bell workout (which lasted between 40-45 minutes) and the circle dialogue (which lasted between 60 to 75 minutes).

I chose kettle bell workouts as the physical activity included in Wiisokotaatiwin because I am a certified kettle bell instructor who has been coaching Indigenous peoples in kettlebell since 2009. Notably, kettle bells facilitate endurance, strength and explosiveness, flexibility, and a holistic approach to fitness (Lake & Lauder, 2012); as such, they are great fitness tools

(Monocchia, et. al. 2013). Having been a kettlebell coach for nine years, I have observed how they are incredible tools to gain physical strength, which I have seen simultaneously foster overall wellbeing and confidence in kettle bell class participants. For these reasons, I chose kettlebells as the focal physical activity.

Recruitment

The recruitment strategy for Wiisokotaatiwin included a poster advertisement placed at the Program's location, and which was also circulated through the Program's email distribution list and Facebook page. The criteria for participation included identifying as an Indigenous woman (i.e., First Nation, Métis, Inuit, non-status), being aged 18 years or older, and a willingness and ability to engage in discussions of topics such as perceptions of colonization, decolonization, health and wellbeing, ancestral stories, and other aspects of physical activity. No prior experience with kettle bell training was required. There was an immediate community response to the recruitment poster; in fact, there were over 20 inquiries within the first few days of recruitment. Due to space limitations, only 12 participants participated in the study. Thus, participants were accepted on a first come, first serve basis (refer to Table 1 for participants' namesⁱ, ages, and community affiliations).

The Wiisokotaatiwin dialogue sessions (not including the kettlebell training portion) were audio recorded. Each participant signed a consent form approved by the research ethics board at the University of Ottawa, and received an honorarium of \$70 each, or \$10/session. Importantly, I gave a tobacco offering to each participant upon the commencement of Wiisokotaatiwin. Offering tobacco is a common practice among many Indigenous nations; offering it is a respectful way of asking people for their permission or guidance. Upon being offered the tobacco, a person may choose to accept the tobacco or not. Offering tobacco is also a

demonstration of reciprocity and accountability between researcher and participant where good intentions and respectful engagement is paramount (Pedri-Spade, 2016). The participants who were present at this session accepted the tobacco offering.

Table 1

<i>Wiisokotaatiwin Participants' Names, Ages, and Community Affiliations</i>		
Name	Age	Indigenous Community Affiliation
Julia	NP	Anishinaabe, M'Chigeeng First Nation
Rosalie	35	Nakota Sioux
Andrea	NP	Algonquin
Donna	57	Algonquin, Kitigan Zibi First Nation
Sarah	36	Algonquin, Pikwàkanagàn First Nation
Kelly	29	Anishinaabe, Nipissing First Nation
Brandi-Lee	31	Anishinaabe, Nipissing First Nation
Alexia	43	Inuit (Nunavut Beneficiary)
Sherry	53	Mi'gmaq, Listuguj First Nation
Tracy	NP	Cree, Cowessess First Nation
Laura	NP	Cree, Opaskwayak Cree Nation
Shirley	57	Algonquin, Kitigan Zibi First Nation
*NP (not provided)		

Importantly, Wiisokotaatiwin is not a standard qualitative focus group where the researcher directs the questions. Instead, as Wiisokotaatiwin is an Indigenous research tool, By sharing my personal experiences as they related to decolonization, physical activity, and ancestral stories, I was an equal participant in the dialogues (Wilson, 2008). As Anishinaabekwe scholar Pedri-Spade (2016) explained, it is imperative for an Anishinaabeg researcher to “share as an equal, and to have [our] personal reflections...be part of the conversations during [the research]” (p. 396). As a result, all participants, including me, equally contributed to Wiisokotaatiwin.

Data Analysis

Each dialogue session that was part of Wiisokotaatiwin was transcribed verbatim and returned in a password protected email for each of the participants to review after the final session. Although I asked each participant to review the transcripts, only 5 of 12 participants replied to the email. Of the five who responded, only two requested minor edits related to spelling. Once finalized, the transcripts were exported into QSR International NVivo 10.2 (for Mac), which is a qualitative data analysis program. Guided by the research questions and the Anishinaabeg research paradigm, I employed Anishinaabe-informed thematic analysis, which I based on Braun and Clarke's (2006) approach to thematic analysis. Braun and Clarke (2006) described six steps of thematic analysis: 1) familiarizing oneself with the data; 2) creating data codes; 3) examining the data for themes; 4) assessment of the themes; 5) providing descriptors for the themes; and 6) final analysis and generating a report.

In addition to following these steps, I further employed the Anishinaabeg research paradigm to assist in indigenizing the iterative thematic analysis process. First, I read the transcripts multiple times in order to code the text into nodes and sub-nodes, based on identification of common themes that arose from the data (Newman, 2003). Second, throughout the data analysis and writing process, I engaged in a process of mindful reflection of *inaadiziwin*, *gikendaasowin*, and *biskaabiiyaang* from my participants' stories as they applied to the research questions. Simultaneously, I would attend to my spiritual processes by offering *semaa*, asking for guidance with my analysis and by holding onto one of my many rocks. For instance, some initial themes that arose once I began to "make meaning," which is the process by which Indigenous researchers "interpret and finding meaning" in research (Absolon, 2011, p. 33), included remembering ancestral stories, the role of the disparity literature in continuing colonization, and resistance through physical activity. A draft of the final manuscript was given to all the

participants for review. Being guided by the Anishinaabeg research paradigm, it was important for me to engage in this reciprocal act to ensure the words of the participants were analysed in a good way, and with their approval. While the participants who reviewed the article offered their validation of the findings and did not request any changes, I am also cognisant that as the primary researcher, I had the authority to choose and not choose specific words of the participants. While the participants approved the themes and how I used their specific quotes, I still had the ability to make these choices by way of my presence in academia.

Results

To make meaning of Wiisokotaatiwin results, I present them as a circle that has three parts: the start of the circle (colonial displacement), the circle continued (critical consciousness of marginalization(s), and the closing of the circle (regenerating wellness through enacting community). The start of the circle, which represents the results of Wiisokotaatiwin, represents how the participants spoke about their grandmothers' fortitude and wellbeing, which was gained in them from their relationships with the land. Their relationship to land was disrupted because of colonial displacement, which created a parallel displacement of Indigenous women's physicality. As we continued to journey around the circle, the participants engaged in critical consciousness-raising about the multiple marginalizations they experience, which is expressed as displacement from land, and disruption of wellbeing. The circle was completed when the participants showed how, through physical activity that is completed in concert with critical dialogue about our colonization, health, wellbeing, and decolonization, a return to wellbeing, strength, and wellness can be fostered.

The Start of the Circle: Colonial Displacement

Many of the participants reflected on their grandmothers' or great-grandmothers' tenacity and strength and how it was garnered from their connection to the land. For instance, Shirley recalled that her great-grandmother had an enduring strength, which was gained as the result of raising three of her great-grandchildren, tending to farm animals, preparing daily home-cooked meals, preparing game from skinning and processing the meat, and making clothing. Shirley reflected on her grandmother's strength and skills: "There was nothing she could not do; it was just amazing...to me, there aren't that many women like that. I haven't met that many women like that ever again." Similarly, Rosalie reflected on her grandma's daily tenacity for getting up at 6am to then work all day until the sun went down, but how these traits are not seen today,

My grandmother trapped until she was 70, because she was built strong and was naturally tough. It was second nature to her because that's what her grandmothers had done prior to her time. It's kind of like that's how it always was for our women. It's just some of the women that grew up in cities, they don't really have that strength, that attitude. It's more like the traditional women who utilize their territory were that way.

The impacts of transition from living off the land to urban living was also shared by Sherry, who grew up on the land in Listuguj First Nation,

I'm 53 and I remember [as a child] pulling a net in the mud with all these salmon on it to help our father. I grew up on the land. I gutted animals. I killed my own moose years ago. I know how to gut a moose...just to feel my hands inside the moose. You wouldn't believe the feeling you get; he survived to help me survive. It's a way of survival. I always say that, because it is a way of survival. We need those tools. Now we all live in the city. Look at this. Right there we have a cell phone, "beep, beep, beep. I want a pizza please," and that's where I think we lose our identities.

Sherry shared that she still lives off the land as much as she can; she raises her own chickens and turkeys and has a big garden, and it is important to her to practice her spirituality (e.g. smudging, offering tobacco). Upon reflecting on Sherry's story, Rosalie added,

We don't have the traditional consciousness anymore. Well some people have it, those that practice [it] everyday, like you were saying [motioning to Sherry], but I think the millennial age, they lost that traditional consciousness, [that is] what's missing in finding that consciousness, and I think that's what needs to be focussed on.

Rosalie acknowledged that Indigenous women would benefit from re-learning land based physical activity, which may help reconnect to traditional consciousness. In sum, Shirley, Sherry, and Rosalie all raised concerns about the transition from land-based activities to urban environments. Their stories suggest that Indigenous women's displacement from the land signalled a parallel displacement of Indigenous women's physical strength derived from the land. The participants articulated that there have been lasting effects on Indigenous women's wellbeing and physical strength due to their displacement from land-based living to more colonial-based lifestyles.

The Circle Continued: Critical Consciousness of Marginalization(s)

In one of the Wiisokotaatiwin sessions, after we finished our kettlebell workout, I provided the participants with an overview of the health disparity literature regarding Indigenous women's ill health. Immediately after we engaged in physical activity and when we were still catching our breath, the participants had the opportunity to reflect upon the health disparity literature that positions Indigenous women as prevalently ill when compared to non-Indigenous peoples. Tracy shared that she saw the disparity literature as a baseline,

This is where we are right now. I mean, the numbers aren't lying, right? We do know that

there's obesity and it's all linked to colonial order; it's all linked to poverty. Those are our numbers, and those are the things we have to deal with. That's what the data tells us.

Groups like this, and leaders in our community...will help lift us out of that, and I think it just keeps going and going, and if we bring people to get away from that baseline data.

Julia explained that she “doesn’t like the implication in the text that we’re not healthy. I think we all have the potential to be healthy, but at times our bod[ies] are seen as bad, intrinsically diseased or weak.” For Julia and Tracy, there was a stark contrast between how they felt in their bodies after their workout, compared to the health disparity literature that portrayed Indigenous women as ill and weak. Tracy also considered how marginalization is connected to the disparity literature:

I think that some of the [health] limitations that we were talking about...I think we talked about physical limitations and economical limitations of Indigenous women being in the margins, but I think it goes deeper than that. We are also marginalized in our own heads, so you stop and you say, "Oh, I can't do this." We've been in the margins for so long that this is where we're used to being, and it affects our self-confidence, and our ability to think that we can actually do something.

Julia agreed with Tracy and reflected on how racisms and stereotypes affect Indigenous women,

I agree. I grew up in the city, and I often think about my experiences growing up. For example, when you're one of the few Aboriginal people at school, it's always like, "Oh we don't want her on our team." You're always experiencing these negative things coming toward you from different directions. Teachers didn't think you had the same capacity as other people and that still happens today. So, you experience that, and then it doesn't get better in high school maybe you want to try out for a team, and maybe not

having the skills. You aren't comfortable being around your basic environment that other people were comfortable being in. That keeps coming back, and later on you begin to apply this to other aspects of your life, [such as] going to the gym [and feeling] embarrassed or are people still looking at me? It's hard to navigate new environments when you're faced with subtle racism and stereotypes that impacts your health mentally, emotionally, and social life. It impacts your ability to want to fulfill your goals.

Kelly provided another account of the marginalization she experienced because of choosing to live a healthy lifestyle,

In my work, it's [part of] my job to be that [healthy] role model, but I get made fun of a lot for what I eat or what I don't eat. If I'm seen eating a slice of pizza it's like, "oh no Kelly's eating pizza." I'm like "what do you mean? Pizza is my favorite." So, it's kind of the opposite end where if you're trying to eat healthy or you're seen as trying to stand out as the good one outside of everyone else who are eating bad, or what they perceive as bad. And [it is the] same with fitness too, people in the community who are exercising a lot or being really active, they are often like, "oh they are always out at the gym and not with their family" and when we go back home it's always in our plan to go to the gym and it's what we do on our off time, but for them it's like, "oh well you don't want to hang out with us? You're only down here for a couple of days and you're going off to the gym," and it's like "yeah that's just part of our lifestyle."

Kelly's story shows that, at times, marginalization occurs in the very spaces where community support should exist. Brandi-Lee provided a further reflection upon this space some Indigenous women navigate, "[In] Western culture versus ours, we always celebrated our strengths. And I think [as a result of] colonialism how hyper critical we have learned to become

over so many things.” Brandi-Lee also shared that she believes, “[everyday] moments in [our] journeys should be celebrated” in addition to the bigger moments in our lives. The participants emphasized how they are treated unequally, as seen through their experiences with marginalization and subtle racism. Their experiences showed that by continually being treated as unequal by discourses of colonial normativity and as being ill in the case of the health disparity literature conditions Indigenous women to be marginalized. For Kelly and Brandi-Lee, their encounters with marginalization enacted their resilience by countering the negative messages they encountered with physical activity and positivity.

Closing the Circle: Restoring Wellness by Enacting Community

The participants reflected on their involvement in Wiisokotaatiwin and what it meant for them. They highlighted the importance of creating community by gathering women together for physical activity. For instance, Brandi-Lee shared that she and Kelly had reflected on the space Wiisokotaatiwin created:

I think it was helpful to come together as a group...Kelly and I were talking about how great it was to be with a lot of likeminded people and just have that kind of communal sense again and all sharing that same goal. And realizing that we [all] shared so much...there's so much in common with all of us and the things that we had to go through as Aboriginal women.

In particular, they found that their experiences as Indigenous women navigating various effects of colonialism resonated with other participants. For instance, Alexia shared that she enjoyed coming together as a group to hear others' stories and further acknowledged that, “we're all so diverse, but we all share this common dark part.” Similarly, Sherry noted, “I think as women we connect easier with each other, especially as we're all First Nations. We all come

from different communities, but we can connect somehow because we share [similar] stories of our ancestors.”

Wiisokotaatiwin created enthusiasm for physical activity, which was highlighted by several participants. Julia explained that she would attend workout classes at mainstream gyms, but there was never a community connection, which influenced her motivation,

You can go to workout classes but often if you don’t make that connection with other people in class, then it’s not as motivating to go. So, I really like the fact that we had the workout together, then we had the sharing. [It] made it more motivating to come here.

Similarly, Alexia noted in our group dialogue that she had been working out at the gym and running as a result of attending Wiisokotaatiwin. She explained,

[I feel] a boost in my confidence to start working out again. I always feel good when I leave here. I’ve been trying to come to the gym every day, at least for half an hour... [and when I first started] I could run for 20 minutes and now I can do 45 minutes.

The participants also spoke about the importance of creating community spaces where women can come together. Julia explained that while Wiisokotaatiwin was a space to discuss physical health,

we [also] talked about our lives as women...we do share things in common but everybody had these different perspectives so for me it helped [me to] look at things a different way and to get new ways of thinking about things.

Brandi-Lee further explained,

It’s so important to come together as a community to remind each other that it is possible. These limitations that we place on ourselves aren’t... sometimes they’re just in our minds. The biggest take home for me would be mindset, and knowing it is possible to get

where you want if that's your goal. Even just the changes in several weeks is amazing.

For me, it got me on a kind of good start back into exercising more. Having a peer group, it just makes you more committed. You just want to be there and meet with your group. It kind of becomes your group after. Something you look forward to.

Rosalie and Julia correspondingly reflected on how Wiisokotaatiwin provided them with a comfortable space to connect with other Indigenous women for physical activity, which further built their sense of community:

I never really worked out at all [in the past]. I always wanted to. I even bought a membership, but I cancelled it because I would just never go and I would never have that motivation. It needs to be community. And you need to feel comfortable. So, this also gave me a space to come and try to get healthy and be comfortable also. (Rosalie)

This felt like a body positive space. I like that I felt comfortable here. Sometimes I go to the gym and there'll be uber healthy people on those spinning classes and I'm just huffing and puffing away. So, this felt good. I felt comfortable (Julia).

The supportive, comfortable, Indigenous women-led community that Wiisokotaatiwin provided enabled the participants to gain confidence in other areas of their lives. Tracy noted,

I felt very proud of...the group, and myself, because you're part of something that is really strong - not just physically, but emotionally, spiritually, and mentally. You feel that strength just by doing physical stuff with people who are like-minded. [Additionally] I really love our group here because, where I work, it drains me. I come here and I'm able to take that confidence and that strength, and [apply it to] how I carry myself at work.

Having discussed the importance of community in fostering the broader health and wellbeing of Indigenous women, the participants also discussed the issues they see with the lack

of funding to promote wellness in community. Kelly, who is employed at a local Indigenous health organization, brought attention to how funding usually goes towards chronic disease care, and hardly any funding toward fostering health and wellbeing,

A lot of the funding goes to management programs for chronic diseases rather than prevention. So [my organization] gets very little in comparison to help live healthy lives, versus the management of diabetes for example...I feel like that's backwards. It should be the other way around...When we leave here, we feel really good, right? But how do you report on something like that? To [report] “we feel awesome! We should invest more here versus diabetes.” We see so many people on insulin, and that's what paid more attention to because of these [disparity] statistics.

Tracy agreed with Kelly and reflected on how the needs of the people are not fitting current programs,

Our needs, our aspirations are not fitting into their square mold, so that's when we need to shift things around and insist. Especially now, in the place that we're at with this government, we have to say “the way you operate your program doesn't work for me, so this is how we need to do it.” I think taking ownership, and insisting that they start meeting our needs, not the funders' [needs]. That's the battle we have to take [on].

This led Kelly to question why there has not been more of a challenge to top-down funding directives, which then guided her to think about other community-led opportunities to address our health,

Why haven't we challenged it more, you know? Just to get that confidence to be able to do that - then potentially thinking about other sources of funds. Do we have to go through the government? I don't know. What other options are there? How can we mobilize as a

community to do this work, or to do it [our] way? There's a lot of really positive things happening, like with kettlebells, and bringing that into a space like Wiisokotaatiwin. I think it's related back to workouts like this, that make you feel strong physically, that translate out there, and you begin to feel strong mentally. You can take that and bring it into those kinds of conversations that are tough to have, but you feel stronger as an Indigenous woman to be able to do that.

Many of the participants also described how Wiisokotaatiwin helped them with acknowledging the role of decolonization in gaining confidence. For instance, Shirley recognized the importance of the multifaceted discussions that occurred to decolonization,

I really enjoyed that [Wiisokotaatiwin] incorporated a lot of stuff. Our physical wellbeing, our emotional wellbeing...and talking about the connection between us and decolonization. I think it empowered each one of us here in the room to acknowledge, “yes, [colonialism] happened, and now we’re moving on.” To see where we once were, where we are now, and where we’re going in the future. So, I think that this [space] helped me to feel all of that.

Tracy agreed with Shirley and added that for her,

[Wiisokotaatiwin] affirmed and really clarified the whole connection between physical fitness and building strength in all elements of your body, to decolonization. I mean, I can see the real connection. The power I feel around this circle is just amazing and it makes me proud to be here.

The sharing that occurred between the participants encouraged a level of comfort that enabled them to discuss personal stories about the effects of colonialism and how they connected their wellbeing to decolonization.

Discussion

Indigenous health researchers have noted that transformative ideas are needed from Indigenous community members themselves to address our health and wellbeing (Reading, 2009), especially in relation to physical activity (Lavallée, 2007). Thus, I implemented Wiisokotaatiwin to bring together urban Indigenous women to explore how directed physical activity, coupled with critical dialogues regarding colonization, decolonization, health and wellbeing may influence urban Indigenous women. The results from seven-weekly sessions of Wiisokotaatiwin emphasized that an Indigenous-led critical dialogue about health and wellness, coupled with directed physical activity, can serve as an important motivator for Indigenous women to engage in physical activity, enhance wellbeing, and engage in decolonization.

The participants discussed the displacement from land-based living to colonial-based lifestyles. Specifically, Shirley, Rosalie, and Sherry noted how city-based living caused Indigenous peoples to disconnect with their land-based lifestyles, which they saw as negatively affecting Indigenous women's physical strength and identities. This resonates with what many scholars have articulated concerning the devastating effects Indigenous peoples' displacement from their lands has had upon their health (Alfred, 2005; Kelm, 1998; Walters et al., 2011). For instance, Alfred (2005) explained that Indigenous peoples' ill health is related to our "disconnect[ion] from our lands and from our traditional ways of life" (p. 31). While traditional ways of life are often assumed to occur in reserve-based settings, there have been other scholars who suggest that Indigeneity is present regardless of urban or rural location (Bang et al., 2014), because Indigenous peoples "carry [our attachments to lands] ...wherever we go" (Walters et al., p. 170). To only envision Indigenous peoples as authentically existing in the past, however, is to "trap Native people in a time warp, [that] insist[s] our past was all we have. No present. No

future. And to believe in such a past is to be dead” (King, 2003, p. 106). In our efforts to foster health and wellbeing, it is important to acknowledge that our existence is not solely enacted through land-based living. Without a doubt, regenerating our land-based activities is fundamental for our collective drive toward regenerating our respective governance systems and to fostering decolonization (Alfred, 2005; Coulthard, 2014; Simpson, 2014). I argue, however, that corresponding practices of decolonization can be enacted through physical activity that is mindfully connected to our ancestors’ physicality.

The participants talked about their ancestors’ physical strength, which shows the importance of ancestral stories of strength to assist Indigenous people in “bridging the past and present” (Schultz et al., 2016, p. 27), to fostering health and wellbeing in an urban-based Indigenous community setting. Recently, Schultz et al. (2016) emphasized how Indigenous peoples’ commitment to physical activity is a significant way to “reconnect to ancestral strength and visions of health” (p. 26), which also enacts our relational responsibilities to our ancestors and future generations. As a result of the physical strength gained by working out with kettlebells, the participants showed that the qualities of tenacity, determination, and strength they described of their grandmothers are also present within them, and can be enacted through physical activity. Thus, we can use our ancestral stories of physical strength to propel us to engage in physical activity that replicates our ancestral strengths. This process simultaneously enhances our relationships with our ancestors and reanimates our ancestral knowledge.

The participants showed a critical consciousness of the marginalization(s) they experience, connecting it to broader colonial discourses of racism and inequality. When asked to reflect on the health disparity literature, the participants connected it to the effects of colonialism and how it related to other experiences of marginalization. For instance, some of the participants

explained that they felt marginalized from mainstream society (e.g., in educational settings), and in some cases felt judged for leading active lifestyles. Halas' (2011) study stressed that many Indigenous youth feel racism in school settings and in physical education settings. She noted that anti-indigenous racism "operates in everyday routines and practices that are unrecognized, unacknowledged and unproblematized" (p. 11). It is significant that the participants spoke about the intricacies of marginalization they navigate, as colonialism is realized through every-day actions, in addition to structural forms of authority, such as seen through the health disparity literature. Kelm (1998) discerned how the colonial government, the medical profession, and other colonial state partners are well versed in positioning Indigenous peoples as weak, ill, and dying, which has worked to solidify "the embodiment of inequality [as] a powerful tool in legitimizing [colonial] authority" (p. xvii), especially over Indigenous bodies and territories (Daschuk, 2013).

Moreover, as reported by the participants, Wiisokotaatiwin created a community of women through physical activity and critical dialogue. Within this community, participants self-reported gaining wholistic wellbeing, where they stated they felt strong physically, emotionally, spiritually, mentally, and improved self-confidence. Correspondingly, as the weeks progressed, the women's participation in Wiisokotaatiwin helped to alleviate some of their daily experiences of marginalization. While physical wellness was the driving force, the participants shared that they felt good after each session of Wiisokotaatiwin, which relates to enhancing overall wellbeing. The participants explained that they left Wiisokotaatiwin feeling good, and that they were motivated to continue with their own physical activity. This motivation led some participants to gain confidence in addressing areas of marginalization such as going to the gym and facing work-place or other criticisms. Lavallée and Poole (2010) explained that dispelling

stereotypes and building one's confidence through physical activity enhances Indigenous health. The space that Wiisokotaatiwin created, thus, assisted the participants in engaging in self-reflection with other women, which was found to have reverberating effects on the participants' overall wellbeing. This finding resonates with Lavallée's (2007) study where Indigenous women, through a martial arts program, enhanced their wholistic wellbeing.

The participants also discussed how current health programs tend to focus on treatment of chronic disease, rather than prevention. Indeed, the prevention of chronic disease would ultimately challenge the colonial discourses that rely on our illness to normalize colonial authority over Indigenous peoples and lands. Further, governmental campaigns aimed at increasing physical activity tend to focus on individual behaviour, and not community or social support, which is necessary to motivate individuals to enhance physicality (Alvaro et al., 2011; Forneris et al., 2013). Creating Indigenous-led spaces, like Wiisokotaatiwin, is one example of how this occurs and corresponds with the literature on the importance of community for supporting physical activity and wellness (Howell et al., 2016; McHugh et al., 2015; Thompson et al., 2003). The community that Wiisokotaatiwin created resulted in the women gaining confidence with physical activity and, for some, it helped them gain self-confidence in other areas of their lives; as a result, Wiisokotaatiwin helped them to articulate and, in some cases, challenge the marginalization they experience.

What was it about Wiisokotaatiwin that fostered the women's confidence and enhanced their overall wellbeing? Importantly, Wiisokotaatiwin provided a welcomed counter narrative to the marginalization, racism, and the disparity literature Indigenous women encounter. Kerslake (2017) recently interviewed a Cree medical doctor, James Makokis, who explained that to confront the effects of colonization on Indigenous peoples' health, Indigenous-led thinking about

health must be recognized and sustained for lasting changes in health and wellbeing to take hold in our communities, as opposed to top-down, incremental government policies. This resonates with Wilson's (2008) contention that when research and policy are framed by non-Indigenous researchers/policymakers, it ultimately results in the focus on illness, rather than health or wellness. Moreover, as this research used an Indigenous research methodology and method, it resulted in concentrating on the participants' strengths rather than focussing on their health issues. Further, this Indigenous led approach created space for the participants to be the experts about their health and wellbeing. Thus, Wiisokotaatiwin used Indigenous-led thinking and practices in research and broke free from the hegemony of the dominant health system (Wilson, 2008). The results of Wiisokotaatiwin demonstrated that critical dialogue about health and wellness, coupled with directed physical activity, is an important way to engage urban Indigenous women in physical activity, enhance their overall wellbeing, and enact Indigenous-led solutions.

Limitations

There are a few limitations of the research study. First, I cannot determine if the participants sustained their commitment or motivation to engage in physical activity. As a result, I cannot conclude if the collective feeling of overall wellness and confidence was sustained. Second, there was no land-based physical activity in the program. Wilson (2003) found that a connection to land through land-based activities, such as hunting, trapping, or collecting medicines, is an "integral part of First Nations' identity and health" (p. 83). Given the important discussions that occurred between the participants regarding ancestral strength gained from the land, any future application of Wiisokotaatiwin should consider integrating some land-based experiences. Third, beyond the offering of tobacco, there were no cultural ceremonies included

in Wiisokotaatiwin (e.g., smudging or prayer). As spiritual connection is an important factor in promoting wholistic wellbeing, future research or community use of Wiisokotaatiwin may wish to include some ceremonial aspects, under the guidance of Elders or other cultural practitioners.

A final potential limitation concerns the inclusion of a variety of urban Indigenous women in the study, while using an Anishinaabeg approach. While I initially planned to recruit only Anishinaabeg women for participants within Wiisokotaatiwin, in order to reflect the range of urban Indigenous women my community partner serves, I felt it was best to be inclusive to First Nation, Métis, Inuit, and non-status urban Indigenous women. Ultimately, bringing together multiple urban Indigenous women served to enrich the Wiisokotaatiwin experience, as seen for example in the comprehensive range of dialogues that occurred. For instance, as Indigenous women we share similar experiences with colonization, and through Wiisokotaatiwin, were able to build community, support one another, and create wellbeing regardless of our respective Indigenous identities. While some might critique the use of an Anishinaabe approach with non-Anishinaabeg women, I argue that by “gathering together for a purpose,” we assist each other in challenging colonialism and enacting decolonization. Furthermore, as explained by Aikenhead and Michell (2011), “while no two [Indigenous] groups are the same, they all share commonalities in their own tribal ways of living...and in their Indigenous ways of understanding how to live” (p. 72).

Conclusion

The displacement of Indigenous women from the land caused lasting health consequences that researchers have identified as needing to be viewed through an Indigenous-based lens (Reading, 2009; Wilson, 2004)). Rather than looking to Western research approaches to create recommendations for Indigenous women’s ill-health, which do not necessarily resonate

with Indigenous peoples (Ahenakew, 2011; Macdonald, Abbott, & Jenkins, 2010), Indigenous health researchers have argued that Indigenous peoples' voices, ideas, and visions must be used to find sustainable solutions. As such, I implemented Wiisokotaatiwin, an Indigenous research tool, to discern what a subset of urban Indigenous women thought about their health and wellbeing as they relate to colonization, decolonization, and improving health and wellness, while simultaneously engaging in physical activity. I argue that creating supportive spaces for Indigenous women to connect and share our respective Indigenous perspectives, while also engaging in physical activity, is a key element for improved health and wellbeing. Indeed, the participants noted feeling more motivated, self-confident, and generally good after the weekly sessions.

Finally, it is my hope that Wiisokotaatiwin may be used as an adaptable tool by Indigenous health researchers and/or Indigenous-led community programs to further investigate how physical activity promotes health and wellness. Importantly, while I chose kettlebells as the physical activity for Wiisokotaatiwin, any form of physical activity may be used to foster critical dialogue. What is needed is support to host sessions of Wiisokotaatiwin and an Indigenous community leader to implement it/oversee it. Thus, a significant recommendation includes funding for spaces for women to intently focus on physicality and community so that Wiisokotaatiwin can occur.

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Footnotes

ⁱ Pseudonyms were initially assigned to all participants; however, some participants chose to use their real names. In these instances, their names have been included.

Chapter 7:

Conclusion

In May 2017, while writing the final paper of my Ph.D. research, two more Anishinaabeg youth were found drowned in my hometown, Anemki Wekwedong, the Place Where the Thunderbirds Live, or Thunder Bay. Tammy Keeash and Josiah Begg - two more youth added to the growing list, now numbering seven, of dead Anishinaabeg in Thunder Bay found in rivers. I could not stop thinking about Tammy and Josiah. They deserved to have long, fulfilling, love-filled lives. But as a result of the enduring, palpating anti-Indigenous violence in Thunder Bay, they were erased, and with them went the future of their ancestral legacy. This is settler colonialism: the ever-present but rarely discussed measures by which Indigenous peoples must disappear.

Indigenous peoples are systematically erased by death as we stand in the way of settler sovereignty on Indigenous territories, settler wellbeing and safety, and settler futures. Had seven white youth been found dead in the waters of Thunder Bay, the city, the police, and its residents would not have rested until those responsible had been found and dealt with accordingly. But for our youth, it is rationalized, “they took their own lives,” “there was no foul play,” “they were drunk.” They were just Indians, meant to disappear by any means necessary. Basil Johnson-ba shared that as Anishinaabeg, it is our responsibility to find our path in life and use our skills to help the Anishinaabeg Nation. My Ph.D. research is my endeavour to find solutions to the looming reality of settler colonial erasure, especially within the context of health and wellbeing, and it is my contribution to the Anishinaabeg Nation.

The aim of my doctoral research was to examine Anishinaabeg women’s physical activity as a site of personal decolonization, health, and wellbeing. Canada is a settler colonial nation that has been built upon the erasure of Indigenous peoples in order to justify the appropriation of land; this has had lasting and devastating effects on the health of Indigenous peoples (Daschuck,

2013). To date, health researchers have mainly focused on Indigenous peoples' health as deficient when compared to non-Indigenous peoples, which perpetuates a settler colonial view of our health. As such, through my research I provide a counter narrative to the deficit-based literature by describing how Anishinaabeg and other Indigenous women understand their health, wellbeing, and personal decolonization as it relates to physical activity.

The principal question guiding my research was, “can physical activity that encompasses a decolonization approach (Alfred 2005; Lavallee & Levesque, 2013) be a catalyst for regenerative well-being for Anishinaabeg women?” Additionally, I sought to understand how we can overcome the embodied presence of settler colonialism and practice decolonization through our physical activity. To answer these questions, I interviewed Anishinaabeg women who are exemplars of physical activity, I held a sharing circle with Anishinaabeg Elders from Naicatchewenin First Nation, and I partnered with the Urban Aboriginal Healthy Living Program at the Odawa Native Friendship Centre to implement Wiisokotaatiwin, which included seven consciousness-raising sessions with Anishinaabeg and other Indigenous women.

In this conclusion, I provide a summary and interpretation of the important findings from the five papers that comprise my dissertation. I then discuss the broader implications of my research and the contributions it makes to Indigenous feminist theory and Indigenous health research. Finally, I make suggestions for future directions in research and urban Indigenous health programming.

Summary of Papers

Paper One: Disrupting Settler Normativity: Regenerating an Anishinaabeg Research Paradigm to Create a Space for Decolonization

In this paper, I grounded my study within an Anishinaabeg research paradigm (ARP), which includes gikendaasowin (knowledge/theory), inaadiziwin (ontology), biskaabiiyang

(epistemology), niizhwaaswi kchtwaa kinomaadiwinan (axiology), wiisokotaatiwin (methodology and research method). Each component was an assemblage of what I had learned from other Anishinaabeg scholars (Benton-Banai, 1988; Geniusz, 2009; McGuire, 2009; Simpson, 2011), Indigenous research methodology scholars (Kovach 2009; Wilson, 2008), and my own Anishinaabe theorizing regarding Wiisokotaatiwin. Importantly, the ARP guided me in connecting spiritually and mindfully in my role as researcher. Further, the ARP fosters an Anishinaabeg presence in what is largely a settler-dominated field, health sciences. It is my hope that other Indigenous students and scholars may build upon the Indigenized space the ARP offers, especially within the broader field of health sciences, to enhance and build upon the existing cadre of Indigenous health scholars.

Paper Two: Anishinaabeg Women's Stories of Wellbeing: Physical Activity, Restoring Wellbeing and Dismantling the Settler Colonial Deficit Analysis

In this paper, to challenge the dominance of the deficit-based literature regarding Indigenous women, I sought out the perspectives of seven Anishinaabeg women, who are exemplars of decolonized physical activity, to learn about why they became physically active, what drives them to commit to physical activity, and why physical activity is important to them. The results revealed three important factors that assisted the women in committing to their physical activity practices: personal empowerment and confidence; wellbeing for oneself, family, and community; and group mentorship.

Upon closer analysis through the lens of Anishinaabeg gikendaasowin, in each of the three themes, the women showed how they practice and promote gwesayjitodoon indo bimaadiziiwin (transforming oneself into a better life). For instance, the women were aware of the health deficits that Indigenous peoples often experience, including the potential of suffering with chronic diseases (e.g., type 2 diabetes). But through sustained commitment to their physical

activities, they fostered gwesayjitodoon indo bimaadiziiwin. This finding is important as it shows that Anishinaabeg women are fully aware of the health disparity discourse that frames Indigenous peoples as unhealthy, but they do not passively accept ill health as an outcome for themselves. Rather, they continually counter the health deficit discourse to achieve wellbeing through physical activity, the effect of which reverberates to their families and communities. Thus, it is my hope that the results of this paper may assist Anishinaabeg and other Indigenous peoples with connecting with gwesayjitodoon indo bimaadiziiwin in their personal practices of physical activity and also challenge the deficit discourse that is so prevalent in Indigenous health research.

Paper Three: Anishinaabekweg Dibaajimowinan (Stories) of Decolonization through Running

In this paper, I explored the dibaajimowinan of Anishinaabeg women runners (a sub-set of four out of the seven interviews with Anishinaabeg women) to understand how running assists them in resisting the broader effects of colonialism on their bodies. Given that the health disparities experienced between Indigenous peoples and non-Indigenous peoples comprises much of the focus within the literature, this paper provides counter narratives to the disparity discourses through the dibaajimowinan of Anishinaabeg women runners to understand how their physicality affects them.

In this paper, I used an Indigenous feminist theoretical lens to better understand how Anishinaabeg women resist settler colonialism. Recent Indigenous feminist theorizing has clarified how Indigenous women are disproportionately targeted for erasure via the logics of settler colonialism. Yet, there is a lack of attention on the specific ways Indigenous women resist this targeting. The Anishinaabekweg in this study showcased a resistance to settler colonialism by purposefully connecting their physical activity to ceremony, healing, inspiring others, and

achieving personal health and wellbeing. The dibaajimowinan from Anishinaabeg women greatly adds to Indigenous feminist theorizing by illuminating how physical activity creates spaces to engage in decolonization, which simultaneously fosters a regeneration of Anishinaabeg presence on the land, health, and wellbeing. This paper also makes a contribution to the sociology of sport literature by going beyond the research that has shown sport's role in colonizing Indigenous women's bodies (Bloom, 2000; Forsyth & Wamsley, 2006; O'Bonsawin, 2015) and by instead showing the ways in which sport can be used to resist such colonization attempts.

Paper Four: "This is what I heard at Naicatchewenin": Disrupting Embodied Settler Colonialism

In this paper, I sought to better understand how Anishinaabekweg ancestral stories of physical strength contributes to our decolonization efforts. As I have an existing relationship to Naicatchewenin First Nation, I held a sharing circle with the Elders to understand how they conceptualize challenging embodied settler colonialism, which they expressed is experienced as historical trauma, grief, substance abuse, and ill health. Next is to remember our ancestral stories of physical strength. Invoking our ancestral stories further enacts a reciprocal relationship to them, whereby we take on the responsibility to implement their lessons in our lives as we seek to learn from our ancestors.

This paper adds to Indigenous feminist theory by describing how settler colonialism is embodied. Indigenous feminist theorists have illuminated how settler colonialism works to maintain the disconnection of Indigenous women to their territories (Dillion, 2015; Simpson, 2014; Simpson, 2017). Current theorizing has yet to identify how settler colonialism is an embodied experience. As my research showed, understanding how settler colonialism becomes embodied is necessary to further its disruption by enhancing our health and wellbeing. The

Elders' stories show us how once we identify embodied settler colonialism, we can address it by attending to our healing, empowering us to reanimate our relationships to ancestors through remembering their stories.

Paper Five: Wiisokotaatiwin: Kettlebell training, consciousness raising, and creating wellbeing through physical activity

In this paper, I presented the results of Wiisokotaatiwin, a seven-week consciousness raising group (and an applied Anishinaabeg research method) held with urban Indigenous women. While there has been concerted attention to the health disparities experienced by Indigenous women (Bourassa, McKay-McNabb, & Hampton, 2004; Findley, 2011), the perspectives of Indigenous women themselves - particularly urban Indigenous women - are not prominent in the literature, especially regarding their views on physical activity and decolonization. Therefore, I partnered with the Urban Aboriginal Healthy Living Program at the Odawa Native Friendship Centre to embark on a program of research focused on urban Indigenous women's experiences of physical activity through critical dialogues.

Previous studies have shown the importance of engaging in physical activity fostered within a collective community, especially for Indigenous women (Lavallée, 2008; Shultz et. al, 2016). However, there is a dearth of research regarding urban Indigenous women's perspectives on their physical activity. To address this gap, my study brought participants together to workout with kettlebells and ask them key questions about their physical activity, health, and wellbeing, which resulted in comprehensive critical dialogues about their personal histories, challenges, and triumphs. For instance, the Indigenous women reflected on the physical strength of their grandmothers or great-grandmothers that they gained by being on the land, but was disrupted because of Indigenous peoples' forced displacement from land. The forced disruption from the land has had lasting reverberations upon Indigenous women's health and wellbeing.

The results of Wiisokotaatiwin showed that community, particularly in an urban setting among Indigenous women, is an instrumental component to fostering health and wellbeing. In addition, through Wiisokotaatiwin, the participants demonstrated that critical dialogue about health and wellness, coupled with directed physical activity, in this case kettlebell workouts, played important roles in engaging them in physical activity. Significantly, kettlebells are recognized fitness tools for building strength and overall physicality (Lake & Lauder, 2012). By bringing urban Indigenous women together to participate in kettlebell training, coupled with critical dialogues about their health and wellbeing, the result was the creation of a community of women nurturing each other to achieve wholistic wellness. Through training together with kettlebells, in conjunction with creating a supportive space to critically dialogue about their health and other important issues, the Indigenous women created a community that empowered them to be confident. Importantly, the process and outcome of Wiisokotaatiwin provided welcomed counter narratives to the marginalization, racism, and the health disparity discourses Indigenous women encounter. This study shows that when Indigenous women *enact* Wiisokotaatiwin, or gather together for dialogue and physical activity, it may contribute to improving health and thus decreasing the health disparities experienced by many Indigenous peoples.

Research Implications

In this section, I present the implications of my research for the fields of Indigenous health research and community programming, and the contributions it makes to theoretical and methodological advancements.

Indigenous Health Research

Recently, Albert Marshall's "two-eyed seeing" approach to Indigenous health research has been taken up by health researchers as a useful way to combine Indigenous and Western-based approaches to address Indigenous people's health (Iwama, Marshall, Marshall, & Bartlett, 2009; Lavallée & Lévesque, 2013). Through my research, I departed from the two-eyed seeing approach to create an Anishinaabeg-informed study by specifically using Anishinaabeg gikendaaswin (knowledge) and inaadiziwin (ontology), because there is a need for research and associated methodologies that "are inherently and wholly Indigenous" (Kovach, 2009, p. 13). I achieved this by framing my research within an Anishinaabeg research paradigm, theorizing gwesayjitodoon indo bimaadiziwin, and applying Wiisokotaatiwin as an Anishinaabeg research tool. In furtherance of Indigenous-led research, and given how Indigenous health research has long been led by non-Indigenous researchers, the Anishinaabeg research paradigm should be used, and further developed and implemented, by Anishinaabeg researchers. Indeed, as Indigenous researchers continue to use our knowledge(s) to apply and mature our Indigenous research paradigms, this will lead to "theory, practice, and methods that are uniquely Indigenous" (Wilson, 2008, p. 16). By centring Anishinaabeg gikendaasowin in my research, I showed the utility of using an Anishinaabeg approach, and I would encourage Indigenous peoples from other Nations to make similar contributions using their own worldviews. Such practices will promote Indigenous-led solutions to health disparities, which will enrich the methodological approaches Indigenous health researchers may utilize.

As my research has demonstrated, the narratives/stories of Anishinaabeg, both ancestral and current, are valuable in both addressing ill health and promoting wellbeing. I believe the approach that centres Indigenous stories and theory regarding health will greatly advance the field of Indigenous health research. There is much to learn from the perspectives of Indigenous

peoples – especially women - about our concepts of health, wellbeing, the land, stories of our ancestral strengths and in consideration of seven generations into the future.

Through Wiisokotaatiwin, the Indigenous women voiced their concerns about current program objectives that focus on treating Indigenous peoples' chronic diseases/ill health. Certainly, funding for such programs is greatly needed. What was identified by the women, however, is that an equal funding pool is required to promote wellbeing, which is gained through physical activity coupled with community engagement. It is not enough to simply fund a stand-alone physical activity; as my research showed, there are clear benefits to bringing urban Indigenous women together to engage in physical activity coupled with critical dialogue about health, wellbeing, and decolonization. This finding is important for the Odawa Native Friendship Centre, and other community-based organizations, which seek to increase their funding or create new programs.

Another intriguing result of Wiisokotaatiwin was the clear desire for promotion of community-led programs. One participant argued that if funders do not fund programs that promote spaces of physical activity, dialogue, and community, Indigenous community members would create this space. That certainly was the case as seen in the examples of Kwe Pack, or Team I am Anishinaabe, as described in paper three. It would behoove both federal and provincial/territorial governments to foster Indigenous peoples' wellbeing by increasing funding to physical activity/community spaces, especially given the current climate of reconciliation in Canada.

Theoretical Implications

Indigenous feminist theory provides a valuable lens through which to understand how and why Indigenous women experience violence and erasure as a direct result of settler

colonialism. Further, Indigenous feminist theory creates space for Indigenous women to reflect upon their unique Indigenous worldviews and teachings, and to then amplify the field of Indigenous feminist theorizing. Prior to my research, Indigenous feminist theorists had not looked to ancestral stories of physical strength or Indigenous women's practices of physical activity as ways to challenge settler colonialism. Thus, my research contributes to the advancement of Indigenous feminist theory by including Anishinaabeg women and Elders, and urban Indigenous women's stories and images of ancestral strength and current practices of physicality. As settler colonialism is ongoing, engaging in activities that disrupt settler colonialism, especially its embodiment, is of critical importance. By looking to our respective Indigenous stories of strength, both current and ancestral, I believe that Indigenous feminists will be at the forefront in challenging embodied settler colonialism.

Indigenous peoples have always adapted and thrived, despite the violent attempts at erasure. Gwesayjitodoon indo bimaadiziiwin is evidence of our continual adaptation. We are not merely passive victims of colonialism, accepting a fate of death to secure settler colonialism. To the contrary, Anishinaabeg women are leading the resistance to embodied settler colonialism through practicing gwesayjitodoon indo bimaadiziiwin, personal decolonization, and building community, now and into the future.

Limitations

There are three limitations to my research that I wish to address: the use of Skype interviews, the exclusion of the perspectives of Anishinaabeg men and LGBT2QIA, and my decision not to use land-based physical activity.

During the interviews with the Anishinaabeg women for paper two, a clear limitation that arose was having to conduct two interviews via Skype. Due to distance and limited research

funds, it was the only option available. One of the interviews on Skype went very well, while the other interview presented a limitation. With Anishinaabeg and other Indigenous research protocols, it is a widely established practice to visit with your research participants in person to build rapport and to create a relationship to enhance reciprocity, trust, and respect. This is not to say that such a relationship may not be developed via online or Skype engagements, but it is preferable to have one-on-one visits (Hamilton, 2014).

With one participant in particular, after reviewing the transcript of our first interview that took place via Skype, she was uncomfortable, asked me to refrain from using the content, and requested a second interview. Without hesitation, I deleted my files from the initial interview and we coordinated a second interview over Skype, which resulted in transcripts with which she felt more comfortable. Upon reflection of this encounter, I believe that if I had met with her on her home territory to build a rapport/relationship through visiting, her level of unease/discomfort with the first interview may have been alleviated.

As an Anishinaabe researcher, one of my responsibilities is to ensure the research participants understand the deeply ethical obligations I carry with regard to honouring their stories. One way that this is conveyed is through one-on-one interactions, through body language, and building rapport through sharing stories/visiting, which is somewhat lost in online interactions (O'Connor et al., 2008). With this particular research participant, we were limited to conduct our interactions online through Facebook messenger, email, and Skype; however, I mitigated the lack of one-on-one interaction by mindfully taking time to share with her my Anishinaabe community connections, research responsibilities, and intentions. Regardless of mitigating circumstances, for future research interviews, it will be imperative for me to coordinate face-to-face/ in person interview engagements.

Another limitation that I would like to discuss is my focus on Anishinaabeg women in stages one and two of the research, and a departure from solely Anishinaabeg women in the third stage of research. I purposely focused my research on the perspectives and dibaajimowinan of Anishinaabeg women for three reasons: 1) according to the health disparity literature, Indigenous women experience the highest disparities in nearly every category of examination (Bourassa et. al. 2004); 2) There is a clear need look to Anishinaabeg women's dibaajimowinan of wellbeing to discern counter narratives to the disparity literature; and 3) I am an Anishinaabekwe researcher. However, the stories of wellbeing and health from Anishinaabeg women revealed this as a limitation to my research, as it lacked the perspectives of Anishinaabeg men and LGBT2QIA community members. The research participants identified as women, and none of them disclosed their sexuality, or other gender identities beyond female; therefore, future research that looks to the perspectives of the LGBT2QIA communities is needed to more fully comprehend how each member of our respective communities understand and experience wellbeing and health. Similarly, the experiences of health disparities and stories of wellbeing and health from Anishinaabeg men and other Indigenous men are equally relevant to the overall wellbeing of Indigenous communities. Additionally, a potential limitation may be seen in my departure from solely including Anishinaabekweg for Wiisokotaatiwin. I argue, however, that in order to reflect the range of urban Indigenous women my community partner serves, it was best to be inclusive to First Nation, Métis, Inuit, and non-status, urban Indigenous women. Ultimately, bringing together multiple urban Indigenous women identities served to enrich the Wiisokotaatiwin experience, as seen for example in the comprehensive range of dialogues that occurred.

A final limitation to my research was the lack of land-based physical activity. During my interviews with Anishinaabeg women, Elders, and in Wiisokotaatiwin, all the research participants highlighted their ancestral stories of women being physically active on the land through trapping, hunting etc. Additionally, a few of the Anishinaabeg women shared that they continue to practice land-based physical activity such as sugar bushing, and gardening, and a major finding of Wiisokotaatiwin was the importance of reconnecting to land-based physical activity. Upon reflection, adding land-based activities such as hunting, trapping, gardening, fishing etc., may have added to the overall experience of Wiisokotaatiwin. Also, connecting with an Elder(s) or community practitioner to guide the participants through the land-based activity, and to share stories of the territory, would have added to the depth to the Wiisokotaatiwin experience. Due to time limitations and not knowing any land-based practitioners within Ottawa, I was unable include land-based physical activity within the study.

Recommendations for Future Research

In this final section, I offer recommendations related to future areas of research regarding the inclusiveness of other gender identities, reciprocal relationships, and land-based practices as a process of Indigenous nationalisms. I conclude by offering my reflections on including Indigenous research paradigms in Indigenous health research.

My first recommendation concerns the field of Indigenous health. It will be imperative for current and future Indigenous health researchers to continue seeking out Indigenous peoples' stories/dibaajimowinan regarding physical activity, health, and wellbeing from more Indigenous women, Indigenous men, and LGBTQ2IA communities. Further, it is crucial that Indigenous health researchers build meaningful and reciprocal relationships with research participants and

that they present participants' stories with due care and respect, especially in consideration of Indigenous research methodologies and relational accountability.

A second recommendation is for Indigenous health researchers to look to more specific land-based physical activities, such as harvesting traditional foods, trapping, hunting, or fishing, to learn how being on the land may impact Indigenous peoples' overall wellbeing. For example, how do land-based physical activities relate to Indigenous sovereignties or nationalism movements? As Coulthard (2014) emphasized, reconnecting to Indigenous territories (e.g., "walking the land"), assists in Indigenous peoples' resurgence from settler colonialism. Such re-presencing on our lands aids in our reconnection to places that inform our wellbeing. As such, future research may look to specific forms of physical activity on the land to better understand how such activities may affect individual and community resurgence from settler colonialism.

Finally, I offer my thoughts including Indigenous research paradigms within Indigenous health research. As I showed in my research, the Anishinaabeg research paradigm allowed me to create a space in academia to pursue Anishinaabeg-informed research that also assisted in fostering meaningful relationships with Anishinaabeg and other Indigenous women and Elders. As Indigenous health scholars continue to look to own ontologies, theories, and epistemologies in our research, it is very exciting to contemplate the direction in which physical activity and health research may go. What new Indigenous-led theories will be envisioned, especially as they pertain to our bodies and countering health disparities?

Concluding Thoughts

I have grown immensely from my time spent with Anishinaabekweg, Elders, and Indigenous women. Their stories have not only inspired the research papers contained in this dissertation, but also my own wellbeing as I traversed this journey. Through listening to the

stories from the Anishinaabekweg, I learned to create a deeper connection to my personal practices of physical activity and to foster my own personal wellbeing. As well, the gentleness, kindness, and love the Elders shared with me in the roundhouse taught me that even when we are challenging the hardships of settler colonialism, as Anishinaabeg, we must also share love and laughter with each other. I am deeply humbled to have been able to use our Anishinaabeg-gikendaasowin to assist in creating new ways to think about our health and wellbeing, which could not have happened without building reciprocal and meaningful relationships with Anishinaabekweg, Elders, and the Indigenous women who participated in Wiisokotaatiwin.

Niinwendimaaginaatok – All my relations

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Appendix A: Interview Consent Form



Université d'Ottawa | University of Ottawa

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

Project Title: Anis 125 rue Université C.P. 450, Succ. A 125 University St., P.O. Box 450, Stn A
Ottawa (Ontario) K1N 6N5 Canada Ottawa, Ontario K1N 6N5 Canada
(613) 562-5800 • Téléc/Fax: (613) 562-5149

Researcher:

Tricia McGuire-Adams

Supervisor:

Dr. Audrey Giles, School of Human Kinetics

This information letter, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research project is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like further information about something mentioned here, or lack thereof, you should feel free to ask the researcher listed above. Please take the time to read this carefully. The research will be conducted in English.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS RESEARCH is to conduct research with Anishinaabeg women to investigate if physical activity that encompasses a decolonization approach can be a catalyst for regenerative well-being for Anishinaabeg women. You have been invited for this interview because you engage in or aware of decolonized physicality, which is physical activity that is specially used to foster wellbeing for oneself, family, and community, and/or have knowledge of ancestral or current stories of strength (either on the land or in current practices of physical activity). Thus, your participation can provide valuable knowledge by sharing your experiences, insights, and stories.

TIME COMMITMENTS will include one semi-structured interview (via Skype, phone call, or in person) that will last approximately 1 to 2 hours. The time commitment related to the interview will vary depending on how much time you can give to this project, but will likely not exceed 3 hours in total, including the review process. After the interview has been transcribed, the researcher will send the transcribed interview to you in a password protected email, or by hard copy. You will then review the transcribed interview, which can take about 30-60 minutes. You may revise your responses in the transcripts. If you make changes, you will have two weeks to send the revised document via password protected email, or in a self-addressed stamped envelope that I will provide to you. Transcripts that are not reviewed and returned within two weeks will be deemed as acceptable and will be used in the study.

THE METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION will be one key informant interview conducted over Skype, phone call, or in person at a time that is convenient for you. During the interview, you will be asked to discuss ancestral stories of strength and/or share your experiences with engaging in

physical activity as it may relate to decolonization processes, and what you think can be done to address Anishinaabeg women's physical wellbeing. The researcher will communicate the interview day, time, and place in person or over the phone or email prior to the interview date. The semi-structured interview will be digitally-recorded to ensure that none of the information provided in the interview will be missed. If, however, you do not want your responses to be recorded, the researcher can take notes instead. The recorded interviews will be transcribed into written form and then used for analysis.

PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY. The researcher will collect the participants' names and community affiliations and use them in the dissertation and publications to acknowledge that Anishinaabeg peoples' knowledge is expert knowledge. If, however, you may choose to be anonymous and not have your name identified, the researcher will remove all identifiers and assign you a pseudonym (a made up name). Furthermore, all identifying characteristics will be altered to promote anonymity if you want to remain anonymous. The research findings will be disseminated primarily through community and academic conferences and publications, but your anonymity and confidentiality will be ensured if so desired. The researcher recognizes the importance of crediting sources of expert knowledge – especially Indigenous knowledge; as such, if you would like to be credited by name for your contributions, that will be done.

ACCESS TO DATA AND STORAGE. All data, including final transcripts and audio-recordings, will be retained in a locked cabinet in the researcher's office. Furthermore, all electronic data will be stored in encrypted files whose access keys will be known only to the researcher and her Ph.D. supervisor, Dr. Giles. The data, including final transcripts and audio-recordings, will be stored on both the researcher and her supervisors' computers for 30 years and the consent forms will be in Dr. Giles' locked filing cabinet for 30 years, at which point all data will be destroyed. This material will not be made available to anyone other than the researcher and Dr. Giles, and you at your personal request. No other persons will have access to the data without ethics approval.

COMPENSATION. Participants will be given an honourarium of \$40.00 for your participation in this study. If you choose to withdraw from the study, you will keep the \$40.00 honourarium for the study.

PARTICIPATION IN THIS PROJECT IS VOLUNTARY. You may refuse to participate, refuse to answer any questions, or withdraw from the study at any time without explanation. Upon your withdrawal, the data will be removed from the study. If we wish to keep the data, we will ask your permission to do so.

BENEFITS AND RISKS. There are no known risks to your participation in this study. Benefits may include contributing your knowledge to help Anishinaabeg people, Friendship Centre programs, and Indigenous community members more broadly by addressing if/how physical activity with a commitment to decolonization may assist in regenerating Indigenous peoples physical wellbeing.

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY, DATA, AND RESULTS SHARING. As the researcher is an Anishinaabe researcher she will enact a process of relational accountability to the Anishinaabeg participants and their personal and/or ancestral stories they will share. The researcher has a

responsibility to share your stories with accuracy, and to be continually mindful of respecting Anishinaabeg gikendaasowin (knowledge). The researcher does not own these stories but is an interpreter of the stories; she will enact reciprocity with you by asking you to review and provide feedback of your transcript. Moreover, the researcher will also be available to present the findings of the study to you, and in the event that a community presentation is well received, I will eagerly arrange presentation at your convenience and/or your community.

FUNDING. This research project is funded by a doctoral award from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research.

ACCEPTANCE. I, _____ (Name of participant), agree to participate in the above research study conducted by Tricia McGuire-Adams, Ph.D. Candidate at the University of Ottawa. I understand that by accepting to participate I am in no way waiving my right to withdraw from the study.

If I have any questions about the study, I may contact the researcher at the numbers mentioned at the top of this consent form.

If I have any ethical concerns regarding my participation in this study, I may contact the Protocol Officer for Ethics in Research, University of Ottawa, 550 Cumberland Street, Room 154, Ottawa, ON, K1N 6N5, (613) 562-5387 or ethics@uottawa.ca.

There are two copies of the consent form, one of which is mine to keep.

My interview may be audio-recorded (circle one): YES NO

I wish to remain anonymous (circle one): YES NO

My photograph may be taken and used for community and/or academic conferences (circle one):
 YES NO

My community may be identified (circle one) YES NO

Participant's signature: _____ _____
 (Signature) Date: (Date)

Researcher's signature: _____ _____
 (Signature) Date: (Date)

Appendix B: Interview Guide

Interview Guide for Anishinaabeg Women

1. Anishinaabeg introduction (from myself and women): Where are you from, what is your clan, who are your family relations?
2. What type(s) of physical activity do you perform?
3. What, if anything, influenced you to start being physically active?
4. Why is it important for you to be physically active?
5. Has physical activity helped you to deal with any self-esteem issues? If yes, how so?
6. Are you familiar with the effects of colonization on our bodies e.g. high rates of chronic disease? If yes, how do you see physical activity addressing ill health?
7. Do you feel it is important for Anishinaabeg women to learn about our ancestral stories of physical strength or physical activity? If so, why?
8. Do you think our ancestral stories featuring physical strong Anishinaabeg women can assist you in your training?
9. Are you familiar with the concept of decolonization? If yes, do you think physical activity can help with a person's decolonization process?
10. Do you have any opinions on mainstream solutions to address Indigenous people's ill health e.g. the Canada Food Guide?

Appendix C: Elders Consent Form



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Project Title: AnisOttawa (Ontario) K1N 6N5 Canada

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(613) 562-5800 • Téléc/Fax: (613) 562-5149

y

Researcher:

Tricia McGuire-Adams,

Supervisor:

Dr. Audrey Giles, School of Human Kinetics

This information letter, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research project is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like further information about something mentioned here, or lack thereof, you should feel free to ask the researcher listed above. Please take the time to read this carefully. The research will be conducted in English.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS RESEARCH is to conduct research with Anishinaabeg women to investigate if physical activity that encompasses a decolonization approach can be a catalyst for regenerative well-being for Anishinaabeg women. You have been invited to participate in this focus group because you engage in or aware of decolonized physicality, which is physical activity that is specially used to foster wellbeing for oneself, family, and community, and/or have knowledge of ancestral or current stories of strength (either on the land or in current practices of physical activity). Thus, your participation can provide valuable knowledge by sharing your experiences, insights, and stories.

TIME COMMITMENTS will include a focus group session that will last approximately 2 to 5 hours. Once the focus group session is completed and transcribed, the researcher will send you a copy of the transcribed focus group session, *containing only what you said*, in a password protected email, or by hard copy. You will have the ability to alter only what you were recorded – and then transcribed – as saying, which can take about 30-60 minutes. You may revise your responses in the transcript. If you make changes, you will have two weeks to send the revised document via password protected email or in a self-addressed stamped envelop that I will provide to you. Transcripts that are not reviewed within two weeks will be deemed as acceptable and will be used in the study.

THE METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION will be a focus group where Anishinaabeg teachings and protocols will be used to make a culturally sensitive and responsive atmosphere, which will be conducted at a meeting space in Naicatchewenin First Nation. During the focus group, you will

be asked to discuss ancestral stories of strength and/or share your experiences with engaging in physical activity as it may relate to decolonization processes, and what you think can be done to address Anishinaabeg women's physical wellbeing. The researcher will communicate the focus group day, time, and place over the phone or email prior to the focus group date. The focus group will be digitally-recorded to ensure that none of the information provided in the focus group will be missed. If a participant does not wish to be audio-recorded, they will not be able to participate in the focus group. The recorded focus group will be transcribed into written form and then used for analysis. The researcher will also take photographs for use in community and/or academic conference presentations. If you do not wish to have your picture taken and/or used, the researcher will refrain from taking pictures of you.

PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY. Pseudonyms will initially be assigned to all participants; however, those who wish to be identified will have their pseudonyms removed. Only the researcher and her PhD supervisor will have access to pseudonyms in order to link the data to participant identities. Unless you want your real name to be used, all identifying characteristics will be altered to promote anonymity. There are, however, confidentiality limitations due to the nature of the focus group session. The researcher will emphasize to all participants that comments made during the focus group session are to be kept confidential; however, there may be a limit in protecting confidentiality as the researcher cannot predict if, at some point in the future, a participant may repeat comments made during the focus group. As such, the research will encourage you to be as honest and open as you can, but remain aware of the limit in protecting confidentiality. Only the researcher and her Ph.D. supervisor, Dr. Giles, will have access to the information that you give. The research findings will be disseminated through community and academic conferences, and publications, but your anonymity and confidentiality will be ensured if so desired. The researcher recognizes the importance of crediting sources of expert knowledge – especially Indigenous knowledge; as such, if you would like to be credited by name for your contributions, the researcher will be glad to do that.

ACCESS TO DATA AND STORAGE. All data, including final transcripts and audio-recordings, will be retained in a locked cabinet in the researcher's office. Furthermore, all electronic data will be stored in encrypted files whose access keys will be known only to the researcher and her Ph.D. supervisor, Dr. Giles. The data, including final transcripts and audio-recordings, will be stored on the researcher's and Dr. Giles' computers for 30 years and the consent forms will be stored in Dr. Giles' locked filing cabinet for 30 years, at which point they will be destroyed. This material will not be made available to anyone other than the researcher and Dr. Giles, and you at your personal request. No other persons will have access to the data without ethics approval.

COMPENSATION. The focus group participants will receive an honourarium of \$40 for their participation. The researcher will distribute the \$40 dollars to each participant at the start of the focus group and you will still be given the honourarium even if you withdraw from the study.

PARTICIPATION IN THIS PROJECT IS VOLUNTARY. You may refuse to participate, refuse to answer any questions, or withdraw from the study at any time without explanation. Due to the dynamic of the focus group discussion, where people build off of each other's points of discussion, I will not be able to remove your data from the focus group if you choose to

withdraw from the study. However, I will ensure your name and all identifiers are replaced with a pseudonym, if it is not already in pseudonym form.

BENEFITS AND RISKS. There are no known risks to your participation in this study. Benefits may include contributing your knowledge to help Anishinaabeg people, Friendship Centre programs, and Indigenous community members more broadly by addressing if/how physical activity with a commitment to decolonization may assist in regenerating Indigenous peoples physical well-being.

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY, DATA, AND RESULTS SHARING. As the researcher is an Anishinaabe researcher she will enact a process of relational accountability to the Anishinaabeg participants and their personal and/or ancestral stories they will share. The researcher has a responsibility to share the participants' stories with accuracy, and to be continually mindful of respecting Anishinaabeg gikendaasowin (knowledge). The researcher does not own these stories but is an interpreter of the stories; she will enact reciprocity with the participants by asking them to review and provide feedback of their transcripts. Moreover, the researcher will also be available to present the findings of the study to the participants, and in the event that a community presentation is well received, I will eagerly arrange presentation at the convenience of the participant and/or her community.

FUNDING. This research project is funded by a doctoral awarded to the researcher from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research.

ACCEPTANCE. I, _____ (*Name of participant*), agree to participate in the above research study conducted by Tricia McGuire-Adams, Ph.D. Candidate at the University of Ottawa. I understand that by accepting to participate I am in no way waiving my right to withdraw from the study.

If I have any questions about the study, I may contact the researcher at the numbers mentioned at the top of this consent form.

If I have any ethical concerns regarding my participation in this study, I may contact the Protocol Officer for Ethics in Research, University of Ottawa, 550 Cumberland Street, Room 154, Ottawa, ON, K1N 6N5, (613) 562-5387 or ethics@uottawa.ca.

There are two copies of the consent form, one of which is mine to keep.

I wish to remain anonymous (circle one): YES NO

You may photograph me as I participate to be used in community and/or academic conferences (circle one): YES NO

Researcher's signature: _____
(Signature)
Date: *(Date)*

Appendix D: Wiisokotaatiwin Consent Form



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125 rue Université C.P. 450, Succ. A

125 University St., P.O. Box 450, Stn A

Project Title: AnisOttawa (Ontario) K1N 6N5 Canada

Ottawa, Ontario K1N 6N5 Canada

(613) 562-5800 • Téléc/Fax: (613) 562-5149

y

Researcher:

Tricia McGuire-Adams

Supervisor:

Dr. Audrey Giles, School of Human Kinetics

This information letter, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research project is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like further information about something mentioned here, or lack thereof, you should feel free to ask the researcher listed above. Please take the time to read this carefully. The research will be conducted in English.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS RESEARCH is to conduct research with Anishinaabeg women to investigate if physical activity that encompasses a decolonization approach can be a catalyst for regenerative well-being for Anishinaabeg women. You have been invited for this focus group called Wiisokotaatiwin, which means gathering together for a purpose, because you engage in or aware of decolonized physicality, which is physical activity that is specially used to foster wellbeing for oneself, family, and community. Thus, your participation can provide valuable knowledge by sharing your experiences, insights, and stories.

TIME COMMITMENTS will include 10 in-group sessions of the Wiisokotaatiwin focus group at the Odawa Native Friendship Centre. The Wiisokotaatiwin focus group will entail participation in a kettle bell workout, and, immediately after, meeting in a circle to engage in a critical dialogue pertaining to how participants' physical activity may or may not influence decolonization processes, about which the participants will also journal throughout. The researcher will lead the kettle bell workout (to be 30-45 minutes) and circle dialogue (to be 30 to 60 minutes), as she is a certified kettle bell instructor and was a previously trained and employed as a community circle coordinator. Once all sessions of the focus groups are completed and have been transcribed, the researcher will review the transcription with you, which can take about 60 minutes. You will have the ability to alter only what you were recorded – and then transcribed – as saying. Transcripts that are not reviewed within two weeks will be deemed as acceptable and will be used in the study. The total approximate time for the Wiisokotaatiwin is 20 to 25 hours.

A kettle bell is a weight held by one or both hands to perform a series of movements, such as the swing, snatch, clean and press etc. Notably, kettle bells facilitate endurance, strength and explosiveness, flexibility, and a holistic approach to fitness (Lake & Lauder, 2012); as such, they are great fitness tools to foster physicality in short amounts of time.

THE METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION will be an Anishinaabeg style focus group (Wiisokotaatiwin) where Anishinaabeg teachings will be used to make a culturally sensitive and responsive atmosphere, which will be conducted at the Odawa Native Friendship Centre. The researcher will do her best to accommodate your schedule. During the Wiisokotaatiwin focus group, each week we will have a themed topic where you will be asked to discuss the following: physical activity and wellbeing, colonialism, personal decolonization, health, ancestral stories etc. in order to facilitate critical dialogue amongst the participants. However, it is equally important to give space to the participants to direct the flow of the content, which will assist in your engagement in the critical dialogue and to include other aspects of physical activity that you identify as crucial.

The researcher will communicate the Wiisokotaatiwin focus group's (which includes the kettle bell workouts) schedule including days, times, and place in person, over the phone, or by email prior to the start date. The Wiisokotaatiwin focus group will be audio-recorded to ensure that none of the information provided in the sessions will be missed. If a participant does not wish to be audio-recorded, they will not be able to participate in the Wiisokotaatiwin focus group. The recorded Wiisokotaatiwin focus group will be transcribed into written form and then used for analysis. The researcher will also take photographs for use in community and/or academic conference presentations. If you do not wish to have your picture taken and/or used, the researcher will refrain from taking pictures of you.

PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY. Pseudonyms will initially be assigned to all participants; however, those who wish to be identified will have their pseudonyms removed. Only the researcher and her PhD supervisor will have access to pseudonyms in order to link the data to participant identities. Unless you want your real name to be used, all identifying characteristics will be altered to promote anonymity. There are, however, confidentiality limitations due to the nature of the Wiisokotaatiwin focus group sessions. The researcher will emphasize to all participants that comments made during the Wiisokotaatiwin focus group sessions are to be kept confidential; however, there may be a limit in protecting confidentiality as the researcher cannot predict if, at some point in the future, a participant may repeat comments made during the focus group. As such, the research will encourage you to be as honest and open as you can, but remain aware of the limit in protecting confidentiality. Only the researcher and her Ph.D. supervisor, Dr. Giles, will have access to the information that you give. The research findings will be disseminated through the Wiisokotaatiwin focus group blog, through community and academic conferences, and publications, but your anonymity and confidentiality will be ensured if so desired. The researcher recognizes the importance of crediting sources of expert knowledge – especially Indigenous knowledge; as such, if you would like to be credited by name for your contributions, the researcher will be glad to do that.

ACCESS TO DATA AND STORAGE. All data, including final transcripts and audio-recordings, will be retained in a locked cabinet in the researcher's office. Furthermore, all electronic data will be

stored in encrypted files whose access keys will be known only to the researcher and her Ph.D. supervisor, Dr. Giles. The data, including final transcripts and audio-recordings, will be stored on the researcher's and Dr. Giles' computers for 30 years and the consent forms will be stored in Dr. Giles' locked filing cabinet for 30 years, at which point they will be destroyed. This material will not be made available to anyone other than the researcher and Dr. Giles, and you at your personal request. No other persons will have access to the data without ethics approval.

COMPENSATION. The Wiisokotaatiwin focus group participants will receive an honourarium of \$10 per session for their participation. The researcher will distribute the \$10 dollar increments at the start of each of the 10 sessions and you will still be given the honourarium even if you withdraw from the study.

PARTICIPATION IN THIS PROJECT IS VOLUNTARY. You may refuse to participate, refuse to answer any questions, or withdraw from the study at any time without explanation. Due to the dynamic of the focus group discussions, where people build off of each other's points of discussion, I will not be able to remove your data from the Wiisokotaatiwin focus group if you choose to withdraw from the study. However, I will ensure your name and all identifiers are replaced with a pseudonym, if it is not already in pseudonym form.

BENEFITS AND RISKS. You will be a participant in physical activity that will be suited to your comfort level. As with any physical activity, a person may experience muscle soreness; however, as muscles get stronger the soreness often dissipates. The researcher will help mitigate these risks as she is a certified kettle bell instructor who has been training with kettle bells for nine years. Should you want additional resources to address either physical activity or muscle soreness, you may contact Sheridon Baptiste, the Program Coordinator of the Urban Aboriginal Healthy Living Program at the Odawa Native Friendship Centre. He may be reached at: healthyliving@odawa.on.ca and/or 613-722-3811 ext. 226. Additionally, in the Wiisokotaatiwin focus group the participants may discuss body image issues such as obesity, anorexia, or bulimia that may cause emotional distress. The researcher will help to mitigate the risks of any emotional discomfort by ensuring the participants have access to a list of counseling resources. A sheet listing resources in Ottawa will be distributed to each participant at the beginning of the Wiisokotaatiwin focus group session. They may also contact the Carrie Diabo, Coordinator of the Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Program at the Odawa Native Friendship Centre. She may be reached at: 613-789-3077 and/or healingandwellness@odawa.on.ca. These are the only known risks to your participation in this study.

Benefits from participating in this study may include contributing your knowledge to help Anishinaabeg people, Friendship Centre programs, and Indigenous community members more broadly, by addressing if/how physical activity with a commitment to decolonization may assist in regenerating Indigenous peoples well-being; you may gain a greater sense of well-being by being physically active; and it may open up more possibilities to engage in physical activity.

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY, DATA, AND RESULTS SHARING. As the researcher is an Anishinaabe researcher she will enact a process of relational accountability to the Anishinaabeg participants and their personal and/or ancestral stories they will share. The researcher has a responsibility to share the participants' stories with accuracy, and to be continually mindful of

Appendix E: Wiisokotaatiwin Recruitment Poster



| Université d'Ottawa | University of Ottawa
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Ottawa (Ontario) K1N 6N5 Canada Ottawa, Ontario K1N 6N5 Canada
(613) 562-5800 • Téléc/Fax: (613) 562-5149

Indigenous Women Needed for a Research Study!

Title of Research Project: Anishinaabeg Women's Well-Being: Decolonization through Physical Activity.

Criteria:

- Anishinaabeg and/or other Indigenous women aged 18 years and older
- Willingness and ability to engage in physical activity
- Willingness to engage in important discussions regarding physical activity, Anishinaabeg and other Indigenous peoples stories, colonialism, and decolonization.

Participation:

You will be asked to participate in Wiisokotaatiwin, which means gathering together for a purpose in the Anishinaabeg language. Wiisokotaatiwin is an Anishinaabeg-informed focus group, that will address questions to help understand Indigenous women's health and well-being. During Wiisokotaatiwin, you will be asked to discuss topics such as: perceptions of colonization, decolonization, health and wellbeing, ancestral stories, and other aspects of physical activity that you identify as crucial. Wiisokotaatiwin will be audio recorded.

Time Requirement:

Wiisokotaatiwin participants will meet once per week at the Odawa Native Friendship Centre gym for seven weeks beginning **Sunday, October 16 to Sunday, November 27**. The participants will meet each Sunday for 1.5 to 2 hours maximum (11:00 am to 1:00 pm). Wiisokotaatiwin will entail participation in a kettlebell workout, a talking circle to engage in a critical dialogue pertaining to how participants' physical activity may or may not influence decolonization processes, and journaling. A kettlebell is a weight held by one or both hands to perform a series of movements, such as the swing, snatch, clean and press etc. Notably, kettlebells facilitate endurance, strength and explosiveness, flexibility, and a holistic approach to fitness (Lake & Lauder, 2012); as such, they are great fitness tools to foster physicality in short amounts of time. Participants do not need to have previous experience with kettlebells to attend.

Other details:

This study will be conducted solely in English; however, an interpreter can be made available if/when required.

Please note that participation is based on a first-come, first-served basis. Participants will be given \$10 honourarium per session. Light, healthy snacks, and drinks will be provided each week.

To register for Wiisokotaatiwin, please contact Tricia McGuire-Adams, the researcher.

Appendix F: Ethics

File Number: H10-15-05

Date (mm/dd/yyyy): 11/30/2015



Université d'Ottawa
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Office of Research Ethics and Integrity

Ethics Approval Notice

Health Sciences and Science REB

Principal Investigator / Supervisor / Co-investigator(s) / Student(s)

<u>First Name</u>	<u>Last Name</u>	<u>Affiliation</u>	<u>Role</u>
Audrey	Giles	Health Sciences / Human Kinetics	Supervisor
Tricia	McGuire-Adams	Health Sciences / Human Kinetics	Student Researcher

File Number: H10-15-05

Type of Project: PhD Thesis

Title: Anishinaabeg Women's Well-Being: Decolonization through Physical Activity

Approval Date (mm/dd/yyyy)	Expiry Date (mm/dd/yyyy)	Approval Type
11/30/2015	11/29/2016	Ia
(Ia: Approval, Ib: Approval for initial stage only)		

Special Conditions / Comments:
N/A



Université d'Ottawa **University of Ottawa**
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Renewal Date (mm/dd/yyyy)	Expiry Date (mm/dd/yyyy)	Approval Type
11/30/2016	11/29/2017	Approved

Special Conditions / Comments:
 N/A

Appendix G: Contributions

Tricia McGuire-Adams developed, designed, and undertook this dissertation, its theorization, analysis, and writing. Dr. Audrey Giles provided assistance and input into the editing of each paper and reviewing the final product. One paper is co-authored with Dr. Giles, where she aided in the development of the paper, Anishinaabekweg Dibaajimowinan (Stories) of Decolonization through Running.