



The National Coaching for

PARASPORT SUMMIT

REPORT

**May 2nd–3rd, 2023
Edmonton, Alberta**

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We gratefully acknowledge the collaboration of our partner organizations: the University of Ottawa, the University of Alberta, the Coaching Association of Canada, and the Canadian Paralympic Committee. Special thanks are also extended to the Steadward Centre at the University of Alberta for hosting the summit and providing a welcoming environment for meaningful exchange.

We sincerely thank all NCPS participants from across the country, representing diverse sports and sport organizations, whose contributions enriched the dialogue. Your experiences, insights, and commitment to advancing inclusive coach development for Para sport were at the heart of this initiative.

We also recognize the dedication of the NCPS organizing team and facilitators, whose efforts ensured meaningful dialogue and the success of both in-person and virtual sessions. A very special thanks goes to Geneva Coulter and Sierra Roth, whose tireless work before, during, and after the event was essential to making the summit run smoothly.

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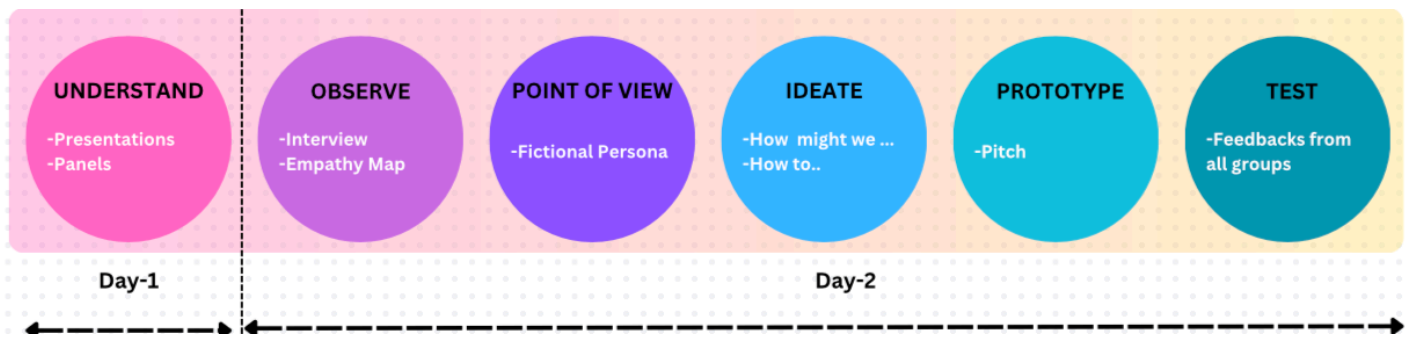
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



The National Coaching for Para Sport Summit (NCPS), held on May 2–3, 2023, at the University of Alberta’s Steadward Centre, brought together a diverse group of coaches, researchers, athletes, and stakeholders to advance inclusive coach development in Canadian Para sport. Hosted in collaboration by the University of Ottawa, University of Alberta, the Coaching Association of Canada, and the Canadian Paralympic Committee, NCPS brought together participants from across Canada. The NCPS, designed as a hybrid event both in-person (Day 1: 38 participants; Day 2: 20 participants) and online (Day 1: 65 participants; Day 2: 9 participants). The NCPS aimed to catalyze sustainable systems change by fostering national dialogue, sharing research-informed practices, and co-creating innovative, user-centred solutions to address challenges in Para sport coaching. To guide this process, the summit adopted a Design Thinking (DT) framework (Brown, 2008), which emphasizes empathy, creative problem-solving, and iterative solution-building. Although widely used in business and education, DT remains under utilized in sport, making its application at the NCPS both timely and transformative. This report will offer a thorough overview of the two-day summit and propose recommendations for future actions regarding coach education for Para sport.



Day 1: Mapping the Landscape

The first day focused on exploring the “problem space” of Para sport coach development through a series of panel discussions, each addressing a key thematic area:

- **Coach Education Landscape in Canada:** Participants examined national reports and studies related to Para sport coach education. Discussions identified gaps in curriculum, integration of research into practice, and systemic barriers.
- **Tailored Training Pathways:** International experts shared models for inclusive coach development from other countries. The conversation highlighted both structural challenges and promising practices that could inform the Canadian context.
- **Inclusive Programming and Resources:** Presentations explored mentorship models and communities of practice that foster social learning. The importance of adaptable, scalable frameworks was emphasized.
- **Leadership and Anti-Ableism in Coaching:** A keynote by Dr. Peers, “Nothing About Us Without Us”, explored self-determination and leadership from the perspective of people with disabilities. Input from Para athletes and coaches added powerful lived-experience insights into inclusive practice and structural inequity.

Day 2: Designing the Future

On the second day, participants tackled the central DT challenge: *“Reimagine coach development that delivers a high-quality Para sport experience accessible for all.”* Using the Hasso Plattner Institute’s DT model, participants engaged in iterative processes of understanding, ideating, prototyping, and refining inclusive coaching solutions. This human-centred methodology enabled participants to generate ideas grounded in empathy and user experience while promoting creativity and systems-level thinking.

Key Recommendations

The discussions and design activities generated a set of strategic recommendations to support inclusive, high-impact coach development in Para sport across Canada:

- *Create a National Communication Platform:* Centralize Para sport communication in Canada, with sub-channels for sport-specific collaboration and knowledge sharing.
- *Host Regular Coaching Summits:* Establish recurring national events to sustain dialogue and innovation in Para sport coaching.
- *Support Inclusive Coach Development:* Increase the representation of persons with disabilities in coaching and provide structured pathways for athlete-to-coach transitions.
- *Expand Learning Opportunities:* Offer accessible virtual and in-person training, including mentorship and communities of practice.
- *Adopt an Equity-Based Lens:* Shift from binary to continuum-based understandings of disability and use high-performance resources to support all coaching levels.
- *Improve Access to Resources:* Centralize educational materials and encourage cross-disciplinary learning beyond a coach's primary sport.
- *Foster Inclusive Environments:* Address stigma in sport and promote shared learning while recognizing the unique needs of Para sport coaching.



INTRODUCTION

The 'National Coaching for Para sport Summit (NCPS)', a SSHRC funded Connection grant received by Drs Culver and Konoval, was a knowledge mobilization / research collaboration between the University of Ottawa, the University of Alberta, the Coaching Association of Canada and the Canadian Paralympic Committee. The Summit was hosted at the Steadward Center on the University of Alberta campus on May 2nd and 3rd, 2023.

The concept for NCPS indicated a need for high-quality, well-trained coaches to help mitigate the well-established issues with Canada's Para sport system (e.g., Hammond et al., 2021; Howe, 2007; 2008; Peers et al., 2020). Furthermore, Culver and colleagues' research (2022) reiterated the critical place coaches for Para sport occupy as the cornerstone for creating quality Para sport programming for athletes just being introduced to sport (Allan et al., 2020; Allan et al. 2021; Martin & Whalen, 2014) and at the high-performance level (Kohe & Peters, 2017). However, Konoval and colleagues (2020) found the National Coaching Certification Program (NCCP) lacks disability-inclusive content in their coach education. Consequently, coaches are not being effectively educated about the nuances of disability and Para sport, which ultimately means there are few well-trained coaches for Para sport in the Canadian sport system. In addition, Lawson and colleagues (2021) found that less the formal resources for coach education in Para sport that do exist are scattered amongst provinces sport websites and are low in quality. For this reason, the NCPS brought together sport organizations, coach educators, coaches, athletes, and leading coaching researchers to move beyond asking 'why' disability inclusion is important in coaching and coach education to instead asking 'how'.

NCPS was a hybrid event, so participants had the opportunity to be part of the conversation from across Canada. Day 1 featured diverse, in-depth discussions for knowledge mobilization regarding the main problems, opportunities, and innovations in coaching and coach education in Para sport. On Day-2 the participants searched for answers to the challenge "Re-imagine coach development that delivers a high-quality Para sport experience accessible for all" through Design Thinking (DT) activities. The main purpose of NCPS was for participants to work on how a national framework could be co-constructed to be more inclusive and to meet the needs for well-trained coaches in Para sport in Canada.

This report will include an overview of both Day-1 and Day-2 as well as the recommendations that came from the Day-2 Design Thinking process. We'd like to thank SSHRC for the Connection grant that allowed us to make NCPS a reality.

PARTICIPATION OVERVIEW

DAY 1



38

IN-PERSON
PARTICIPANTS



65

ONLINE
PARTICIPANTS

DAY 2



20

IN-PERSON
PARTICIPANTS



9

ONLINE
PARTICIPANTS

KNOWLEDGE MOBILIZATION AND GAPS ON COACHING FOR PARA SPORT

Day-1 included a variety of presentations, in-person and pre-recorded highlighting several themes related to the main problems, opportunities, and innovations in coaching and coach education for knowledge mobilization in Para sport. These discussions set the stage for future collaborative activities on Day-2 which will be explored more in-depth below. In this section you will find an overview of each presentation as it relates to the overarching theme.

1.How is coach education for Para sport currently delivered in Canada?

The presentations related to Theme-1 focused on exploring how coach education for Para sport is currently delivered in Canada. An overall quantitative overview was provided of current coach education materials and resources for Para sport (presented by Dr. Veronica Allan) as well as a qualitative assessment of the current online Para sport module (i.e., Coaching Athletes with a Disability; CAWAD) (presented by Iman Hassan). An evaluation of academic studies conducted to date in the field of Para sport coaching was also presented along with their contributions to practice (presented by Dr. Gordon Bloom). Finally, the session concluded with a panel discussion of stakeholders, moderated by Dr. Veronica Allan, who provided their own perspective on how coach education for Para sport is currently being delivered in Canada. Members of the panel were: Sean Liebich, the program manager for Wheelchair Basketball; Jennifer Larson, the program manager for Boccia Canada; Bjorn Taylor, the athlete development manager and a Para Nordic coach for Nordiq Canada; and Janet Dunn, the Para swimming performance pathway coach and national classification lead for Swim Canada. (See below of details of each presentation)

1a. Examining Disability Inclusion in Canada's Coach Education system?

Presented by Dr. Veronica Allan (SIRC) & Dr. Tim Konoval (UA)

Dr. Veronica Allan presented an examination of the visibility, structure and content of disability inclusion in sport specific National Coaching Certification Program (NCCP) materials and resources for NSOs delivering programs for people with disabilities in Canada. 966 documents from 27 NSOs were reviewed and coded according to (e.g., instruction, community, competition), document type (e.g., learning facilitator manual, coach workbook) and whether disability, Para sport or a related term (e.g., athlete with disability) was mentioned. 74 out of 966 resources were included in the analysis. The findings of the analysis were contextualized using the models of disability (Categorical, Inclusion/Integration, and Infusion)[1] and the types of coaching knowledge (consideration, collaboration, and professionalism). The results showed that the visibility of disability in sport specific NCCP programs is low. Disability or Para sport was mentioned in 12% of sport specific NCCP materials and resources and only 7% of these materials mentioned a coach. This included sport specific NCCP materials and resources for 23 of the 27 NSOs (85%). However, these rates tell us nothing about the quality of disability-related programming. When they analyzed the structure of coach education program, they found that 6 NSOs have no or limited disability-inclusive content, 5 NSOs have separate Para coach education from traditional NCCP content, 6 NSOs have a combination of the separate module(s) and some disability-inclusive content in traditional NCCP content, 5 NSOs have Para coach education fully integrated into traditional NCCP content, and for 5 NSOs disability-inclusion is implicit by virtue of sport (e.g., Basketball Canada) or the Para sport has its own NSO (e.g., Boccia). The analysis of the module content showed the materials of coach education programs have: 5 NSOs (19%) address Consideration (i.e., addressing biases, assumptions, advocacy, and/or inclusion), 9 NSOs (33%) address Collaboration (e.g., communication), 20 NSOs (74%) address Professionalism (practice planning, skill acquisition), 14 NSOs (52%) Para sport specific information (e.g., accessibility, equipment), and 20 NSOs (74%) address disability-specific information (e.g., classification). The research results point to the need to shift Para coach training towards integration and infusion frameworks.

Presentation Takeaways

- Para sport-specific information (e.g., eligibility, rules, equipment, history) should be integrated into coach education. While technical content is strong, adding general knowledge about disability, inclusive language, and principles would enhance understanding.
- Content must be thoughtful and purposeful. Disability is diverse, and traditional sport concepts don't always apply to Para sport. More content may be needed in some areas, using creative tools like case studies, stories, and reflection.
- Developing disability-related content requires creative pedagogy and collaboration with the disability community. Some sports focus heavily on certain disability groups, leaving others underrepresented.,this imbalance needs addressing.

[1] Para sport Coach Education Frameworks can have different integration levels: low to high, categorical, inclusion, and infusion. The lowest integrated one, the medical model (categorical model), focuses on impairment, and according to the model, impairment is a problem that needs to be fixed. The social model is placed between the medical and social-relational models. According to the social (inclusion/integration) model, the main reason for the disability is society, not impairment. Social structure causes people with disabilities to be disabled. The environment needs to change. The highest level of integration can be with the Social-relational model (infusion model). The Social relational model sees the people as a whole, individually and socially. According to the social-relational model, impairment is the reality of people with disabilities, and for integration, understanding.

1b. Examining Disability Inclusion in Canada's Coach Education system?

Presented by Iman Hassan (UO), Dr. Diane Culver (UO), & Dr. Tim Konoval (UA)

Based on the lack of coherent or organized coaching modules to support coaching for Para sport, in this presentation Iman Hassan addressed the coach education landscape and provided recommendations to improve the quality of resources. Within this study, researchers aimed to understand gaps, barriers, and facilitators for Para sport coach education and to examine the accessibility and inclusiveness of the coach education Coaching Athletes with a Disability (CAWAD) e-learning module. The interviews with coach developers, sport managers, and high-performance directors and focus group with coaches from a variety of sports (e.g., athletics, badminton, wheelchair curling, ice hockey, rowing) showed a need for institutional readiness and a capacity for disability inclusion. Also, the results suggested a need to move away from ad hoc approaches to the coach development pathway and directly address confusions about the infusion model. As a result of examining the accessibility and inclusiveness of the CAWAD e-learning module researchers suggested the use of centralized voices and the representations of athletes and coaches with disability, a clear picture of 'who' the module is speaking to, a contemporary pedagogy, and to make use of the existing Para sport resources to ensure the module is accessible to people with disabilities. In summary, the study pointed to the demand for more resources, strategic intentionality, and increased awareness of the Para sport coaching pathway.

1c. Using Para sport Coaching Research to Inform Practice

Presented by Dr. Gordon Bloom (McGill University)

Based on the lack of data-based research to assess the effectiveness of coaches identified by previous studies, the purpose of Dr. Gordon Bloom's presentation was to provide a broad overview and synthesis of the existing literature related to Para sport coaches and how it can inform practice. Bentzen, Alexander, Bloom, and Kenttä (2021) conducted a scoping review of research on Para sport coaches from 1991 to 2018. Within the scoping review, they aimed to preliminarily assess the size, range, and nature of existing literature and identify gaps in the research that could help inform education and practice. Six databases were used to identify relevant studies which included articles that collected data from coaches or were specific to the role of the coach (i.e., excluded chapters, books, and dissertations). The results identified 44 peer-reviewed articles (33 empirical, 5 reflective) and found that 70% of articles were published after 2014. The main findings suggested coaches were predominantly male (74.4 %), in high-performance sport contexts (71.8%), and from North America and Europe (77.7%). Many of the articles were qualitative (66.7%), using cross-sectional design and interviewing methods. The topics in Para sport are "general coaching knowledge" (i.e., roles and responsibilities of the coach, self-reflection, pre-competition plans; e.g., Choen et al., 2015), "being Para sport coach" (i.e., stigma associated with disability in society; Wareham et al., 2017), and "becoming Para sport coach" (i.e., typical pathways and learning opportunities; e.g. Cregan et al., 2007; Douglas et al., 2018). The review also showed there is a need to continue expanding empirically based research on Para sport coaching to inform coach education and practice, a need for large sample sizes, more longitudinal designs (51.3% had 10 or fewer participants; 17.9% had more than 21 participants), and international research collaborations to acquire more culturally diverse sample sizes and diverse perspectives. Overall, the review highlighted a desire for formal Para sport coach education to include contextualized training (e.g., disability-specific coaching knowledge), yet found this information difficult to access (McMaster et al., 2012). Since the review, Alexander and Bloom (2023) have explored the effectiveness of the first formal coach mentorship program for Para sport coaches. Mentee coaches valued learning Para sport-specific information from an experienced coach in their field.

1d. Panel – What coach education curriculum currently exists?

Moderated by Dr. Veronica Allan (SIRC)

The final presentation related to Theme -1 was a panel discussion exploring what coach education curriculum currently exists and the experiences of key stakeholders in the field. Present for the panel were Sean Liebich, the program manager for Wheelchair Basketball, Jennifer Larson the program manager for Boccia Canada, Bjorn Taylor the athlete development manager and a Para Nordic coach for Nordiq Canada, and Janet Dunn the Para swimming performance pathway coach and national classification lead for Swim Canada. Panelists explored the strengths, and areas of improvement for coach education especially when considering the different experiences of small versus big NSOs. Common concerns included budget constraints, a need for more time and resources dedicated to projects such as mentorships, disability-specific coach education courses, etc. and more facilitators for Para sport specific coach education. In summary, the panel highlighted flexible approach (e.g., multi-sport perspective, transferability of knowledge, stigma about being Para sports coach), representation in the system (e.g., inclusion of more persons with disabilities, the transformation of the athletes with disabilities to coach or other roles) and improvement of resources (e.g., virtual delivery, annual camps, mentorship programs).

2.How could coach education for Para sport be implemented in Canada?

The presentations related to Theme-2 focused on how coach education for Para sport could be implemented in Canada. Presentations related to this theme included an overview of how the Para sports coach education and coach development process is carried out in the United States (presented by Dr. Scott Douglas), the need for a shift to an infusion approach in Para sport (presented by Dr. Rob Townsend), and a panel discussion exploring the current successes, challenges, and opportunities to a disability inclusive coach education system in Canada with panelists Peter Niedre from the Coaching Association of Canada, Jenny Davey from the Canadian Paralympic Committee, Michael Frogley from Own the Podium and moderated by Dr. David Legg (MRU).

2a. Coach Education for Para sport in the United States Presented by Dr. Scott Douglas (NCU)

In his presentation, Dr. Douglas explained how the Para sports coach education and coach development process is carried out in the United States. In the US, an eligible paralympic athlete refers to an individual with a classifiable impairment, which fall into three distinct groups; physical impairments (e.g., spinal cord injury, MD, post-polio syndrome, spina bifida, arthrogryposis, amputation, cerebral palsy, TBI, stroke, MS), vision impairment, and intellectual impairment. “The training of coaches is considered central to sustaining and improving the quality of sports provision. In Para sport, coaches are recognized at the highest level of international sport policy as performing a central role in achieving important sporting and social outcomes related to people with disabilities. However, an emerging body of evidence suggests that formal coach education plays only a minor role in Para sport coaches’ development. To ensure equitable access and quality experiences and opportunities for people with disabilities in sport there is an ongoing challenge to theorize and implement the optimal structure for educating coaches.” (Townsend et al., 2022). So, with this perspective the question remains, how can we best design, develop and deliver relevant formal coach education in Para sport? In his presentation, Dr. Douglas presented some challenges in answering this question. These include the absence or minimization of disability sport in current formal coach education curriculum, the lack of proper support for Para sport specific coach development programs, the limited qualifications required to become a Paralympic coach compared to their Olympic counterparts, the “dumping” of many coaches from the Olympic side to the Paralympic side, and the “fast-tracking” of Para sport athletes into head coaching positions without proper mentorship and/or coach education. As a result, the US Olympic committee has developed a quality coaching framework. An evidence-based resource that outlines a common set of guiding principles for all those working in the Team USA coaching context. This framework was the latest step taken by the United States Olympic & Paralympic Committee (USOPC) to enhance the standard of coaching nationwide and support Project Play 2020, a three-year initiative led by the Aspen Institute to stem the decline in youth sports participation. 2020 USOPC Quality Coaching Framework (QCF) developed in partnership with sport governing boards aimed to improve the sport experience for athletes across the country and advance the coaching profession. As a result of the QCF Dr. Douglas presented Wheelchair Tennis as one of the most integrated Para sports.

What is Reciprocal Mentorship (RM)?

In the wheelchair tennis context, RM is defined as when relatively experienced players serve as mentors to qualified tennis coaches (impairment challenges, wheelchair setup, mobility, etc.) in almost the same capacity as a coach mentors the player. Townsend and colleagues (2017) stated “integrating personal experiences of impairment through narratives of people with disabilities can illustrate the social restrictions that affect their access to and engagement in sport, enhance coaches’ communication skills, and introduce specialized intervention strategies for those with severe or multiple impairments based on needs-based approaches”. Coaching for Para sport requires a more pronounced collaborative relationship between the coach and athlete depending on their age, skill, and past experience. The social relational model promotes the importance of a dialogical relationship between coach and athlete (Culver & Werthner, 2018). Townsend and colleagues (2022) urged coach educators to reflect critically on the use of scenario-based learning or simulation exercises.

Wheelchair Tennis

- 1992 - debut as a full medal sport at the Paralympic Games in Barcelona, Spain and international management of the sport taken over by the International Tennis Federation (ITF).
- 1998 - National Foundation for Wheelchair Tennis (NFWT) was absorbed by the United States Tennis Federation (USTA), becoming first National Governing Body (NGB) to absorb a Para sport and first to hire a full-time National Manager, paving the way for other NGBs around the world.
- Sport played at all four Grand Slams since 2007, while the BNP Paribas World Team Cup is the sport's flagship international team competition.
- Wheelchair tennis has its own professional tour, the UNIQLO Wheelchair Tennis Tour, which boasts over 160 tournaments across 40 different countries in every region of the world. The Tour offers over \$3 million USD in prize money and culminates in the season-ending NEC Wheelchair Singles Masters and the ITF Wheelchair Doubles Masters.
- 2022 - U.S. Open includes Top 8 world-ranked junior players (Boys & Girls)

US Tennis Association

- 2017 - with the addition of the United States Tennis Federation (USTA) National Campus at Lake Nona in Orlando, wheelchair tennis joined the Player Development family.
- 2022 - USTA Boys 18s and 16s National Championships Kalamazoo, Michigan.
- Two certifying bodies for coaches, United States Professional Tennis Association (USPTA) and United States Professional Tennis Registry (USPTR).
- Both have conducted wheelchair tennis workshops (for 20 years) where coaches can add a "specialty" to their professional certification, however, wheelchair tennis is not mentioned in the standard course of study for professional certification.

The deficiency of formal educational opportunities in wheelchair tennis that lead to hesitancy, fear, and ultimately a low self-efficacy toward coaching athletes with disabilities is one of the main challenges to attracting qualified coaches. Conversely, it also contributes to a lack of new players." (Allen and Douglas, 2021). In 2019, the USTA developed a new wheelchair tennis specialty course designed to incorporate educational best practices including coach engagement and athlete-centered learning.

Certification course emphasizes wheelchair tennis knowledge in four key areas:

1. General disability specific information (medical) and sport implications
2. Equipment (sport wheelchairs, set-up, assistive devices, etc.)
3. Pushing mechanics, movement patterns and live simulation experiences
4. Psychosocial knowledge (interaction with the athlete and their world view living with an impairment and use of Reciprocal Mentorship (RM))

In 2022, Wheelchair Tennis Coach Development workshop was organized. Overall objectives of the workshop to share best practices for teaching wheelchair tennis at a recreational level with enthusiasm, innovation, and relevancy. The learning outcomes of the workshop was coaches will demonstrate a higher self-efficacy in working with an athlete with disability, comprehend disability-specific and sport-specific considerations for wheelchair tennis and apply best coaching practices in wheelchair tennis. Before joining the workshop, every participant must complete an online course entitled "Starting a Wheelchair Tennis Program", review wheelchair tennis resources from both the USTA and ITF and come prepared to share and engage. Dr. Douglas stated that workshops could also be integrated HP programs.

2b. Coach Education for Para sport in the UK/NZ Presented by Dr. Rob Townsend (WU)

Disabled people have the right to participate and excel in sport, and currently, we are in a moment of sustained interest in, and visibility of Paralympic and disability sport. A growing body of research recognizes the significance of coaches in terms of both maximizing elite performance and facilitating quality opportunities for athletes with disabilities. However, sport organizations cite the recruitment, training and retention of coaches as the most important barriers to inclusion. As Dr. Townsend discussed in his presentation, the level of integration requires, in order from low to high, categorical framework (medical model of disability), inclusion/integration frameworks (pre-social model of disability), and infusion frameworks (social relational model of disability).

Overall, Dr. Townsend shared that a number of challenges remain in pedagogical (e.g., coach learning/coaching knowledge), cultural (e.g., ableism), practical, and methodological issues. For those interested in further research on this topic, we encourage you to explore Dr. Townsend's presentation with NCPS's partner, the Calgary Adapted Sports Hub. They also hosted the [webinar](#) shortly before NCPS, offering additional insights into these discussions.

| Categorical Frameworks (Impairment-specific workshops and resources) | |
|--|---|
| Strengths | Weaknesses |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Initial increases in awareness, confidence. · Useful for guiding high performance planning, recovery and training. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Risk perpetuating stereotypes “reality shick” · No long-term impacts |
| Based on a medical model of disability, these approaches may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Information about disability etiology · Classification information · Prescriptive strategies and tools for dealing with difference · Scenario-based learning | |
| Inclusion/Integration Approaches (Typical workshops or online courses) | |
| Strengths | Weaknesses |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Reflective focus – encourage a coach to make adaptations to existing practice structure | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Integrative rather than inclusive |
| Based on a pre-social model of disability, these approaches include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · ‘Bolt on’ training for coaches to understand forms of exclusion. · Encourages activity differentiation · Reference to adaptive frameworks (e.g., STEP, TREE ‘The accursed acronym’ Black, 2011) | |
| Infusion Approaches (Disability fully integrated into mainstream coach education) | |
| Relational coaching approaches | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Understanding disabling barriers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Considering impairment effects |

2c. Panel: What are successes, challenges and opportunities to a disability inclusive coach education system in Canada?

Moderated by Dr. David Legg (MRU)

The final presentation during Theme-2 was a panel discussion on the successes, challenges and opportunities of Canada's disability-inclusive coaching education system. The moderator was Dr. David Legg from Mount Royal University. Panelists included Peter Niedre, Director of Education Partnership from the Canadian Coaching Association, Jenny Davey, Paralympic Pathway Manager from the Canadian Paralympic Committee and Michael Frogley, Summer Paralympic Performance Consultant from Own the Podium. The panellists agreed that there is no binary perspective for contextualizing impairment in the system and there is a need to understand people's functionality on a continuum and look at each impairment need from an equity perspective. They emphasized that impairment/disability information helps able-bodied people grow their empathic perspective, but there is a balance between stereotyping and emphatic understanding. Although there are many new approaches to coach education for Para sports in Canada (e.g., NCCP CAWAD module, Athletes2Coach, increased education delivery rates, different funding opportunities), there is still a need for systemic changes such as addressing the coaching pathway gap, a need for focus on function and equity, more collaborative work, and linking existing knowledge and making it accessible to all among other things. As Dr. Micheal Frogley pointed out "We are in a transition phase, so it gives us chance to take that step back and [re-build the] Canadian system". With this perspective, there is a need for clarification of coach pathways such as the plethora of resources on the high-performance side which could be used to help develop other parts of the sport system and more usage of the resources that have been developed to support this process.

3. What existing programs and resources could be included?

The presentations related to Theme-3 focused on what existing programs and resources could be included when thinking about how to reimagine coach education for Para sport. Presentations related to this theme included an overview of the Athletes2Coaches Mentorship Program (presented by Geneva Coulter and Sierra Roth), the use of Communities of Practice in the context of Para sport (presented by Dr. Tiago Duarte), an overview of a Virtual Para sport Coach Mentorship Program in Canada (presented by Dr. Danielle Alexander) and finally the first interactive group activity beginning the Design Thinking process (facilitated by Dr. Iman Hassan and Dr. Diane Culver). The purpose of this first Design Thinking activity was to gather diverse viewpoints about the current status of coach education in Para sport. Further details about the activity will be provided below.

3a. Athletes2Coaches Mentorship Program Presented by Geneva Coulter (TSC) & Sierra Roth (TSC)

Athletes2Coaches (A2C) is a pilot study of a mentorship program for athletes with disabilities. Sierra Roth a former Para athlete, avid mountain biker/coach and youth Engagement Coordinator at the Steadward Centre and Geneva Coulter a Former National Team Para Hockey athlete, assistant coach with the Canadian Women's Para Hockey Team and Partnerships & Para Sport Development Coordinator at the Steadward Centre presented. The project has been executed in two phases, Athletes2Coaches 1.0 and now Athletes2Coaches 2.0, and it started with the question: Are Para athletes interested in becoming coaches? Through this work, the team aimed to develop opportunities for Para sport athletes to gain leadership skills, work towards becoming coaches, and address Para sport athlete dropout by building a stronger sense of community. Participants met virtually once a week between November and December 2021 and engaged in a virtual Community of Practice on Discord. 13 athletes (6 women, 7 men) participated from different sport (e.g., swimming, blind hockey, athletics, Para ice hockey, goalball, wheelchair basketball) and different region in Alberta (e.g., Edmonton, Calgary, Medicine Hat, Red Deer). These sessions highlighted three key themes;

- Connection with others (social aspects, feeling of community, networking, and mutual learning experienced in A2C)
- Becoming a coach (athlete's mentions of their roles as coaches, instructors, and volunteers and the impact of A2C)
- Role modelling and mentorship (the athlete's understanding of leadership among other athletes, within their community, and beyond the world of sport)

As a result of the study, athletes expressed confidence and self-efficacy in coaching and leadership despite limited opportunities to develop. Athletes also reported feeling unsure of future opportunities, continued time commitment, and coaching compensation. In the future through Athletes2Coaches 2.0, the project team will continue to examine questions such as;

- What do athletes need to find themselves in coaching/leadership roles?
- How do we legitimize lived experience within a coaching pathway?
- What barriers exist within coaching pathways for athletes?

Overall, this presentation demonstrated the benefits of Para athletes choosing to take on a coaching role and the key need for Para athletes to be supported in transitioning to a coaching role.

3b. A Community of Practice for Disability Sport Coaches Presented by Dr. Tiago Duarte (Curling CAN)

Despite Canadian Paralympic success, there continues to be systemic issues, a lack of coaches, athletes and competition learning opportunities in Para sport and a lack of social interactions. As a result, Dr. Duarte saw the opportunity to integrate a social learning approach based on the work of the Wenger-Trayner's. Over four years, participants engaged in an iterative process consisting of social gatherings, online meetings and online interactions. Dr. Duarte's project consisted of numerous phases, including mapping the landscape, framing learning activities, assessing the value, and understanding the role of the system conveners and co-participants. In 2016, the Coaching Landscape Map (e.g., recreation hill, high-performance hill) was generated from the research. Participants include a mix of coaches and curlers varying from casual recreational to high performance. The common goals of the curling athletes and coaches were fun, socialization, development, skill improvement, and becoming better players, also, curlers aimed to compete at higher levels and coaches aimed to improve the sport. There were four main topics addressed in the collaborative discussion space, well-being/connectivity, development, competition, and building the game. This study created value and meaningful learning for athletes and coaches. It highlights the potential for social learning and Communities of Practice to be used in the context of Para sport to advance coach education.

3c. Exploring Coaches' Experiences and Perceptions of a Virtual Para sport Coach Mentorship Program

Presented by Dr. Danielle Alexander (McGill University)

The Coaching Association of Canada (CAC) created the “Coach2Coach: Para sport Mentorship Program” in 2019. It was a one-year program designed to provide incoming or inexperienced Para sport coaches (less than 5 years of experience) with more experienced mentors (over 10 years of experience). Mentors and mentees meet at least 30 minutes a month. There were structured learning opportunities, such as seminars, workshops, and networking events. Due to the pandemic, it had to be adapted to a virtual context (e.g., online webinars, virtual platforms). Dr. Alexander’s study aimed to explore the perceptions and experiences of mentor and mentee coaches following the CAC’s 1-year formal coach mentorship program. The participants consisted of 15 mentors and 29 mentee coaches from various Para sports and competitive levels. Data were collected through focus groups with mentees and mentors and individual interviews at the end of the program. Reflexive thematic analysis results showed three overarching themes; outcomes of effective mentorship, disability-specific coaching knowledge and virtual learning considerations. Mentees described feeling more confident in coaching athletes with disabilities (to a certain extent). Mentee coaches were particularly interested in the topic of disability, including classification, inclusive language, and functional ability. Although participants desired a human connection, they highlighted the benefits of learning online to maximize the inclusivity of the program. In conclusion, mentee coaches benefited professionally and personally from the formal mentorship program, mentorship led to increased confidence, yet mentees still required hands-on learning with their mentors, and mentees appreciated a context-specific coach learning opportunity to acquire disability and Para sport information from experienced mentors in their field. This study confirmed the need for context-driven learning opportunities and the benefits of engaging with a mentor in the Para sport context.

3d. Design Thinking Group Activity #1 (Gathering Different Viewpoints)

Moderated by Dr. Diane Culver (UO) & Iman Hassan (UO)

The entire Design Thinking (DT) process will be explored further in-depth below, but the purpose of the first phase also known as the ‘Understand’ phase was to generate contextual and ecological insights into the broader Canadian Para sport landscape. This activity during Day-1 of the NCPS was dedicated to this step, as an in-depth understanding of the main challenges, opportunities, and innovations in Para Sport coaching and coach education was essential. Both theoretical and applied presentations were incorporated to recognize the contributing gaps and holistic influences on the overall design challenge. In-person and online participants engaged in 15-minute brainstorming sessions to gather insights about the Canadian Para sport landscape to be used by the team on Day-2 and also aimed to identify key problem areas within the landscape. An example of one of the team’s brainstorming sessions is provided below.

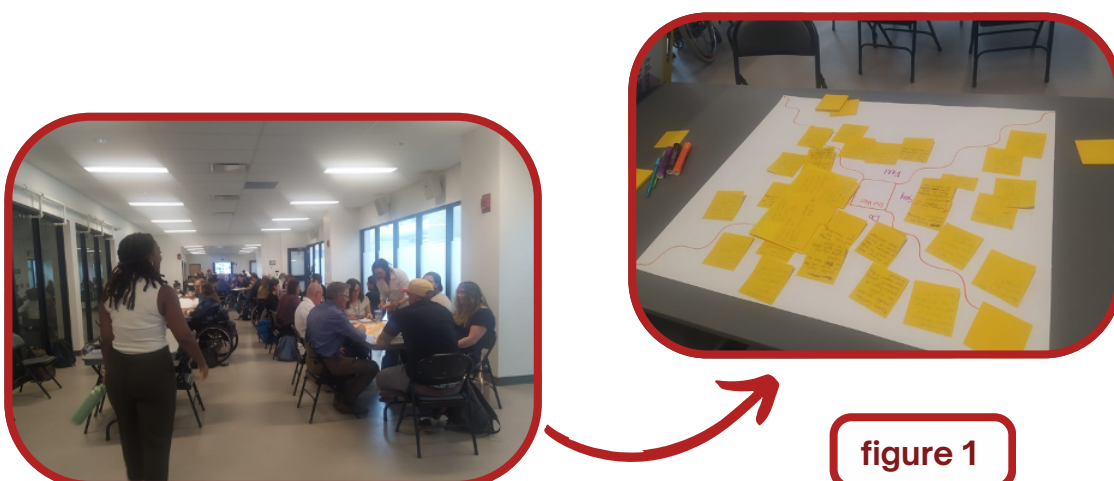


figure 1

4. What could coach education for Para sport look like in Canada?

The presentations related to Theme-4 focused on looking forward to examining what could coach education for Para sport look like in Canada? Presentations related to this theme included an introduction to the concept of anti-ableist coaching praxis (presented by Dr. Danielle Peers), and a panel discussion exploring recommendations for Para athletes and coaches through the lens of panelists Dr. Darda Sales (Swim Canada), Jeremy Hall (Row Canada), Brian McKeever (Nordiq Canada), and Dr. Scott Douglas (NCU) moderated by Tara Chisholm the head coach of the Canadian Women's Para hockey team. This final theme concluded the presentations for Day 1 and left the Summit participants with much to think about moving into Day-2.

4a. Nothing About Us Without Us: Self-determination, leadership, and building anti-ableist coaching praxis

Presented by Dr. Danielle Peers (UA)

In their presentation, Dr. Danielle Peers mentioned engaging with critique towards transformative change, Para sport claims of empowerment, inclusion, etc., and defining characteristics of Parasitic and disability programs. Paralympic and Para sport often frame themselves as a disability movement that creates empowerment, inclusion, accessibility, and transformation. This is the discourse of many (mostly) non-disabled Para sport researchers, administrators and coaches. Many athletes, activists and disabled scholars have challenged this narrative. One of the most widespread discourses of Paralympism is that it is akin to, if not a crucial part of, global disability movements. Some of Dr. Peers' earliest research, in their masters, challenged the notion that the Paralympic Movement is fundamentally empowering. This does not mean that there are not some folks that may feel empowered by it, but rather, it is something that primarily aligns with the values of empowerment and disability rights movements. In Canada, the Para sport system rarely provide definitions or evidence of Para sport's empowerment and inclusion. Dr. Peers argued that it is taken for granted cliché. There are four common types of programs/organizations for disabled people; a) eugenic (serves to eradicate disabled people), b) medical/rehab (serves to reduce impairment effects in people), c) charitable/parasitic (largely non-disabled helpers working for disability inclusion/supports/cure, while (unknowingly?) reproducing ableist structures that harm people with disabilities), and d) social/disability (by and for disabled people). On the one hand, in charitable/parasitic programs, the majority of decision-makers and paid staff are non-disabled and oriented towards priorities/problems defined by non-disabled people and sustaining the organization – not disability-defined objectives and systemic change. On the other hand, social/disability programs are aimed at changing ableist or otherwise oppressive social structures, enabling greater flourishing. Dr. Peers asked why this should matter to Para sport coaches and leaders. All of these are often run by folk with good intentions who want to help disabled people. Yet, all but four programs in Canada have long histories of deeply harming disabled people and actively working against disability movements. The take-home lesson is here: “If you are running disability programming that is not aligned with disability organizations, you are almost certainly eugenic, medical, and/or parasitic.”

High-quality programs/organizations have three main characteristics: self-determination, politicization, and activism (otherwise, likely parasitic). Self-determination meant disability-centered and powering programs. For example, “Nothing About Us Without Us” centred on disabled people’s knowledge, experiences, decision-making, and consent in the decisions that most affect them (at least 50% voting and leadership). “Leadership of those most impacted” is intersectional and impairment specific. Non-disabled perspectives, knowledge, and leadership are often welcome when collaborative, anti-ableist and mobilized in solidarity— politicization meant anti-ableist and affirming. With politicization organizations/programs are challenging the problematization of disabled bodies or capacities, reframing normalized ableist structures and beliefs as a social or political problem, and centering anti-ableist disability knowledge in our training, planning, and communicating. Activism meant being action-oriented and transformative. It is included actively challenging social structures that perpetuate ableism, inequality, and oppression, co-create new structures, and practices that are disability affirming and anti-ableist, inter-impairment and inter-movement solidarity (no justice until justice for us all), and transforming ourselves, our programs/cultures, so it transforms participant life chances. Dr. Peers outlined three ways to identify if your Para sport program could be considered ‘parasitic’ through the exploration of the commonly used terms’ empowerment, affirmation, and transformation. In order to move away from parasitic practices, there is a need for programs to;

Empower

- Change policies/practices that may be barriers (e.g., conflict of interest policy, inaccessible, centralization).
- Adopt policies/practices that help to recruit. Support and affirm (e.g., hybrid-flexible schedules, distance, quotas, affirmative hiring).
- Start recruiting, training, paying the next disabled leaders (e.g., mentees, athlete-coach/admin/research internships; best leaders are not always best athletes: keep athletes we cut/retire).
- De-hierarchize, democratize, and delegate key decisions (e.g., team athletes decide, co-decide, and co-create ways forward; athlete committees empowered to make relevant decisions; interested athletes trained, responsible, paid, and acknowledged to lead projects or decision-making processes; leadership more directly accountable to athletes they serve).

Affirm

- Begin an ongoing learning journey around ableism and disability justice.
- Forefront affirming, anti-ableist and sport-centered disability stories.
- Build transparent, accountability processes to identify and challenge ableism and other systematic oppression in yourself/your program.
- Create disability mentorship opportunities for both disabled and non-disabled coaches
- Engage with, value, and learn from disability knowledges and histories inside and outside of Para sport.

Transform

We must act from our empowered collaborations, anti-ableist understanding, and affirming relationships in order to have transformative impacts on the athletes we work with, and the systems and sectors we work in. Para sport coaches and leaders must become anti-ableist activists by actively challenging social structures that perpetuate ableism, inequality, and oppression; co-creating new structures and practices, that are disability affirming, and anti-ableist; developing intersectional approaches, and acting in solidarity with other justice movements so that our work does not only benefit white, cis, straight, settler, para-athletes; transforming ourselves, our programs/cultures, so it transforms athlete life chances. Dr. Peers argues that current ableist structures are killing Para sport and reducing disability opportunities to play and lead (e.g., podium focus narrows number of participants, range of impairments, access for less privileged, centralization and direct recruitment skills local participatory programs, undermines athlete leadership training in regions, increases barriers for less privileged, and diminishes athlete opportunities beyond sport). They state that most of our programs are, despite our best intentions, parasitic. Disabled people have immense passion, insight, and ingenuity to offer Para sport, our communities, and the world. It is time we acted like it. Non-disabled Para sport coaches and leaders also have immense passion and ingenuity to offer. It’s time we harnessed this towards creating more empowering, affirming, and transformative sports and worlds.

4b. Panel – Recommendations from Para Athletes and Coaches

The final presentation in Theme-4 was a panel discussion on advice from Para athletes and coaches. The moderator was Tara Chisholm, head coach of the Canadian Women's Para Hockey Team. The panelists were Dr. Darda Sales, coach and retired athlete from Swimming Canada; Jeremy Hall, Vice Chair of the Athlete Council of the Paralympic Committee of Canada; Brian McKeever, coach and former athlete from Nordiq Canada; and Dr. Scott Douglas from the University of Northern Colorado. The panelists shared their positive and negative experiences as athletes and coaches. They emphasized the importance of a welcoming and safe sporting environment. They talked about gaps in coach education for Para sport (e.g., easy access to reliable resources on disability sports, encouraging coaches to learn outside their knowledge), their experiences in transition (e.g., social stigma around people with disabilities) and how they see the future of coaching for Para sport. Their main messages were "coaching is coaching" and "building a system where coaches learn together" without forgetting the nuances.

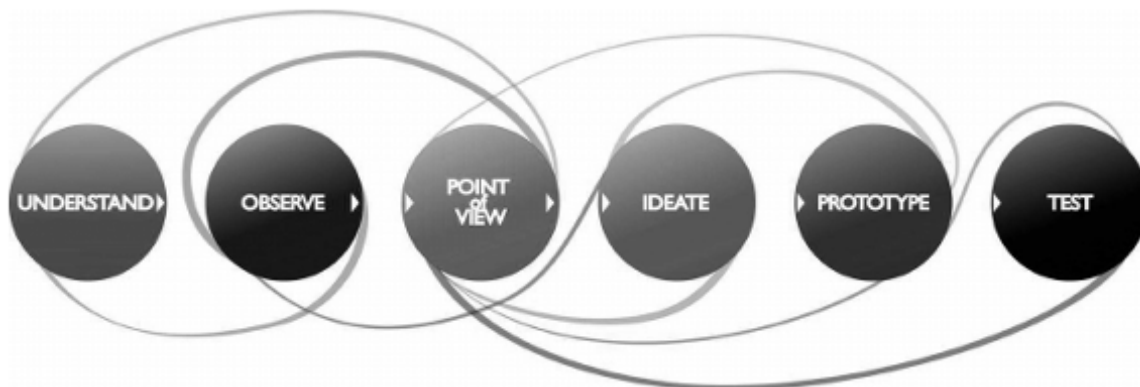
DESIGN THINKING ACTIVITIES

The Design Thinking (DT) approach has been realized as an optimistic way of working to shape a brighter future for the current and next generation of all athletes (Graper, 2022). It has also been used in global coach education contexts (e.g., Cuthbert et al., 2018). This provided a rationale for using DT to guide the workshop component at the NCPS. DT was presented to NCPS participants using Brown's (2008) definition with the intention of producing multiple humanly desirable, technologically feasible, and economically viable solutions that could have a positive impact on Para sport coach education. The workshop format was guided by the Hasso Plattner Institute 2018 DT methodological framework and led by a team of trained DT facilitators. The overarching design challenge was to re-imagine coach development that delivers a high-quality Para sport experience accessible for all.

What is Design Thinking?

DT is a human-centered approach to understanding end-users, challenging assumptions, redefining problems, and creating innovative solutions to prototype and test (Brown, 2008). DT has gained significant attention in the business world as a creative approach to solving customer problems and enhancing experience satisfaction (Lockwood, 2010). This popularity often misconstrues DT as a linear step-by-step process, becoming overly reliant on templates to produce innovation (Johansson-Sköldberg et al., 2013). DT has made substantial contributions to academia as a paradigm, methodology, and set of tools (Laursen & Tollestrup, 2017). This approach provides a novel perspective for a wide variety of disciplines to explore complex nuanced problems, produce practical impact, and optimize knowledge translation. Chambers (2020) advocates embracing DT as a process, mindset, and space. From this perspective, DT tools and principles can be manifested and brought together to develop impactful solutions (Chambers, 2020). This ensures transformation rather than merely incremental improvements to existing structures.

figure 2



The Hasso Plattner Institute (2018) DT Model

The Hasso Plattner Institute (HPI) DT model (figure 2) encompasses two phases divided into six iterative process steps (HPI, n.d.). Phase one is referred to as the “problem space”, where you engage in the first three divergent processes; (1) understand, (2) observe, and (3) point of view. This phase ideally comprises 80% of a design project timeline, allowing for an in-depth exploration of the research problem, the identification of all relevant dimensions, and true empathy with the end-users’ experiences (Tschimmel, 2012). The remaining 20% is accounted for in the convergent phase referred to as the “solution space”. The second half of the project entails (4) ideate, (5) prototype, and (6) test, multiple solutions until one fulfills the needs of all end-users (Tschimmel, 2012).

Below, each process step undertaken at NCPS is presented with illustrative examples to capture the creative and collaborative activities used to address our design challenge. The purpose of NCPS was to develop multiple prototypes to eventually select one moving forward to the testing phases. Completing steps 1-5 would lead to a formalized plan outlining the feasibility and viability of the selected prototype and effectively guiding the implementation.

Understand

The purpose of the 'Understand' step was to generate contextual and ecological insights into the broader Canadian Para sport landscape. Day-1 of NCPS was dedicated to this step, as an in-depth understanding of the main challenges, opportunities, and innovations in Para sport coaching and coach education was essential. Both theoretical and applied presentations were incorporated to recognize the contributing gaps and holistic influences on the overall design challenge.

Observe

The subsequent 'Observe' step was to empathize with diverse user experiences and their unique thoughts, emotions, needs, and challenges with Para sport coaching. To achieve this, pre-assigned homogenous groups were created based on participants' professional experience (e.g., athletes, coaches, PTSOs, NSOs, coach educators). If participants had experience in two roles, we would choose their most current role. Participants were tasked with developing an interview guide (i.e., "Describe your experience in coaching and/or Para sport.", "What does an accessible experience mean to you?", "What is a high-quality para sport experience look /feel like?") to learn more about a specific stakeholder. Then, each group was instructed to select an interviewer and interviewee. The remaining group members would act as recorders responsible for writing down the interviewee's responses verbatim on sticky notes. Once the interviews were complete, participants' sticky notes were categorized using an empathy map template (Figure 3 & 4).



Empathy Maps

Empathy mapping identifies the thoughts, feelings, and attitudes of existing (or potential) users and to better understand their needs (Lewrick et al., 2020). Empathy maps (Figure 5) consisted of four quadrants including say, do, think, and feel.

- The ‘say’ quadrant was to categorize quotes that reflect the language, terminology/ vocabulary used.
- The ‘do’ quadrant reflects the users’ behaviors in both mundane practices and extraordinary events.
- The ‘think’ quadrant unveils deep thoughts, opinions, attitudes, and values of the specific user.
- The ‘feel’ quadrant interprets the users’ emotions expressed during the interviews coupled with supportive statements.

Once recorders placed their sticky notes into the quadrant, they felt most aligned with their quotes, the groups were then tasked to cluster and synthesize. Due to multiple recorders writing down quotes from the same interview, overlap was inevitable. Similar sticky notes were grouped together and then titled a word/ phrase that encompassed these insights. Interestingly, there were instances of sticky notes being perceived differently by group members sparking fruitful discussions.

figure 4



At this point, DT facilitators encouraged participants to think critically about the data and identify potential contradictions between categories (e.g., the user might say things that don’t necessarily align with how they feel). Also, statements that corroborate with ideas learned through previous presentations at NCPS and their own experiences in Para sport.

This activity helped participants remain reflexive of their cognitive biases construed through personal experiences and assumptions (e.g., how can they relate or not relate to the interviewees’ experience), reminding themselves to think about the design challenges from others’ perspectives. The overall analytic process was a recursive, iterative, and interpretive activity helping generate unexpected insights about specific group experiences.

figure 5



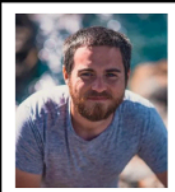
Point of View

The next step, 'Point of View' is to synthesize and present the findings in a creative and easily digestible way. DT facilitators re-assigned participants into heterogeneous groups for stakeholders to review, understand, and empathize with a new user experience. The new groups were tasked with condensing the findings derived from the empathy maps to construct a fictional persona.

Fictional Personas

Personas are “fictional and detailed archetypical characters that represent distinct groups of behaviours, goals, and motivations observed and identified during the research phase” (Calde et al., p. 2). This visual tool presents and personifies the interpreted attributes of the end-users (i.e., needs, interests, aspirations, behaviours, and values). DT facilitators emphasized that the purpose of this activity was not to depict one singular stakeholder experience but rather to illuminate collective thoughts, sayings, experiences, and emotions presented across all empathy maps (Liedtka & Ogilvie, 2011). An overview of the each group’s persona is found in Appendix A of this document. Below is a visual representation of one group’s persona (Figure 6).

Brandon Strong
 (he/him), Age: 26



- Para pathways manager provincial, climbing
- Able-bodied experienced athlete (10 years climber)
- Adventure tours, independent, confident
- Bachelor of physical education
- Volunteered with an inclusive children's climbing program in Victoria

- Income: \$60k
- Combined passion for sport, climbing, camping, outdoor recreation
- Thinks everyone should be able to climb
- Feels it's important to co-create a coach pathway to para climbing with athletes, coaches, HPD, other sports

Needs

- Accessible infrastructure
- Integration of para climbing into overall community course
- Bring passion to a smaller centre to build a program
- Bring people from other sports current climbers to work together

HMW

- ...help Brandon feel supported not get burn out?
- ...capitalize on passion for the sport?
- ...ensure Brandon's passion lives on (so he doesn't burn out) can be supported to be successful in building a high quality coach pathway

How To

- Ensure accessible facilities by working with people with disabilities that would use the space, city planners, \$
- Infuse inclusion with all participants, programs, pathways
- Use existing resources NCCP, the sport, high five, becoming para ready

figure 6

24

Ideate

Now that various POVs have been defined through the persona profiles, NCPS can officially begin to transition into the solution space. Starting with the 'Ideate' step, groups were tasked with brainstorming possible solutions to enhance the persona experiences. To provide structure to the brainstorming session, DT facilitators introduced "How Might We" (HMW; figure 7) questions to spark a high volume of ideas. According to Berger (2012),

The 'how' part assumes there are solutions out there – it provides creative confidence. 'Might' says we can put ideas out there that might work or might not – either way, it's OK. And the 'we' part says we're going to do it together and build on each other's ideas (p. 1).

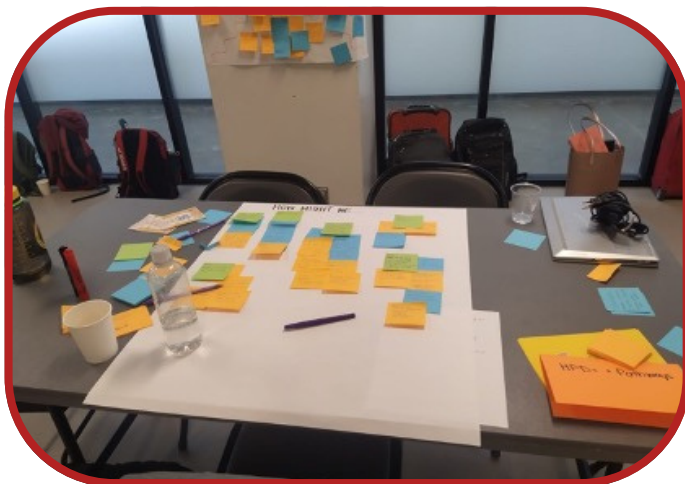


figure 7



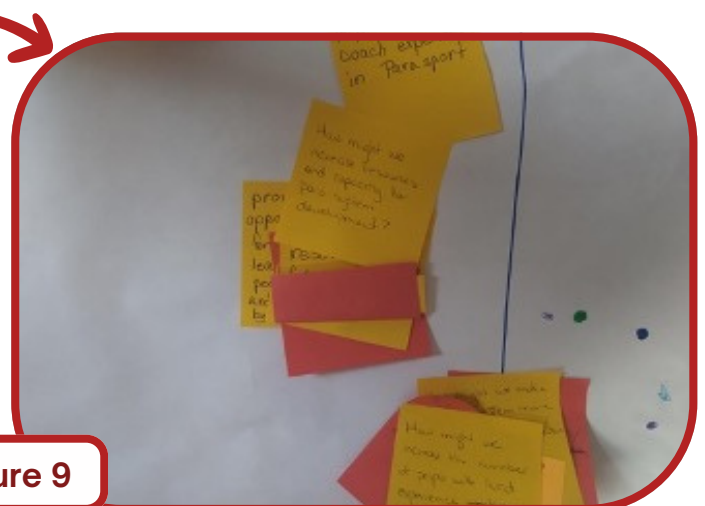
figure 8

This step showcases the truly collaborative nature of DT, creating a space free of judgement for both introverted and extroverted group members to express their ideas. Building off this activity, the DT facilitators presented 'How To' questions, essentially prompting answers to the HMW questions (Figure 8).

Groups were instructed to evaluate How To's based on a criterion of desirability, feasibility, and viability. The groups proceeded with dot voting (figure 9), a technique used to settle on one idea collaboratively.



figure 9



Prototype

The 'Prototype' phase helps test the proposed solutions (How To's) in an efficient manner, that is quick with low risk (Lewrick et al., 2020). Dot voting was used once again to select a prototype and formalize a pitch. Once a prototype was selected, the group discussed and jotted down a necessary level of detail to present their idea to the entire NCPS. This is reflected below in the prototypes overview.

Pathways- HPD: Community Engagement Approach

Presented by Jason Sjostrom & Geneva Coulter

The starting point of the group was “How can we better understand the potential of the participants, well support them, and co-create high-quality experience?”. Their model was a climbing metaphor and called “Climb your passion to a community engagement strategy.” With this model, they aimed to help people with disability engage in all ways of the system. The engagement is to improve by recognizing who is not participating in the conversation, where you talk directly to users in those communities, and then from there; you reach out to the people who are influencing the people who are entering the community. With semi-structured interviews, an engagement strategy facilitates accessibility, and talking with owners and other communities might be needed as part of the communication strategy.

PTSO: PTSO Para sport Summit

Presented by Tara Chisholm

The end-user (PTSO) is struggling with knowledge, resources, connection and collaboration in coach education for Para sport. The solution that was presented was the PTSO Para Coaching Summit(s). These summits will be sport-specific and organized by an NSO (i.e., Swimming Canada). The events will be online and will take two days. The first day will be virtual and based on knowledge transmission. The second day's purpose will be to connect people and have facilitators being people with lived experiences, and community champions in the room. The main goal is to open the eyes of coach developers and the PTSOs across Canada regarding the experiences of people with disabilities in the system. To continue the process, 6 to 8 weeks after the summit, there should be a call to those PTSOs, facilitated by the NSO. Also, there should be an advisory committee of individuals with lived experiences.

Athlete: CAC Create Mentorship Leaders

Presented by: Ozzie Sawicki

The end-user had negative and positive experiences as a Para athlete who wanted to transition to a coach's role. The group suggested that developed a structured mentorship program based on the collaboration of different institutions and organizations. This program aims to involve people with lived experiences in the program to overcome positive and negative experiences and to provide more positive outcomes for future athletes. The program also facilitates diversity, equality, and social impact models. Mentors and mentees need to be from different contexts (i.e., para sport vs non-disabled). This programme is not limited to Para. Using the Para driver of the model, the mentorship program can be applied to indigenous coaches and white coaches, newcomers in Canada, or long-standing coaches. National partners are required for the program to be financed. The program needs to be marketable and have a national reach. The Canadian sport policy needs to be updated. The CAC could be a lead partner, and/or there could be leaders in the Para system who are willing to deliver the program. Also, program partners could be CPC or organizations outside the traditional system.

Coach : More representation/leadership across the whole system esp., at CPC and in NCCP content

Presented by Darda Sales & Sierra Roth

The overarching end-user is a coach who does not feel the support of the community, has a lack of training, and experiences a lot of stress. In the model presented, the main goal is the deliberate involvement of people with lived experience at all levels of the sport system and leadership. According to the model, leadership representation in organizations requires the CPC to mandate 51% disabled executives by 2040, starting with their CEO. This change will affect all partners (e.g., The Ontario Parasport Collective), so these need to check their current representation. The model also mandates infusion of Para sport nuances into all NCCP educational resources, and 20% of facilitators identifying as a person with disabilities. This prototype emphasized that “people with lived experience should be present at all levels of the system”.

POST-SUMMIT FEEDBACK

Online Experience

The NCPS Summit was held in a hybrid format, allowing participants from across Canada to join via Zoom. On Day-1, 65 online participants attended presentations and engaged through chat, supported by facilitators who helped bridge online and in-person engagement. Day-2 included interactive Design Thinking activities via Mural, with facilitators assisting those unfamiliar with the platform. While some missed the nonverbal cues of face-to-face communication, most adapted quickly and found the experience smooth.

“It was actually pretty good... The summit team was supportive and great.”

“Not being face-to-face was challenging... but facilitators were helpful.”

Survey Insights

Seventeen participants completed the post-summit survey. Over half expressed interest in ongoing online collaboration. Most online attendees found the content relevant, noting themes like systemic change, cross-country challenges, and the need for more Para athlete representation in coaching. Some had already applied learnings in their roles. In-person attendees also found the summit valuable and wanted future participation. Feedback highlighted powerful moments like Dr. Peers’ “Nothing About Us Without Us” presentation, and the need for greater focus on coach experiences, hands-on solutions, and inclusive leadership.

“It was eye-opening...I’ve been too focused on high-performance. Day-1 shifted that mindset.”

“We might not be as inclusive as we think... Years of experience doesn’t guarantee we’re doing it right.”

Design Thinking (Day-2) Feedback

Reactions to the Design Thinking session were mixed. Some praised its structure and focus on empathy, especially activities like the empathy map and persona creation, which humanized systemic challenges. Others felt the approach was too academic or misaligned with the needs of seasoned professionals eager for tangible solutions.

“It helped us see the human side , the coach or admin trying their best.”

A few felt the session didn't yield actionable outcomes and wanted more facilitator input and clearer guidance. Others saw it as a productive step in a longer-term process.

“We kept circling the problem without reaching a realistic plan.”

“It's a great model for wicked problems but needs better framing for experienced participants.”

“At the beginning of the day, I would never have guessed we would end up where we did”

Interview Highlights

Ten follow-up interviews confirmed the NCPS offered vital networking and honest dialogue. Participants valued discussions on representation, coach education, and national strategy alignment.

“It was the first time I've heard this level of transparency about system gaps.”

“Just knowing others are working on the same issues across Canada is encouraging.”

Day-2's Design Thinking received both praise and critique. Some found it refreshing and humanizing, while others saw it as too structured. This likely reflect the tendency of people to jump to solutions without exploring deeply the issues. The DT process attempts to prevent this.

“When someone has an idea, let them run with it, structure can't replace momentum.”

Key Takeaways & Suggestions

- Continued collaboration is essential, both in-person and online.
- Emphasis on lived experience and grassroots solutions is needed.
- The summit should be an annual or bi-annual event with deeper follow-ups and more realistic, actionable strategies.
- Topics like inter-organizational communication, leadership representation, and practical barriers (e.g., facility accessibility) deserve more attention.

“We need to move from discussion to action, policies help, but real change happens with passionate people doing the work.”

RECOMMENDATIONS

Establish a national Para sport communication channel

- Create a centralized communication platform for Para sport in Canada
- Include sub-channels for specific sports to facilitate knowledge sharing and networking

Host regular Para sport coaching summits

Create more inclusive coach development opportunities

- Increase representation of person with disabilities in coaching roles
- Support Para athlete to coach transition through structured programs

Expand virtual and in-person learning opportunities

- Support social learning opportunities like communities of practice and mentoring

Promote an equity-based perspective on disability in coaching

- Shift from a binary perspective to a continuum-based understanding of impairment.
- Utilize high-performance resources to develop all levels of the coaching system

Improve access to reliable resources for Para sport coaches

- Centralize educational materials on disability sports.
- Encourage coaches to expand their knowledge beyond their immediate sport.

Foster a welcoming and inclusive coaching environment

- Address social stigma surrounding disability in sport.
- Build a system where all coaches learn together while recognizing the unique aspects of Para sport coaching.

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APPENDIX A

| GROUP | PERSONA |
|--|---|
| <p>HPDs Pathways: Brandon Strong (he/him)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Age 26 (1997), Single · Para pathways manager provincial, climbing · Comox Valley, BC · Able-bodied experienced athlete (10 years climber) · Adventurous, independent, confident · Passionate + proud · Bachelor of physical education -1 course in APA · Volunteered with an inclusive children’s climbing program in Victoria · Income: \$60k · Combined passion for sport, climbing, camping, outdoor recreation · Thinks everyone should be able to climb · Feels it’s important to co-create a coach pathway to para climbing with athletes, coaches, HPD, other sports <p>Life changing if ... accessible infrastructure, integration of para climbing into overall community course, bring passion into a smaller center to build a program, bring people from other sports/current climbers to work together, collaborate with gymnastics, another town.</p> |

PTSOs: (1) Michelle (she/her)
and (2) Kate (they/them)

Michelle

- 25 years old
- VI/working with provincial Blind Sport association. (Nova Scotia)
- Former goal ball athlete
- BSc Kinesiology
- Had a negative experience in sport wants to change the system
- Hired full-time but has a lot on her plate
- Wants to develop multisport/grassroots program for kids

It would be life changing if she could focus on this project in a world where she would get the resources from the NSOs

Kate

- 38 years old
- No lived experiences
- Works at rowing Ontario (manager of education Q Indus..)
- Sport management diploma
- 15 years of experiences in sport, no para specific background
- Feels like they have been put in the position because they are N/B
- They want to. Better understand the system (para rowing)

It would be life challenging for them if the PTSO was more inclusive

In a world where inclusive unless are completely ingrained

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| <p>Athletes: Pappin (she/her)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Young woman · Former varsity level athlete, moving into new sport opportunity · Acquired non-visible disability · Loves sport, used sport during rehabilitation · Wants to compete in high-level para sport · Found entry point to new para sport through social media · Experienced both positive and negative coaching experiences at club · Saw values or critical influence of coach on her experiences · Went through classification, which became the pinch point in her pathway · Became an advocate for understanding para-athletes |
| <p>Coaches: Jennifer Jones (JJ) (she/her)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Middle age women · 5 years coaching (club) · Exp-non-para · New to Para sport recreational →hp · Passionate/loves coaching .. cares · Yearning to learn from mentor/athletes · Self-taught .. no para coach training · Willing to fail... trail to error · Strong work ethic · Conflicted role (rec/hp) (anxiety about effectiveness, isolated /lost) <p><i>Inspired:</i> passion for learning, willing to admit limitations, care/respect for athletes</p> <p><i>Life changing:</i> specific para sport training, role clarity and capacity</p> <p><i>In a world:</i> supportive “community” peers, resources, athlete, not isolated, valued</p> |

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|--|---|
| <p>Coach Developers/Educators: Donna Dogooder</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · From Winnipeg · Coach educator develop curriculum, teaching background · Also a coach at a club -kayak · Has kids in the sport · Enjoys traveling · A person who is a life long learner · Also full-time grade 6 teacher · She wants to make sure that coach trainer is available across Manitoba · Her challenge is that she us the only coach educator in her province -she is worried about burning out <p>Another challenge- coaches are very spread out geographically</p> <p><i>We were inspired to realize:</i> Donna has the skills and knowledge but not the capacity to share it.</p> <p><i>It would be life changing</i> if there were others who were just as inspired. And/or she could afford to spend her time focusing on coach education.</p> <p><i>In a world where:</i> someone could afford to be a coach educator and not have three other jobs.</p> |
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Online Group (Coaches): Non-disabled or/and lived experience with an impairment

Don't fully understand what classification looks like· Passionate, enthusiastic and open minded

- Young coach looking to gain experience
- Not sure who to go to for support (lack of mentorship/ resources)
- Performance lens
- High performance coach

We were inspired to realize that...

- The coach is passionate about coaching athletes with disabilities
- That the coach views the athlete holistically
- There was information that was locked in by professionals
- It feels like a one way pathway rather than a multiple pathway of access
- We don't have the volume of parasport athletes - fast track to high-performance - not enough to create a new pathway
- Coaching para sport and able-bodied sport is not as different as we think.

It would be life changing if...

- They could get the knowledge they need
- Classification was available
- They had the expert on speed dial that they could call - Mentor Bios accessible
- To have this knowledge exchange - having multiple numbers in the phonebook
- The coach was a collaborative learner - less of a hierarchical relationship
- Coaches could be problem solving and collaborative
- Young coaches (who don't have life experience) get exposure and help
- Having a community environment
- There might be distinct characteristics of para sport coaches
- We had access to equipment, funding, ability to get classified
- We re-shape classification - create pathways that match spaces in sport
- Paralympic coaches had access to mentoring, information, and other nuanced modalities specific and different to each sport.

In a world where...

- There was more money than we know what to do with!
- There was inclusion and disability awareness training - giving that to the coaches
- The NCCP makes this training mandatory
- Coaches knew the right terminology and had the confidence to execute them
- Level of empathy, maturity, and compassion is there for the coaches - especially as a young person
- You can understand other people's environments and sport -specific knowledge
- There's more than a couple lines in a training course
- Coaches have the passion, empathy, and caring to work with people with special needs

All coaches are empathetic, compassionate, and knowledgeable/competent enough to address the needs of athletes of any level of ability. Coaches have resources and seek out knowledge/address their gaps. Coaches can critically reflect and problem solve.