

DECOLONIZING AND INDIGENIZING PA FOR INDIGENOUS YOUTH WITH ID

WEAVING INTERSECTIONAL WISDOM, EMBRACING DIVERSE EXPERIENCES:
GUARDIANS' PERSPECTIVES ON DECOLONIZING AND INDIGENIZING PHYSICAL
ACTIVITY FOR INDIGENOUS YOUTH WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES

BY ERIN HARPER, B.Kin.

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Intellectually Disabilities AUTHOR: Erin Harper, B.Kin. (University of Manitoba)
SUPERVISOR: Dr. Kyoung June (David) Yi. NUMBER OF PAGES: v, 88

Abstract

Systemic social inequities actively harm Indigenous peoples of Canada, leaving them with significantly lower physical and mental health outcomes than non-Indigenous people. Individuals with intellectual disabilities (ID) have few opportunities for physical activity appropriate for their physical and social nuances. When Indigeneity intersects ID, health and social inequities are amplified.

This research centralizes the voices of Indigenous communities, extending beyond the academic understandings to ensure needs and solutions are expressed by those who experience the effects first-hand. Strategic comprehension support will maximize input from individuals living at the intersection of Indigeneity (or lack thereof) and ID. Using semi structured individual interviews of guardians guided by interpretive phenomenological analysis, recurring themes highlighting most universal and pressing needs were identified.

Physical activity is foundational for mental and physical health, however systemic oppression and social inequities are reflected in physical activity. Sparse recreational programming, equipment, and facility access perpetuate patterns of inactivity which entrench lower health outcomes. Targeted programming can address these gaps by providing culturally relevant opportunities for physical activity that maximize engagement with Indigenous youth with ID.

Employing intersectional lens, this study generated new knowledge and perspectives to assist in proceeding with decolonizing and Indigenizing inclusive physical activity and sport opportunities. The breakdown of the experiences and barriers in relation to Indigenous sport opportunities will hopefully encourage targeted sport programming to include meaningful Indigenous cultural practices.

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Chapter 1

1.1 The Research Journey Begins

Growing up with considerable options for physical activity and sport programs contributed to living a healthy lifestyle and curating my identity around sports and being active. I was involved in dance, soccer, baseball, swimming, and taekwondo just to name a few that I participated in over my early childhood and into my adolescence. In those activities I noticed everyone that participated was White presenting and without a visible disability. That did not mean that there were not people of different cultures or who had a disability in the community, but clearly, they were absent from sport participation. I volunteered with my mother at a store where people with intellectual disabilities (ID) did work placements and valued those connections I made in my early adolescence. This intrigued me as to why I did not see people with a disability in sport in the community. There were, however, some specialized programs such as Special Olympics swimming at our local pool where I lifeguarded. Although there was programming, it was very minimal, and this group only included those with ID.

Being raised in a northern Manitoba community with minimal support as a Métis woman made cultural sport offerings next to impossible. There were some Indigenous programs through our Friendship Center but those were only open to Indigenous people with a treaty card or who lived in rural Indigenous communities. There was no local or provincial support for Métis people in northern Manitoba during my adolescence and early adult hood. Due to such limitations the opportunities to embrace and practice Métis culture and incorporate Indigeneity into my life was almost nonexistent. There were very limited Métis community members in northern Manitoba which led to a loss of culture and identity during my upbringing. It was not until I moved to Winnipeg, the home of the Métis nation that I truly discovered cultural offerings for Métis

people. I joined my local Winnipeg West as a member into the Métis community in Winnipeg. Although the acceptance into this community has been enjoyable, I do still find challenges as a visibly White Woman who at times feels judged for outwards appearance and not appearing Métis by societal standard view of Indigenous.

As a member of the Manitoba Métis Nation, I have sought resources about my Indigenous culture to deepen knowledge and understanding when approaching sport for those that are Indigenous with ID. As a result, I have a valuable insight into this research and the potential impacts it may have on the Indigenous communities. This Indigenous background has piqued my interest in inclusive physical activity opportunities and programming, highlighting a clear gap in literature regarding experiences of Indigenous youth within inclusive physical activity programs.

I knew the impact that sports and physical activity had on my identity, representation, healthy lifestyle, social constructs and the relationships I built throughout my childhood. However, I noticed a lack of representation for people with disabilities and cultural inclusivity, as well as missed opportunities for them to improve their quality of life through these avenues. Early in my post-secondary studies after moving to a much larger and culturally diverse city, I noticed the lack of disability and culturally relevant programming was still largely evident. During my studies I took a course on inclusive physical activity which sparked my interest in volunteering for a Special Olympics Swim team as I had coached swimming previously. After getting involved with the swim team and witnessing the athlete's enjoyment in participating in sport, it piqued my curiosity about how the sporting organizations did not have culturally diverse sport programming or targeted physical activity for individuals with disabilities. This was extremely frustrating that many places lacked adapted programming in their sport classes and

that many of their facilities remained inaccessible.

Through my volunteering position with Special Olympics Manitoba, I met amazing people and developed connections in the disability community that led me to pursue a job after graduation. Through this employment I helped develop and implement school programs across southern Manitoba. I realized that school-aged children are at an ideal age for developing many social and physical skills that are greatly impacted through physical activity participation. Furthermore, school was a great avenue to provide those with ID to participate with their peers and be offered a thriving environment for social connection, fair play and inclusion.

I worked along rural and urban communities in Manitoba with varying sizes of Indigenous populations and communities throughout my six years of employment at Special Olympics Manitoba. This led to some connections and programs in northern Indigenous communities starting through the organization. Although the effort and programs were trialed, they ultimately were not designed or delivered with Indigeneity in mind and thus were not sustainable. The outcome of these programs reconfirmed that Indigenous families and communities offering inclusive physical activity programs needed to be consulted and recruited to increase the chance for a successful and long-lasting program while incorporating Indigeneity. After seeing the positive impacts of inclusive programming in physical activity events I have attended through my work at Special Olympics Manitoba, I knew I wanted to investigate further.

The goal as the researcher is to try to remain neutral and to not lead the research with overbearing theories and ideas. More importantly, it is to investigate what is experienced and produced by the interviews and then have it analyzed to see where it fits. Thus, there will be no hypothesis for this study, but rather it will focus on lived experiences shared by participants, guardians of Indigenous athletes with ID, their families, and people from the Indigenous and

disability communities (Markula & Silk, 2011).

1.2 Contexts

Youth with ID are at greater risk of experiencing oppression through marginalization, discrimination, social exclusion, ableism, and a lack of opportunities in sport participation (Fernández-Gavira et al., 2017; Friedman, 2023). For example, Gibson and Martin (2017) discuss that marginalization is seen through the diverse types of sport programming that inadequately include or adjust programming for those with ID primarily due to poor information distribution not aligned for those with an ID. Many youths with ID are not typically focused on or targeted for pursuing physical activity or sport (McGarty et al., 2018). Ableism and discrimination are observed and experienced by many with ID through lack of trained instructors, inappropriate equipment and locations, and fees (Bossink et al., 2017). Sport is seen by many as a positive means to reduce the impact of these oppressive factors that can affect youth with ID (Friedman, 2023). With the inclusion of youth with ID into sport, there is a feeling of acceptance, social relationship development, representation of different marginalized groups and a community support that begins to form in these spaces (Weissman et al., 2022). These types of opportunities can form positive, healthy, and safe spaces for physical activity for those with ID.

ID can be defined as “when a person has certain limitations in cognitive functioning and skills, including conceptual, social and practical skills, such as language, social and self-care skills” (Special Olympics, 2023, para. 1). Developmental disabilities which also fall under this classification are considered ID. Though not commonly medically diagnosed, American Association of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD) (2023) offers three criteria which help to determine ID. A medical diagnosis is described by the American Psychiatric

Association (2024): “Intellectual functioning is measured with individually administered and psychometrically valid, comprehensive, culturally appropriate, psychometrically sound tests of intelligence” (para. 6). These include limitations in adaptive behavior, an IQ lower than 70, and the onsets of both before the age of twenty-two. Although some organizations do not require medical diagnoses to have people with an ID participate in their programs, they use the honour system in faith that one would not falsely self-identify.

ID can be one component of intersectionality as many people have other characteristics and circumstances that put them at a disadvantage such as race and socioeconomic status (AAIDD, 2023; Crenshaw, 1991). Many people with ID also live their lives with coexisting identities that shape who they are and how they pursue physical activity. Using an intersectional lens to look at Indigeneity and intellectual disability is something of a niche topic in Canada that is seemingly under researched. Inspired by a two eyed seeing approach, incorporating an Indigenous identity and culture with a disability perspective is important when considering the cultural impacts that this population could face when pursuing inclusive physical activity programming (Lavallée & Lévesque, 2013). Through this intersectional lens, disability can be viewed from an important scope different from the primarily White, ableist lens reinforcing ideas of normalcy (Azzarito, 2020).

A large community of people has been continually overlooked when it comes to physical activity programs curated to be culturally supportive and relevant. Indigenous people are at the forefront of this disregard and face intersectional marginalization in Canada as they strive to embrace their culture and roots. Many Indigenous communities and people have been subjected to Western ideals over the past century and forced to discard their Indigenous ways of knowing, living and being (Abdullahi et al., 2020). Due to Western ideals and disparities such as

displacement inflicted upon Indigenous people, many people were at an increased risk of producing offspring with health problems leading to increased cases of ID at birth (Abdullahi et al., 2020). Indigenous people in Canada have long been marginalized and oppressed at the hands of colonization and capitalism. Indigenous youth with ID has endured these oppressive conditions and continue to bear the scars of colonial traumas, particularly considering recent revelations regarding the horrors of residential schools (Gerlach et al., 2022). The lack of sporting opportunities designed to incorporate Indigeneity for Indigenous youth with ID becomes apparent through relevant published articles and the lack of available information.

Indigenous perspectives are slowly being welcomed back into Western society as many political issues have come to the national forefront for our Indigenous peoples. Indigenous practices are being incorporated into some physical activity programming but the need to incorporate disability as an intersectional consideration is evident.

Special Olympics started in 1968 in the United States of America (USA) and was developed to provide people with ID a place to compete in sport against their peers with ID (Special Olympics, n.d.). The sports are organized into divisions that reflect their ability categories to offer them a fair chance to succeed and fairness in their competitions. This is accomplished by grouping heats of athletes into sections with no more than a 25% difference between the lowest ranking and highest-ranking athlete in their heat. Over the past fifty years, there have been many changes and additions specifically designed sport management systems created to accommodate ability level, but inclusion has remained the organization's key purpose. This mission of Special Olympics on creating spaces of inclusivity was a positive change in providing sport opportunities to those with ID around the world through weekly programs and competitions in various sports while concurrently being in a time where segregation and

institutionalization was at its height especially in the USA (McConkey et al., 2013; Steele et al., 2023).

Special Olympics provides inclusive sport opportunities for those not only with ID but also to those without ID through their Unified programming. Unified sport is a relatively new inclusive sport opportunity in Canada with its introduction in 2016 (Special Olympics, 2018). It was based off an already existing unified model running in the USA although the programs in the USA have expanded out into community programs. Unified sport is defined as a sport program that incorporates athletes with and without an ID to participate in sport and encourage social inclusion (Special Olympics, 2018). As defined by United Nations (2016), “Social inclusion is defined as the process of improving the terms of participation in society, particularly for people who are disadvantaged, through enhancing opportunities, access to resources, voice and respect for rights” (p. 17). One important feature of unified sport is the language used when talking about programming. A unified athlete is someone with ID. A unified partner is the athlete without ID.

Unified sport is predominantly carried out in schools, and it is designed to best fit the school environment as it is saturated with people with and without ID to reduce possible barriers and constraints of participation (O’Rourke, 2023). The school environment allows for no additional transportation challenges for families, the students are already familiar with each other and are of similar age and skill set as their peers. The financial cost is low or free, and a safe environment is provided with the trust of the students and parents. The teachers or coaches are the important factors of these inclusion opportunities for their students with ID and to ensure the proper implementation of the programs (Hassan et al., 2012; O’Rourke, 2023).

Canada has diverse cultural groups that have increased needs for inclusivity when it

comes to physical activity opportunities. Unified sport opportunities are steadily increasing in Canada, but an Indigenous lens of disability and unified sport programming incorporating Indigeneity is missing from the literature. Throughout Canadian history, many sport opportunities stemmed from Western ideals and the colonization of Canada by encouraging European sports in North America while simultaneously eliminating Indigenous sports. These types of narrowly scoped ideals demonstrate that large groups of culturally different people were being excluded in their physical activity pursuits (Mason et al., 2019). Through targeted cultural programming and outreach in communities, it became increasingly evident that Indigenous Canadians were not being focused or involved in physical activity opportunities that respected or incorporated their culture (Halas, 2004). However, those that did participate in traditional physical activities sensed an increase in their quality of life and acceptance into their communities (Nesdoly et al., 2021). People with ID have also concluded that focused and targeted programming to include their disability and cultural relevancy has increased a feeling of inclusivity in their local communities (Nesdoly et al., 2021). The importance of inclusivity has become a highly focused research topic in the last decade and has provided strong evidence for inclusive programs to be integrated into Indigenous communities for increased quality of life.

One notable observation in Special Olympics programming was the lack of Indigenous participants (urban and rural) and Indigenous communities participating in the inclusive physical activity programming offered. Culturally inclusive programming to include Indigenous youth with ID in Canada has been very under researched thus far. With Indigenization being understood in various social contexts and decolonial physical activity practices being introduced this is a relevant moment in Canadian history for such exploration (Nesdoly et al., 2021). As such exploring what Indigenization would mean in Special Olympics contexts is timely and

mandatory. Furthermore, Indigenous communities have many people with ID and continually seek decolonial approaches to physical activity and creating the opportunity for inclusive programming in their communities (Nesdoly et al., 2021).

There were a few urban Indigenous youths that participated in the programming, but it proved difficult to have geographically close Indigenous communities attend the Special Olympics unified sports events. It is suspected people feel further connected, welcomed and included when “people who look like them” are offering and leading the sport opportunities (Mason et al., 2019). Many sport programs in Canada do not come from a culturally informed community or Indigenous perspective or have cultural components incorporated into the experience (Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018). Indigeneity is not a simple term—far from simply being inclusive of Indigenous people or cultures into Special Olympics programming and practice. It requires a change in ways of being, thinking, and doing.

Indigenous communities hold strong values of community and the collective. Upholding Indigeneity and including Indigenous participants in the unified programming and training community members to provide these types of opportunities might be a new direction for inclusive opportunities. Unified sport can provide sport and mentoring opportunities to those without an intellectual disability and provides meaningful and inclusive sport opportunities.

Canadians are at a point in history where institutions are closing and people with ID are starting to be integrated back into society with mixed opinions from the communities (Angell et al., 2020; Steel et al., 2023). Many members of the community are concerned with their care and day-to-day processes without full time support and the strain it might put on the public (Angell et al., 2020).

Youth with ID are generally underestimated and disvalued in being contributing members

of society and misjudged in the value of their shared knowledge and information to spread awareness and promote social inclusion (De Plevitz, 2006).

According to De Plevitz (2006), medical diagnosis of ID is culturally insensitive and not reliable for Indigenous people as it disregards Indigenous ways of knowing (Azzarito, 2020). Lavallée and Lévesque (2013) explain that the way Indigenous communities view disability in their society and culture has a strong reflection on possible unified programming hinderance without culturally appropriate modifications to respect Indigenous culture surrounding physical activity. There are a few reasons for possible social exclusion of Indigenous youth with ID, including not being seen as intelligent by their peers, teachers, and themselves. being forced into ‘special’ school, reinforcing prejudice, and familial support (De Plevitz, 2006). Society and sport organizations have not developed relationships within Indigenous communities or Indigenous peoples in urban settings to include components that would be culturally relevant as well as crucial for their participation. Others have concluded that it is not the fault of Indigenous communities or people but responsibility of those creating sport opportunities that do not provide inclusive opportunities to include them and their needs (Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018).

Studies on intersectionality of being Indigenous and having ID is underdeveloped and it is difficult to find connections in research through this lens. There was almost no information on any kind of inclusive sport programming going on in Canada for Indigenous people with ID. There was very minimal information on any inclusive sport opportunities that were offered to people identifying as Indigenous in Canada with or without ID, but that is not to say such opportunities do not exist.

1.3 Objective and Research Question

This study aims to explore the experiences of inclusive physical activity opportunities

among youth experiencing intersectional marginalization identifying as Indigenous and having ID from the perspective of their guardians. Crucial to success is obtaining information from Indigenous people with ID on their experiences of adaptive and inclusive programs. A possible program that could be used as a resource to obtain these experiences from guardians of Indigenous youth with ID is the Special Olympics unified program. Currently there is minimal inclusive sport opportunities designed for Indigenous youth with ID and minimal research on the requirements to uphold Indigeneity in programming and practice.

Furthermore, there is limited Canadian research on inclusive opportunities for Indigenous individuals with ID and their peers participating in physical activity together. The importance of understanding what Indigeneity means and what is required by Indigenous people to implement inclusive programming designed for Indigenous athletes with ID is key to whether an existing program such as unified sport can be modified and implemented or if a new program needs to be developed. Investigation of thoughts, experiences, and plans of Indigenous people's involvement in inclusive physical activities can be a resource that can aid in the creation and implementation of inclusive programming for their youth with ID alongside disability experts. Sport programmer's acknowledgement of Indigenous people scarcely participating in programming will facilitate the incorporation of inclusive programs to aid with future quests to target culturally relevant sport opportunities.

Unified sport has the potential to be a foundational building block to include Indigeneity and inclusivity in Indigenous youth sport programming and to gather the knowledge required to develop and modify sport opportunities to respect Indigenous culture. By starting at an early age and beginning exposure of decolonized practice to unified programs, it can create potential for community program to follow in culturally responsive ways. With unified sport as a resource for

ideas and discussion around providing physical activity opportunities with minimal resources directly into Indigenous communities and already present facilities, upholding Indigeneity seems reachable and a possibility. Sport is a powerful method to promote and implement inclusion in life changing ways for those with ID (Pochstein & McConkey, 2022). The knowledge attainment from Indigenous and disability communities is required to successfully disseminate their experiences in inclusive programs to provide effective ways to pursue Indigeneity. With this purpose, this study will address the following overarching research question: What are the perspectives of guardians of Indigenous youth with an intellectual disability on decolonizing and Indigenizing inclusive physical activity opportunities?

1.4 Contributions

1.4.1 Value and originality of work

Indigenous populations with ID can live in remote and secluded areas that make inclusive sport programming difficult to get access to, although it is similarly difficult in urban settings. There has been limited research on the requirements and needs to implement inclusive sport programs for Indigenous people in urban and remote areas. This has potential to be the first empirical study examining inclusive physical activity opportunities through an intersectional lens for Indigenous youth with ID in Canada. It will serve as a knowledge base created by directly involving Indigenous stakeholders to be a resource for current and future inclusive physical activity providers to support Indigenous initiatives.

Sport as an avenue for belonging, social skills, acceptance, cultural awareness, and many other reasons are encouraging to be able to promote to those Indigenous youth with ID. Special Olympics has an existing program that can be modified and used to create inclusive sport opportunities as a resource for families. This study will focus on Indigenous guardians of youth

with ID and their perspectives on upholding Indigeneity in inclusive physical activity programs. Information about pursuing Indigeneity into current and future inclusive physical activity programs could greatly impact Indigenous youth in Canada for the foreseeable future.

1.4.2 Personal meaning

This research will continue the reconciliation work happening throughout Canada to regain Indigenous culture within our population and meaningful pursuits of physical activity. This connects to me personally as a Manitoba Métis woman who lost her culture through colonialism over the past century. The acknowledgement and incorporation of Indigenous practices on Indigenous land is a large part of regaining one's Indigenous culture and is important for developing culturally meaningful physical activity opportunities. This research will reinforce the importance of providing opportunities to those with ID who seek physical activity or sport opportunities which have significantly impacted personal identity for me. Allyship in sport and physical activity programs is important in creating these opportunities, recognizing a place of privilege, and using gained knowledge to be an activist for those with ID when including them in these pursuits.

1.4.3 Academic merit

This research will contribute to creating a source of knowledge from Indigenous parents and guardians on what is needed to uphold Indigeneity in inclusive programs for their programming and practice. The need for further research into inclusive sport in Canada has been apparent through the gaps in literature and has been an interest to researchers from many different aspects on inclusivity in sports for those with a disability. The importance of sport as a vehicle for social inclusion in society for youth with ID needs further investigation in Canada and incorporating Indigeneity into physical activity opportunities. This study will examine the

knowledge and information collected from Indigenous families on experiences and needs to provide inclusive sport opportunities that respect and incorporate the importance of Indigenous practices and culture within programming.

1.4.4 Practical Usage

This research will provide the opportunity for inclusive physical activity providers to critically reflect on the meanings of Indigeneity. This acknowledgement will encourage them to engage in respectful practice incorporating perspectives of Indigenous participants and their families in programming and practice as key resources. The findings of this study can also be used to develop specially targeted programs for Indigenous athletes but also improve inclusive programming nationwide through firsthand experience informed by parents and youth with ID. This knowledge as a resource has the potential to give the tools needed for Canada's Indigenous youth with ID to be fully included in culturally meaningful ways and improve the implementation of inclusive programming.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Literature Findings

This study will look at inclusive physical activity programming for Indigenous youth with intellectual disabilities (ID) from the guardians' perspectives, while focusing on their experiences in these programs and insight into upholding Indigeneity in their programming. Through semi-structured interviews with several guardians, I aimed to determine the outcomes of their participation and the intersectionality of Indigenous athletes regarding pursuing Indigeneity into these physical activity programs. The information collected will be used to disseminate this knowledge to inclusive recreation programmers, communities, and not for profits with a focus on ID to encourage and influence future programming. The impacts of inclusive physical activity programming while being culturally aware, sport for Indigenous individuals with and without ID and inclusive sport in school settings will be the main topics in this chapter.

An important aspect of this research is its theoretical framework. Disability models have been shifting and changing for decades. Disability has largely been viewed from the medical model of disability which puts the onus on the person with the disability. The medical model is viewing the disability first and the person second which creates this notion of the person having to fix themselves to fit into society (Smith & Bundon, 2018). However, despite there being several different models for disability they all fit differently into various disability contexts when needed.

This research will use the social model of disability to provide guidance and a different perspective on Indigenous youth with ID in physical activity programming. The social model

differs from that of the medical model as it places the blame outside the individual such as society, environment, exclusivity and social attitudes (Smith & Bundon, 2018). The social model was developed as a critique of the medical model and its emphasis on the disabled body rather than recognizing other barriers. The attitudes, acceptance and equality of those with disabilities could be accepted easily into society if it had been built to be accessible.

A third model of disability is the social relational model. It was developed as both the medical and social model were critiqued for missing key components. It focuses on the societal views and relationships with people that can define disability and make oppression possible (Smith & Bundon, 2018). The social relational model is quite a new method of viewing disability and reflects the variety of experience from one disabled person to the next.

This research will also focus on collected data from a newly developed critical disability study (CDS) perspective. The emergence of disability studies was part of the disability rights movement and the politics of knowledge creation (Meekosha & Shuttleworth, 2009). CDS is an approach that focuses on the acknowledgement of disability as a historical, cultural and political experience (Bhattacharya et al., 2022). In CDS, disability can intersect with other systems of oppression and power (Bhattacharya et al., 2022).

Intersectionality is another component that will be included in this research to understand how aspects of unique barriers are formed from multiple political and social identities (AAIDD, 2023). Intersectionality will be used to determine how systems of inequality affect marginalized populations and their access when promoting social inclusion (AAIDD, 2023; Crenshaw, 1991). Intersectionality will be used to address Indigenous youths' physical activity involvement in the research and is always in progress (Carbado et al., 2013).

2.2 Sources Consulted

As my research discusses various concepts related to Indigenous sport opportunities, there were a few different topics that were researched. These included inclusive sport opportunities for those with ID, the intersectionality of inclusive sport opportunities for Indigenous youth, impacts of unified sport programs in the schools and the view of inclusion and disability from a critical disability studies perspective.

The electronically sourced databases for this research were OMNI (McMaster University Library), PubMed, Sage Journals Online, Taylor and Francis Online Journals. Web search engines such as Google Scholar were used as a secondary source to further look for useful literature. The date ranges for the articles chosen were from 1991 until 2023 and all articles used and referenced were primarily in English.

The search terms that were used correlated to my various concepts that were derived from my Indigenous youth sport opportunities research interest. Terms that were searched included: "inclusive programs" AND "intellectual disability", "Indigenous" OR "sport" OR "intersectionality", "unified" OR "Special Olympics" OR "recreation", "critical disability studies" OR "inclusion" OR "physical activity" OR "social model", "disability" OR "social inclusion" or "impact" OR "unified partner" OR "school" OR "adapted". These search phrases produced many viable sources to provide context for the literature review.

2.3 Impacts of inclusive and unified sport

The inclusion of youth with ID has been an increasing trend in inclusive physical activity and sport programs in the last decade. A large part of this inclusion movement is the attitudes of those without ID participating in these unified sport programs. According to Albaum et al.

(2022) and McKay et al. (2019), the inclusion of youth with ID in schools and communities' nationwide is a crucial element to facilitating beneficial attitude change of people without ID who are participating in sport with their counterparts with ID (Bota et al., 2014). This being a relatively new topic, there is not a predetermined scale to assess this behavioral change, but a modified scale was used in the study by McKay et al. (2019). This scale was referred to as the Collegian Attitudes toward Inclusive Campus Recreation (CAICR) Scale and was used to analyze attitudes of collegian students and provide validity in these attitudinal assessments (McKay et al., 2019). According to Harada et al. (2011) and Vansickle et al. (2021), people with previous exposure to youth with ID created lasting positive attitudes and increased their confidence, optimism and reduced anger levels when participating in unified sport experiences.

The comfortability of sport and recreation with youth with ID impacts participation too. Vansickle et al. (2021) suggest that with previous contact with someone with ID, willingness and level of relaxation was increased compared to those without previous integration. The frequency of participation in a sport setting with youth with ID reduced the anxiety about future interactions and was seen as a positive outcome from these unified sporting opportunities. With further exposure in schools and community sport settings, the opportunities increased for athletes with ID to engage with their unified partner. This type of exposure can create relationships that provide understanding, friendships and positive attitudes towards sport opportunities and the athletes themselves (Albaum et al., 2022; McConkey et al., 2013). Overall, people without ID see integrated and inclusive recreation as a step in the right direction to providing positive opportunities of social inclusion.

Inclusive sport opportunities are important for those with ID and provide the foundations for unified sport programs and opportunities in school and the community. Special Olympics is a

dedicated organization that promotes and provides sport programming for those with ID and is leading the movement of inclusive opportunities in schools and communities. According to Mayer and Anderson (2014), recreation facilities and schools in the communities can include Special Olympics programming into their services and programs offered and change the impact they have on those with and without ID in a positive manner. Harada et al. (2011) found that the different streams of participation and inclusion opportunities provided by Special Olympics included athletes of many different abilities and provided a place for families and athletes to succeed at sport.

Unified sport is preferred over segregated sport opportunities by the majority of those with ID for the opportunity to interact with their unified partners and to create and foster social inclusion (Albaum et al., 2022; Mayer & Anderson, 2014). The goals of this partnership are to promote a meaningful experience for those athletes with ID (McConkey et al., 2013). Through unified sport and the Special Olympics inclusion movement, other sport stakeholders across Canada have the knowledge available to them to implement and provide inclusive programs. Harada et al. (2011) and Hassan et al. (2012) explain that unified sport has a positive impact and dynamic outcomes from participants, partners, relatives, coaches, as well as athletes regarding inclusion with the help of Special Olympics as an organization. Through this type of programming and the possibility to incorporate Indigeneity could be beneficial to Indigenous youth with ID and their classmates.

Another positive note on unified sport is the rewards that can come from participating in an inclusive sporting environment and to prosper in life, travel, friendships, competitive sporting events (Hassen et al., 2012). Mayer & Anderson (2014) mention that inclusive recreation programs are viable options but need to use the resources of segregated programs to learn of the

needs and values for those with ID to participate.

According to Pochstein & McConkey (2022), as well as McConkey & Menke (2022), youth with ID that did not participate in Special Olympics programs were documented as having a lower rate of social inclusion even though they were a part of a segregated system (school). Determining, measuring, and assessing the different aspects of community inclusion for those with ID is difficult with limited available resources. Oakes et al. (2022) describe that inclusive sport programming has a huge impact on community acceptance of youth with ID. According to McConkey & Menke (2022), inclusive experiences in the community are more often experienced by youth with ID after inclusion into programming compared to those not participating. The research surrounding community inclusion from the perspective of youth with ID needs to be investigated further to gain the knowledge to promote engagement opportunities.

The quality experiences of participants in inclusive physical activity have had a large positive impact on them and gives insight into inclusive sport program success for the facilitators. Weisman et al. (2021) explains the contributing factors of positive experiences of those with ID by using the Quality Participation Framework (QFP) to assess autonomy, belonging, challenge, engagement, mastery, and meaning. However, even with many experiences being positive for athletes, some youth with ID have concerns of barriers including belonging and engagement. People with and without an ID are in pursuit of high-quality sporting experiences and these can be made possible through the Special Olympics unified programming (Arbour-Nicitopoulos et al., 2022; Bota et al. 2014). Little literature is available for this newly researched aspect of inclusive sport, but it is still important as it has created positive emotions, increased self-worth, motor skills, friendships and more autonomy for those with an ID (Arbour-Nicitopoulos et al., 2022). The small scale of literature surrounding this topic does not diminish

the importance and influence it carries in providing an environment of social inclusion.

An important aspect of inclusive and unified programming is the experience of caregivers of those with ID and its impact. The requirement of additional support offered through inclusive programming can make a difference for many families of youth with ID and their involvement with programming. In the study by Tsai & Fung, (2009), many barriers were seen such as the lack of appropriate resources required for an inclusive sport experience in Hong Kong. In many countries outside of North America the reality of disability and social discrimination is still at the forefront of sporting opportunities. The barriers identified by Tsai & Fung (2009) regarding inclusive sport opportunities in Hong Kong are still happening in North America today but at a smaller level and include institutional, community and interpersonal components. Some responsibilities that have been missed by inclusive programming are in the form of disability discrimination and the complete lack of knowledge and resources by those implementing the programs. The support of Special Olympics has facilitated a welcoming and inclusive environment in Hong Kong as well as other nations, but it has not been reciprocated or embraced by other organizations, sport programs or facilities to provide meaningful and non-discriminatory inclusive sport opportunities (Tsai & Fung, 2009). These non-inclusionary experiences through outside organizations also relate back to the attitudinal barriers faced by athletes with an intellectual disability in their communities and with exposure and proper training can be improved to be seen as a step in the right direction.

2.4 Indigenous Perspective

Due to the geographical seclusion, socioeconomic factors, language, different cultural barriers, and marginalization, sporting opportunities for athletes identifying as Indigenous are

very low and almost nonexistent outside of their cultural communities. The lack of sport programming for Indigenous athletes with ID is even more of a rare phenomenon in Canada and other countries as seen in the lack of research literature. Indigenous athletes with ID have extra barriers against them and are falling behind due to a lack of support, knowledge and understanding that is needed for the Indigenous communities to have resources and provide inclusive sport opportunities (Goyal et al., 2020; Rivas Velarde, 2018). There is a need for further research into Indigenous and non-Indigenous athletes and the understanding of disability and impairment. Additionally, this research should include how the barriers identified are impacting inclusive sport opportunities and how including Indigeneity can improve cultural relevancy (Rivas Velarde, 2018).

Indigenous athletes are more likely to experience social exclusion and isolation when it comes to sporting opportunities inside and outside their communities. Social inclusion is an important topic when talking about youth with ID and relates to many critical disability theories in the context of disability being a social matter and not only a medical issue. Canada's historical past with Indigenous peoples has played a huge part in the social exclusion and isolation experienced over the past numerous decades (Rivas Velarde, 2018). The importance of Canada's past and one of the direct causes of these exclusions and isolations in Indigenous communities is described by Samuel et al. (2019) as "geographic isolation on Reserves, and cultural isolation through forced assimilation in a residential school system which forcibly removed children from their families and their culture" (p. 89). Residential schools were something only of recent history in Canada and many reconciliation actions are being sought out to improve the overall wellbeing and inclusion of Indigenous peoples back into Canadian society. Residential schools have led to a long history and colonial Western view of sport. The lack of sport that happened in

Indigenous communities during the residential school era has severely impacted the ability to provide sport opportunities within their communities and include the incorporation of inclusive physical activity programs. (Paraschak, 2019). However, the few Westernized sports they involved did have brought Indigenous people together to survive those schools (Paraschak, 2019). This forced assimilation of Indigenous people with and without ID has led to a lack of integrated sport opportunities for them.

In many countries outside of Canada with Indigenous people, the implementation of programs and the inclusion of cultural practices have started and shown to positively impact the lives of the athletes with ID as well as their communities. It is common for children with ID to be excluded from cultural and community practices because of their disability. Through Special Olympics programming many countries have been given the resources and support to provide opportunities for those with ID and incorporate their culture which has seen an overall uptake in cultural connectedness to their communities and Indigenous traditions (Samuel et al., 2019). The schools are a great place to introduce this inclusive programming in a comfortable environment for those Indigenous athletes. The Westernization of disability in Canada could also play a role in barriers facilitating this kind of inclusive sport (Paraschak, 2019). However, this process and integration is still very new and has not been given priority of much further research into the Indigenous focus on inclusive sport programming in Canada.

The enhancement of the sport opportunities for Indigenous youth is instrumental in creating opportunities of inclusion and cultural relevancy and competency for those with ID. This is a very new topic and therefore specific research studies are difficult to find. However, the sport opportunities for Indigenous youth through traditional games provides exciting progress and resources for the implementation of inclusive and cultural sport for those with ID. Although

limited, research that has focused on Indigenous youth sport experiences shares that incorporating traditional ways and values has positively shaped these Indigenous youth (Dubnewick et al., 2018). It is well researched the benefits that sport participation provides for those in the general community. To those Indigenous youth participating in traditional games there are some cultural and traditional benefits as explained by Dubnewick et al. (2018) as “(a) promoting cultural pride, (b) interacting with Elders, (c) supporting connection to the land, (d) developing personal characteristics, and (e) developing a foundation for movement” (p. 213). The expertise of Indigenous peoples and their traditional sport activities will help support researchers, policy makers and sport programmers to provide meaningful and appropriate inclusive sport opportunities and resources to implement programs in the future (Dubnewick et al., 2018; Hiwi, 2014).

An important aspect of including and researching Indigenous sport for those with ID is for a trusting relationship to be developed within the Indigenous community as well as a cultural understanding of how disability is viewed and experienced (Wheeler, 2014). This has been partially developed and researched by Indigenous policy makers and those working with the federal sport bodies to move away from an assimilation type view of sport (Hiwi, 2014). The lack of research on incorporating inclusive sport programs in Canada for Indigenous peoples signifies a need for this study.

The importance of sport resources in Indigenous communities is high but negatively impacted by many due to their geographical locations in Canada. Many Indigenous athletes with ID do not have the proper resources, support, or knowledge of ID from the community to assist with an inclusive sport opportunity in their remote communities (Goyal et al., 2020). This may depend on location and many Indigenous communities do not have the resources, funding or

facilities for a high school, so they send their children away to urban areas for schooling (Goyal et al., 2020). Due to these barriers, it is seen widely across Canada that these Indigenous youth with ID are at a systemic disadvantage and behind non-Indigenous youth with ID when accessing inclusive physical activity programming. Through the growth and development of relationships with Indigenous communities in Canada, there lies the opportunity for them to modify and incorporate inclusive programming (Wheeler, 2014). Special Olympics is a great place to start in introducing those conversations as well as inviting and incorporating Indigenous individuals to lead the development of those programs in their community. Indigenous peoples comprise many athletes in Canada and many athletes with ID and they have minimal support and resources to provide sporting opportunities to them. The clear lack of literature on this topic expresses the need for further studies involving Indigenous communities and to identify the barriers of implementing them.

2.5 Inclusive physical activity in schools

Positive attitudes are also seen from teachers and unified students with previous exposure to those with ID. Including unified athletes without ID is making a positive social impact on their inclusivity in the classrooms by their peers. (Bota et al. 2014; Oakes et al., 2022; Yin et al., 2021). The unified programming in schools depends on the commitment, willingness and attitudes of the teachers to play the role of a coach and facilitate these unified experiences (Hassen et al., 2012; Özer, 2013). The teachers and support staff in schools play a grand role in the success of inclusive and unified programming in their school and benefit from training on what that is and how to implement it. Challenging the process of physical literacy in schools and the ways that disability is viewed can change the way inclusive sport programs is implemented at school (Barber, 2018).

Many teachers in schools are trusted with the responsibility of who they think would make a good unified partner for their athletes with ID and their sport teams. Choosing students with good athletic ability and sport knowledge contributes to the environment and facilitating the coach or teacher with additional help (O'Rourke et al., 2023). Choosing the unified partners was also determined by already existing relationships with athletes with ID in school as well as potential leadership roles they can excel in. However, many of the unified partners were interested in participating in unified sport because of a preexisting relationship outside of the school or sport setting (Oakes et al., 2022; O'Rourke et al., 2023). The unified partner experience is a great opportunity and learning environment for the uptake of inclusive language with the incorporation of these resources for the coaches and students (Oakes et al., 2022; O'Rourke et al., 2023).

Inclusive sport in Canadian schools has been a popular topic for the last decade. However, despite that, there are still many schools across Canada that do not have any inclusive sport programming for their students with ID or unified programming. The barriers surrounding this type of programming still exist today and include but are not limited to lack of awareness and opportunity, insufficient program options, budget constraints, additional support from staff, teachers, peers, parents and schools (Yin et al., 2021). At the post-secondary level, these barriers can be seen as equitable access due to the low number of individuals pursuing a post-secondary education ID at a post-secondary institution were in favor of unified programming and positive attitudes of inclusion for the start of potential programs (Oakes et al., 2022; Vansickel et al., 2021). Many higher educational settings offer disability support and services, but in Canada that is mostly applied to academics and not sporting opportunities. However, through the reconciliation process, the academy has started to incorporate Indigeneity into their practices at

these institutions (Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018).

Student athletes with ID have been reported as having the lowest participation in sport programs prior to any kind of inclusive or unified setting within their school (Hassan et al., 2012). The shift from the idea of an ableist society as defined by the social model of disability to one that recognizes the inaccessibility of the environment is meaningful. This has been researched further to include proper education and resources for Physical Educators (PE) in school and how to reframe their thinking about inclusive sport activities. Barber (2018) explains that knowledge development as:

PE teacher education designed to interrupt misconceptions and to construct new understandings of disability, to assist teacher education students in beginning to develop a philosophy of full inclusion, and to make physical literacy for all body shapes, sizes and abilities an explicit priority in their PE lesson and program planning. (p. 520)

The physical activity component is a great piece of inclusive sport in schools, but additional benefits have been reported such as meaningful peer relationships, mentoring opportunities and increasing the social interaction with the community of the school and in unified programming (Bota et al., 2014; Yin et al., 2021). Unified sport programs increase the overall physical activity levels for those with ID who are usually at risk for health problems (Dymond et al., 2020). The incorporation of unified programs has brought different schools together to create unified teams and practices which have led to increased inclusion and awareness in schools as well as an overall socially inclusive environment (Hassen et al., 2012; Yin et al., 2021). The schools that have already tried and included unified programming cannot overstate the positive impacts it has had all around, but there is a lack of information and studies

of schools' thoughts and opinions that are not currently involved in unified programming in schools (Hassen et al., 2012). There have also been reports that these inclusive programs have created a spillover effect in schools that has led to higher graduation completion for those with ID as well as a pursuit of post-secondary education (Yin et al., 2021).

Schools are one of the key components when initiating unified programming for athletes with ID and has been steadily growing in Canada at an exponential rate the last few years. This increased interest and uptake of schools in the unified programs in Canada has introduced the possibility of travel and competition throughout their province's countries and even internationally (Hassen et al., 2012; O'Rourke et al., 2023). The introduction of travel will increase and promote independence of those athletes with ID away from familial situations.

For many students with ID, inclusive sport program opportunities at school are the only place they have access to these types of programs. Although, the barriers schools have on implementing unified and inclusive programming can be a huge constraint for participating and encouraging this into their schools. Many teachers who work with students with a disability identify that functional limitations were increasing in severity and increased specific needs has created a complexity to take part in adapted activities and can hinder their participation (Roult et al., 2015). As mentioned by Roult et al. (2015), a PE teacher from a non-specialized school said “I can hardly see myself designing an indoor soccer activity in my class. I have two very active pupils dealing with an autism spectrum disorder next to six others who can’t follow or simply struggle to understand the rules” (p. 6). These types of limitations can be the cause of non-participation in adapted and inclusive programming for some schools.

Another limiting factor for potential adaptive and inclusive programming by schools is

the layout and potential lack of sport facilities and the accessibility of them. This includes placement of facilities, classroom location, accessible washroom locations, and considering the time constraint of travel. These barriers are a challenge for non-disability specialized schools whereas the specialized schools see financial difficulties in purchasing the specialized sport equipment and replacements that may be required for their athletes to participate.

The lack of prior integration in sport in schools between those with ID and those without can be frustrating for both individuals with the different levels of play and negative ability views about the athlete with ID. That potential barrier is offset by the benefits of both athletes participating in unified sport such as offering a new challenge, sensitization of realities and the feelings of inclusion and value (Roult et al., 2015; Yin et al., 2022). Many of these opportunities are solely in the hands of the PE teachers and they take on the extra responsibility to offer these types of programs. Furthermore, they can be very demanding, and with little uptake or no support these programs can be very rare (Özer et al., 2013; Roult et al., 2015). The decision to partake in these adaptive experiences is influenced further by the support offered to the participants with ID and functional limitation outside their school environment. Many of these teachers and students share the belief that these events foster self-esteem, pride, team and school spirit, give the athletes a goal to work towards, encourage motivation to participate in physical activity and have far reaching positive effects into their future lives (Bota et al., 2014; Roult et al., 2015).

2.6 Research Gaps

From the literature review it is clear there is a large gap for Indigeneity in inclusive physical activity programming focusing on Indigenous youth with ID. It has only been in the last

twenty years that Indigenous people are getting to partake in their traditional cultural games again and be recognized by federal sport bodies in Canada (Hiwi, 2014). However, those traditional games do not have a portion designed for those with ID (Dubnewick, 2018). Another gap that was identified was the lack of research on how guardians of Indigenous youth interpret and define disability, their intersections with their culture, and the barriers for them to participate and remain in inclusive physical activity and sport opportunities. It also has been identified that Indigenous youth in rural and urban communities across Canada largely differ and could possibly need specialized program development for each different community. More research is needed to confirm this potential barrier.

Recently, the historical truth has been shared about the dark past of residential schools in Canada. This has played a part in cultural activities getting lost between generations, but Canadian society is on a path to reconcile the tragedies that happened during the timeframe of residential schools (Hiwi, 2014). The impacts of residential schools and inclusive sport opportunities research is very minimal and does not provide enough information to develop any programs. Decolonizing and Indigenizing inclusive sport programs is a newly developed initiative within the Canadian context and has been minimally researched in terms of people with ID.

There have been numerous studies in the past ten years that looked at inclusive and unified sport programs but was limited in information on studies done in Canada (Roult, 2015). Inclusive and unified programming does differ based on country and regions, therefore the transferability to the research data is not always helpful in preparation of implementing a program in a country like Canada. The research is lacking for information about inclusive opportunities in schools in Canada. This lack of knowledge creates additional barriers to

implementing inclusive programming even if it were to fit outside the parameter of Special Olympics.

The amount of research from the perspectives of the school aged kids and their parents of adaptive sport programs was not enough to draw a conclusion. Inclusive and unified sport has many stakeholders and there is more research needed from all the different components that make sport programming what it is (Hassan et al., 2012). There was minimal research included for unified programming and post-secondary institutions and even less about Canadian post-secondary institutions (Sheppard-Jones et al., 2021; Vansickle et al., 2021). From attending university here in Manitoba, I have seen the lack of inclusive programming within our recreation facilities on school campuses. There are no programs designed to be inclusive for those with disabilities and further those with ID.

Another gap identified was minimal research into the barriers or why schools might not be willing to participate in these inclusive opportunities. There are constraints that may be out of the teachers' and students' control, but the lack of awareness of these programs could be a possible cause. Many schools that do have unified programs have been implemented because the teacher knew about Special Olympics and wanted to be a resource for their students to have inclusive sport (Özer et al., 2013; Yin et al., 2022).

Due to limitations in related research regarding Indigenous youth with ID and their experiences in inclusive sport programs, its reconfirmed the importance and aim of this study. The perspectives of Indigenous guardians will possibly bridge the gap in the literature and encourage future research into the topic. The knowledge this research hopes to receive will in turn enlighten the process and information required to incorporate Indigeneity and

decolonization around inclusive physical activity opportunities.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Interpretive Paradigm

An interpretive qualitative research approach will be taken to allow for the open interpretation of the data and encourage research participants' voice and lived experiences to be shown. Interpretive study is comprised of multiple approaches to methodologies as this type of research can create meanings from multiple different places and perspectives (Markula & Silk, 2011). Denzin and Lincoln (2005) explain that qualitative researchers collect empirical material to provide transparency and representation of their research (as cited in Markula & Silk, 2011).

Through an interpretive methodology, this study investigated the experiences and insights of Indigeneity in inclusive physical activity opportunities regarding Indigenous youth with intellectual disabilities (ID). Interpretive project allows for a deeper understanding of experiential phenomena and to think critically and evaluate data from the participants' point of view. For this reason, the researcher is guided by critical disability studies (CDS), social and social relational model of disability, Indigenous world views, and intersectionality as conceptual frameworks to base the researchers' understanding for engaging with participants and collecting and analyzing data. This allowed the researcher to prioritize research participants' lived experience and perspectives, revealing researcher biases in the research process through reflexive commitments.

The social and social relational frameworks allowed for a different understanding of social phenomena with the subjectivity being understood as multiple experiences of a truth within the interpretive approach (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). It allowed for a deeper understanding of disability from the guardian's perspectives. The best way to allow for this type of understanding with participants is by sharing their stories from direct conversations (Creswell

& Poth, 2018). The importance of having the voice guardians of Indigenous youth is key in providing accurate representations of their experience and share their voices in a goal of social inclusion which is lacking in the literature. It will center around opinions, phrases, and participants' lived experiences (Markula & Silk, 2011). The researcher may also present feelings of critical self-reflection, explanations about research questions, significance, and interpretations in the final study report.

This research also connected the researcher's subjectivity and voices of the participants with a lens of CDS, recognizing intersectionality and the social relational aspects of disability. As Powis et al. (2022) describe,

The CDS discipline is committed to exposing injustice through challenging dogmatic theoretical approaches, engaging with thinking from multiple academic disciplines, emphasizing community, social change, and wellbeing, moving 'beyond thinking about disabled people to thinking with disabled people' and including culture, the body, impairment and narrative approached in exploring the experiences of disabled people. (p. 16)

The social model of disability guided the researcher to focus on disability in the context that it is socially constructed and is caused by society's inability to accommodate people with impairments. The importance of including other approaches is important due to the separation of the words 'disability' and 'impairment' and their meaning within the model. Powis et al. (2022) also state,

The social model ultimately represents the disability community and much of the marginalization and oppression felt by its membership. This is why contemporary

national and international policies and laws use its rhetoric and advocate its importance. However, the material collective stance of the social model clouds the diversity of experience as understood by disabled people. As a result, there has been much academic interest in what other conceptual approaches might be employed to develop our understandings of disability. (p. 20)

Due to the subjective nature of qualitative research and determining the meaning of the data collected in the study, the researcher is the main tool (Markula & Silk, 2011). This was explored with semi-structured interviews and researchers' reflexive practices such as weekly journaling throughout the process. There may be times where the researcher wants to get more involved in the process due to strong interest in the questions they are trying to answer and will need to reevaluate and step away from the process or data if bias is occurring.

3.2 Recruitment and Participants

Given the research topic and the unique needs, this study recruited 5 guardians of 8 different Indigenous youth with ID as participants for semi-structured interviews.

The criteria for inclusion include:

- Guardian of an Indigenous youth with an ID
- Has a child that has participated in inclusive physical activity programming or wants to participate in inclusive physical activity in the future
- Has a comprehension competence of verbal, audio, and written English language or a person of trust on their behalf who can agree to consent
- Knowledge of Indigenous cultures, traditions, practices and lifestyles related to physical activity

Purposeful sampling was used to recruit participants for this research, including convenience sampling and typical case sampling which was useful in providing focus and information rich cases to study (Patton, 2003). The importance of purposeful sampling is key to this research as it targets a specific group of people and those capable of making the changes and decisions to change the way they desire (Suri, 2011). The typical case sampling can also reach a few guardians of a Special Olympics athletes and a few guardians of Indigenous athletes with ID who take part in organized sport. Participants were recruited mainly through Special Olympics programming and recreational programming for people with disabilities in the Ontario and Manitoba communities conveniently, given researcher's established trusting relationship with these communities as a Special Olympics coach and staff member over the past six years.

The researcher's involvement with Special Olympics Manitoba (SOM) over the past six years as a coach and staff member has provided a good understanding and knowledge base of working with youth with ID. Throughout that time, the researcher experienced SOM program growth and interest in unified programming increase in the schools. Many of the school divisions in Manitoba have included unified sports in their educational programming but there are still several more that need to be included for a greater impact on the inclusive movement in sport. Through connections with Special Olympics, the researcher will be able to connect with athletes and their families to potentially recruit them for this research. The researcher's knowledge of American Sign Language and French can potentially contribute to the involvement of participant recruitment for this study.

3.3 Data Collection

There were five semi-structured interviews with the participants in this study for the data

collection process. This interview method was used to gain insightful knowledge about decolonizing and Indigenizing efforts and barriers in inclusive physical activity and sport programming for Indigenous youth with ID. The semi-structured interviews provided direct perspectives from guardians of Indigenous youth with ID through a series of questions and open-ended conversations about their experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The semi-structured interviews were based off an interview guide that allowed for open ended questioning and provided a path and direction for the interview to answer topics related to the research question (Markula & Silk, 2011). These questions were created to help answer the research questions about inclusive physical activity programming but were flexible to allow for increased rapport with the participants. These were based in a private room designed for doing interviews for research studies.

Due to the nature of the participants all being fluent in English, there was no need for a translator, or interpreter to be used to achieve the most authentic account of their experience and contributions to the research. The perspective of the guardian provided extra precautions to ensure correct understanding and safeguard the youth with ID from any potential harm or conflict during the study.

Before the data collection began, all participants agreed and completed a signed consent form or gave oral consent with the researcher. The researcher ensured that all participants understood the study's depth, their rights and the privacy they are subject to regarding data dissemination post-data analysis (Patton, 2002). The data was collected through the recording of audio from the semi-structured interviews and field notes completed by the researcher after each interview. To facilitate the ease of these data collection methods, the researcher maintained a good rapport and provided background and relatability to the topic with the study participants.

The interviews lasted no longer than ninety minutes because of one's attention span and for it to be as purposeful as possible (Patton, 2002). After the data collection was finished, the researcher moved into the data analysis phase where the audio was transcribed verbatim and analyzed. An orthographic transcript was done to include verbal and non-verbal cues such as breaks, pauses, from everyone in the audio (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The transcription's accuracy is important to remain as accurate and true to the dialogue as possible, leading to the generation of coding.

The researcher kept an up-to-date journal to provide field notes of each interview and analysis experience. This provided the researcher with information to be able to go back and understand information correctly and how it was construed at the time. The researcher also attended an inclusive physical activity session that involved Indigenous components and wrote a detailed observational journal. This helped provide yet another perspective and view of how Indigenous youth participate in inclusive physical activity programming.

The researcher used reflexive journaling throughout the process to capture potential biases, anything learned during the research, if there were emerging themes, or unexpected outcomes throughout the research process. This was useful during data analysis when the researcher needed a breakdown of notes on the interview experiences and recollecting all the nuances of such.

3.4 Data Analysis

This research data collection was a nonlinear process based off semi-structured interviews. Recruitment, data collection, and analysis happened cyclically until it reached data saturation where no other interpretations emerge (Patton, 2002). Due to the large amount of written information, there was a thematic analysis conducted of the information to create groupings.

A thematic analysis is described as “a method for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). As widely used as thematic analysis is, it still gives the researcher discretion and flexibility to interpret the data with how it fits their research focusing on participants’ lived experiences and perspectives. A thematic analysis is a recursive process and is something that develops over time and needs to be looked at often through the data collection and analyzing process (Braun & Clarke, 2006). For this study, a six-step thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was completed. The steps involve: familiarization, coding, discovering themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report.

The first step, familiarizing themselves with the data, is important for the researcher to fully immerse themselves in the data to get a good concept and understanding of the information they collected. The best way to achieve this is with multiple readings of the transcribed text and to search for patterns when you are reading (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The knowledge foundation of the text is important in this step and can be time consuming but is vital in creating a solid base for your analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

In the second step, generating initial codes, the transcribed text was sorted and given short codes or descriptions to help the researcher identify interesting or key parts of the data. The systemic process will involve generating as much data as possible for future interests and possible connections later (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Coding will provide the necessary foundation for the creation of themes in the next step of the data analyzing process.

In this research, a coding program called NVivo was used to organize, group and code the text. Coding is a nonlinear process and is time consuming, but an important aspect of this research. NVivo will allow the data to constantly be referred to and coded by the researcher

throughout this six-step process and will aid in connecting the data to the research question and study purpose.

In the third step, discovering themes, all the codes generated from step two are reviewed and collated to be put together in potential themes. The analysis process moves from an individual group of codes and bunches them together to create possible relating data sets termed as themes. Themes are an idea or pattern of information grouped with related data. A thematic map at this stage will be used in creating main overarching themes and sub themes to see which codes can be linked together, as well as a miscellaneous themes that may not have a place at this stage in the analysis but can be deemed important to the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Many of the codes can belong to multiple places in the thematic map as where they fit is still being determined at this stage, and it is important not to discard anything at this point of the analysis.

In this step, the patterns and potential themes will be refined and reorganized to reflect the data and how it relates to the purpose of the research. In this process there will be themes that do not have enough data to support it, and it will need to be separated. Two different themes that may get merged and some themes that get dissected into other themes to make the dataset meaningful (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This phase will be achieved in NVivo software giving a good idea of the themes and how they fit together in the dataset. The thematic mapping will be done outside the software in a word document to provide a different scope to see the candidate themes and subthemes.

Defining and naming themes will be the final refinement step. As each theme will have a purpose in the data set, it will capture the essence within that theme relating to the overall data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Theme refinement is crucial in this stage to provide information that only that theme and subthemes have but to also make it relatable and meaningful to the entire

data set and explanatory of the research question. At this point, the themes will be named to intrigue and prepare the reader for the content and for the write-up process.

Producing the report will be the final step in producing and analyzing the data set and information supporting the research question in this study. This write-up will show the reader the validity and merit of the data analysis and provides a clear and concise understanding of the story the data and themes tell. The write-up will be in an order that make sense of where the themes are, be well connected and flow into one another, but also be sufficient to stand on their own. The importance of including vivid examples (i.e., direct quotes) in the write up that support the analysis will give the reader the necessary information to see that the data is more than just describing findings but making an argument in favor of research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

3.5 Ethics

The research process ensured that ethics approval was received by my institution where the research is being conducted and maintained through to the end of the study. There must be diligence in this process as there were vulnerable people taking part in this research study and take the necessary training and precautions to make the experience meaningful for them as well as contribute to the research (Markula & Silk, 2011). Once the ethics certificate was obtained, there were many ways to seek participant recruitment. The first being a detailed email to the Special Olympics athletes families in southern Ontario and Manitoba informing them of the study and potential to be involved to develop more inclusive programming with an Indigeneity focus for them. The recruitment emails and presentations will explain the aim of the study, eligibility, contact information, participant involvement, privacy and confidentiality, free and informed consent protocol and dissemination of results and data. Once participants have reached

saturation, the researcher no longer sends invitation emails out to potential participants.

To ensure free and informed consent, the researcher thoroughly explained that participants can leave the study at any time and will facilitate any additional resources needed for understanding the consent document. In the document it was explained that the interviews will be recorded to provide sufficient information and the possibility to recall and interpret the conversations. The researcher took time to get to know the participants in discussion to build rapport and make them feel comfortable before and during the interview process with a discussion of researcher's background in sport and providing programming for youth with ID. These conversations and interviews took place in a private and comfortable setting for the participant to ensure the best outcome for the data collection. The data collection place was determined by who was chosen to be a participant, what works for them, and the researcher.

3.6 Trustworthiness

A vital component of the study was for the researcher to use methods to provide trustworthiness in the research. The four categories that were employed include credibility and ownership, access, control and possession (OCAP) principles. Credibility was tested through the process of triangulation, which is the use of several sources of data to find identifiable patterns (Stahl & King, 2020). For this study, the researcher has collected information from interviews, observational data set, field notes, and a reflexive journal to demonstrate data triangulation (Stahl & King, 2020). There will be an additional fellow researcher that will read over the reflective journal as well as the results to see if the interpretations of the data are correct.

OCAP principles used by Indigenous communities to protect their data will also be used and maintained throughout the process. OCAP principles refers to the relationship of First Nations data, information and cultural knowledge, and how those are used, stored, shared, and

controlled throughout the entire research process. The researcher developed a close level of trust with the Indigenous peoples and maintain OCAP principles according to their direction. The researcher provided in-depth and detailed information about all aspects of their research. The researcher developed a relationship of trust with the participants throughout the research process.

Chapter 4: Results

This section provides a comprehensive overview of the participants' interview responses. During the data analysis, several key themes clearly emerged from the discussions. Three key themes emerged from the data set: 1) exclusionary preconceptions of Indigenous youth with ID; 2) colonial and ableist practices as barriers, and 3) benefits of physical activity for Indigenous youth with ID. Sub themes in relation to each main theme will provide a further breakdown and explanation of the context of the findings.

4.1 Exclusionary Preconceptions of Indigenous Youth with ID

4.1.1 Indigenous Youth with ID are Reluctant to Engage in PA

It was a consensus explained by the guardians that many inclusive PA practitioners had a preconceived notion that many Indigenous children did not seem interested in physical activity opportunities. This preconception held true for many of the participants as one's guardian mentioned “the people running the programs were surprised that my dependent wanted to join the program.” This was confirmed as other guardians also agreed that the programs were deemed to be inclusive although did not meet the resources for Indigenous athletes with an ID to succeed were surprised that they wanted to join the program being offered. It was isolating for many of the participants as it was at times pointed out that “it's so great an Indigenous youth is participating in the program.” Guardians explained they were frustrated with this rhetoric from non-Indigenous program practitioners.

Many guardians said at times they were the only Indigenous participants in any of their programs, inclusive or not and it reenforced the stereotype that Indigenous youth with ID do not want to do PA as they were scarcely seen in the programming. It was also mentioned that it was more common an occurrence in a predominately non-Indigenous programs that such remarks

were made. One guardian reiterated this narrative by stating, “If I had not volunteered within the inclusive programs for my child in multiple programs they would not be able to run in our community as people think they are not looking for sport.” This was a common occurrence for many of the guardians in regard to inclusive PA programs for their dependents. One guardian explained about an experience in a non-inclusive program, “my dependent was cut from going to competition because they were not good enough to participate and the program was unwilling to bring them for the inclusive stream that was being offered.” This led to feelings of being unwanted and not returning to that non inclusive program for the Indigenous youth with ID. One participant explained that “We shocked so many people when we came to a competition and were actually just as good as the non-Indigenous athletes that came.” This was confirmed with other guardians explaining comments such as “wow your daughter is so good for being from [community name].” This type of preconception was a common experience for all guardians who had youth participate outside their regular weekly sessions.

4.1.2 Living in Remote Areas Limits the Opportunity to Excel

This translated from many guardians' stories as most participants interviewed were from rural areas and a few being from Urban Centers with Indigenous land close by. Many of the rural program's guardians expressed their experiences as always being seen as the underdog and others were surprised how good the athletes were. At times this preconception was strengthened with programs being shut down due to Indigenous sport organizations closing rurally and being only operated in big urban cities. One guardian explained that “the reserve near us that did offer inclusive programming is not the Indigenous community my [dependent] is from and so we are not able to participate.” Many guardians exclaimed how “limiting it is living in a remote area and finding the coaches and volunteers willing to stay long term to help with programming.”

A few guardians expressed that it was even more difficult to find Indigenous community members off reserves to help incorporate Indigenous practices in a meaningful way. Another participant noted “that with such a high number of Indigenous youths in their program it came more naturally and authentically when incorporating Indigenous components and was not necessarily intentional.” It was seen more as something to connect and strengthen their athletes when it came to sport and unlocking their inner self. This helped encourage and promote their inclusive PA programs and provided inclusion in ways that were beneficial to succeed in PA.

Although some guardians had positive experiences with their dependent excelling in the program that was not the reality for some other guardians. One guardian even stated, “she got a bronze medal for...You know [sport] so she was third in the province, and she just started 6 months ago.” Many guardians had the same experience of people being surprised their dependent was good at sport because of where they came from.

4.1.3 Indigenous Youth with ID Lack Athletic Ability

One participant expressed “we were at a competition where almost all the competitors were non-Indigenous and a coach said to their athletes, oh don’t worry about them, they are from up north and won’t be any good.” It was a common occurrence that when Indigenous youth with ID did take part in sport and were good athletes it was always shocking for other participants. Another participant explained that they received comments from non-Indigenous parents about “what a good athlete their child was for being Indigenous and it’s not seen very often.” One participant mentioned that “in our community my [son/daughter] is the only Indigenous child in the program and always turns heads when participating as many non-Indigenous participants have not seen an Indigenous athlete perform so well.”

One guardian had mentioned that most of the Indigenous programming in their area was

not specifically created around PA. To explain they said, “they do powwow dancing at school and occasionally make drums and do drumming, but that is only when its offered.” This type of programming was marketed as being physical activity and in some people's perspectives, did not necessarily involve aspects of PA compared to that of non-Indigenous PA. One participant expressed how people always stated, “Indigenous kids are lazy and do not want to do any type of PA or sport.” The guardian expressed how difficult it was to change the communities view on Indigenous youth to be positive and be able to promote programs for them that they can succeed in. One participant noted that “right now outside of Indigenous communities there are not a lot of kids with ID you see visibly excelling at sport and are often overlooked unless they have someone advocating for them.”

4.2 Colonial and Ableist Practices as Barriers

4.2.1 Lack of Trauma-Informed Care in Sport

This subject was touched on in some way by every participant that trauma-informed was not a part of their inclusive physical activity programs and could have significant impacts to program participation from Indigenous youth and their families. It was common among Indigenous youth with ID in inclusive programs that they were either in foster care, or their guardian was not Indigenous and uneducated about these types of support possibly needed. Some of the guardians of program participants mentioned “how much they could have benefited from having coaches or volunteers with trauma-informed care training.” They expressed that the education to recognize the impact of the historical and cultural factors on trauma experiences from their lives would provide better informed experiences in the program. Most guardians expressed how their inclusive PA programs were more understanding and supported for those with ID, but overall, not for Indigenous trauma experiences. The inclusive (but not geared

towards inclusion) programs that allowed the Indigenous youth with ID to participate did not have the support, resources, or understanding from coaches, participants and parents to provide a positive and safe environment for the athletes to do well. One participant said, “we showed up and basically got ignored by coaches the entire year in the program and so we stopped going.” Another parent mentioned going to an “inclusive” sport program for both of their children in their primary years and the other participants’ parents were uncomfortable and felt it was unfair with how much attention they were getting compared to their kids without an ID. They described the situation as such:

They would assign a [helper] ... to be with my kids as they went around just to keep them safe and a lot of parents didn't like that because they felt they're getting one on one coaching, when they weren't. They were just trying to include them in a club. They enjoyed it. They loved it. It was really exciting to have them in it...We had to make adjustments for them. Yeah, and that would, cause other parents uh... they felt they weren't being fair and stuff like that and that bothered me because you know I wanted my kids to have fun, and I really didn't think it was a big, huge, big thing. I guess to some parents, it was.

This experience made the guardian remove their children from the program so as to not disrupt the program for others. Many times, without trauma-informed care as well as understanding of disabilities it makes it very difficult for an Indigenous youth with ID and their families to have positive sport experiences when programs are not designed with this education.

4.2.2 Cultural Misappropriation

Most of the participants interviewed explained that they do not have the knowledge or comfortability to promote or suggest how to do Indigenous components in the program without

the fear of misappropriation of the Indigenous cultures. One guardian mentioned the following:

We do already have a large chunk of programming that has Indigenous components incorporated but the only thing that I would be worried about would be, uh, doing something wrong and, you know, seeing it as misappropriation... I have a huge fear that Indigenous families joining would be offended if we were doing something wrong.

Another guardian expressed that they would in the future like to “have community elders out to showcase drumming or a prayer at our program to start incorporating Indigenous components.” Another answer from one guardian was “many of the Indigenous families I know don’t identify or believe in their culture in that sense but yet still do traditional Indigenous things such as beading and making moccasins.” A guardian also mentioned “it is difficult to incorporate those Indigenous components into a program when there is a large gap between generations and Indigenous youth with and without ID not partaking in cultural activities often. As many practitioners of these inclusive programs are non-Indigenous, the awareness and importance of getting help and resources from the Indigenous communities is not fully known and lacking for most. One participant explained that “being the only Indigenous participant in a program off reserve was very difficult and isolating in terms of applying Indigenous practices and beliefs at their predominantly white programming.” It was an uncomfortable conversation that was avoided when joining the program as acceptance was their priority. However, the guardian expressed gratitude and willingness if the program were to incorporate Indigenous components, but they would not be comfortable to be the ones to bring it forward. The participant also expressed “it was a common theme of out of sight out of mind and most times it is not something that is even thought about or considered in their programming.” They shared that as the current programming provided was already so limited and scarcely available, they did not want to push

anything.

4.2.3 Socio-Environmental and Socio-Political

Almost all participants at some capacity mentioned that the program location or lack thereof was a large factor for participation for them. Many guardians interviewed were from rural areas and due to such limited access to facilities there were not many options for suitable spaces within the communities. One guardian explained “because we are in a small town, we often feel forgotten about and do not have control of what programming is offered for our [dependent].” However, many Indigenous youths with ID live off reserve and in smaller populations as to access more resources and support for their youth.

Many of the guardians also expressed that programs that were available to them were at least 20 minutes away from them and commuting was not a viable option for many reasons such as not driving, no vehicle, having to rely on someone else and their schedule. One guardian explained that “even though the program is centrally located in our community it did not work well for them to drive to the program as they lived outside of the city.” Transportation was a large issue for many of the participants and made access to inclusive PA programs difficult for them.

Another guardian explained that “there are very limited programs close by, and we are close to [Indigenous community], so if there is something off reserve, it is very rarely happening and usually a one-time event.” This also resulted in many participants experiencing isolation in terms of accessible Indigenous based inclusive programming opportunities around them.

It was common from the guardian's perspectives that many of the programs were also “heavily under resourced” as almost all programs were either volunteer coach based or “lacked the trained individual” for that certain sport. As well as funding and programming being

diminished post COVID with fewer options and sport resources for Indigenous youth with ID, especially access to private and some public spaces. One guardian mentioned “our program had a difficult time recruiting coaches, volunteers, and program equipment due to location of the program we attended.” One guardian noted that “for these programs, there was no training and sometimes were not well supported by the community and/or organizations in terms of facilities and affordability of the spaces.” One guardian mentioned that “the regiment of the inclusive program was very colonial in terms of being black and white and where the activity could take place.” They suggested that:

If Indigenous components were included and the programming was to be outside or less strict with their structure, it could get more Indigenous youth to come out... experience nature and connect with the land.

It was common among all the guardians that the location of the inclusive PA program had a huge impact on their attendance to the program.

4.3 Benefits of PA for Indigenous Youth with ID

4.3.1 Lifelong Skills and Relationships

All guardians expressed a similar sentiment of beneficial outcomes that were additional on top of their dependent getting some PA in a safe setting. A few guardians reflected on the supportive community that came with inclusive PA programs and the families, coaches and volunteers all welcoming each other at the program. One guardian said “my [son/daughter] has made lifelong friends all over the province and finally has a strong friendship with someone like them.” Others have said that it really has brought their [son/daughter] out of their shell and let them be themselves.

One guardian mentioned “for the first time my kid was not bullied or teased at a sport

program, and it is a huge milestone for them which sparked a newfound confidence in themselves.” It was a commonality that almost everyone expressed that their inclusive PA program, geared towards offering support to the athletes excelled in ways incomparable to opportunities they had in their other sport programs. Another guardian mentioned “so many life skills including, pursuing higher education, getting a job and making future plans have been successful due to their involvement in the program.” Having a place to belong and with other Indigenous youth “who looked like them” provided a great environment for the Indigenous athletes who got to experience it. A few guardians mentioned that through the inclusive programming athletes were able to “gain confidence, trust, pursue athletic accomplishments” as well as travel throughout Canada which the guardians never thought would be a reality for their dependent.

4.3.2 Preservation and Growth of Indigenous Culture

One participant was excited about the idea of potentially incorporating Indigenous components into their program as they are seeing so much “loss of culture” with such limited Indigenous focused programming. A few of the participants had mentioned their dependent had done powwow dancing and it really made a difference in the youth with ID being proud of their culture and showing curiosity in learning more. One guardian said, “the opportunity helped them connect with Indigenous traditions while also creating lasting bonds and awareness around Indigenous culture within their community.” One guardian had great ideas for continuation of Indigenous practices in their inclusive community programs and can see the positive effects it has provided for their athletes. However, they did mention that “the continuation and development of the program to continue offering these Indigenous components is really at the hands of the volunteer taking over and it is unknown what will come of the program in the next

decade.”

One guardian did mention that “my [son/daughters] school offered Indigenous programming opportunities within their community but that was few and far between and mostly for elementary school.” There were almost no opportunities as such when the youth with ID got into high school and early adulthood. One guardian stated, “I have 2 kids with intellectual disabilities and when they go to high school and after that there's no programs for them anymore.” One guardian agreed that the incorporation of “Indigenous components in their program” would assist in knowledge and curiosity for those non-Indigenous participants and their families as well as in the community.

Chapter 5: Discussion

This study offers insights from guardians of Indigenous youth with ID on decolonizing and Indigenizing their inclusive physical activity programs. These findings not only strengthen the point of existing literature on experiences of youth with ID in inclusive programs but also contribute to understanding and acknowledging what the experience of Indigenous youth with ID is as well as their needs for Indigenizing their programs. Since guardians of Indigenous youth with ID offer a unique and valuable perspective about their dependents' experiences and can share their perspectives about Indigenous culture, traditions and pursuits of physical activity, this study intentionally chose to use a diverse sample of different Indigenous families from all over Ontario and Manitoba to get a unique but in-depth perspective on their dependents PA experiences.

Interviewed participants highlighted important situational elements and constraints that account for common experiences of Indigenous youth with ID in their pursuit for inclusive PA. It was evident from participant responses how the perspectives varied from program to program and whether that program already had Indigenous components successfully incorporated. For example, a program with over 75% Indigenous youth athletes explained all the positive associations and outcomes of having Indigenous components incorporated in their program and the positive effects it had as a whole. In contrast, other programs where most of the participants were non-Indigenous and there were no Indigenous components incorporated; it felt isolating for the youth in their programming and not as welcoming of their culture etc. When reviewing the literature, it appears that similar perspectives were had going from one extreme to the other and difficulty finding a middle ground in inclusive PA programs for Indigenous athletes.

Through the lens of their own experience with inclusive PA including Indigenous

elements, the guardians commented on the complexities of how to appropriately offer such opportunities and how such factors and barriers had an effect on their past experiences of inclusive PA programs. Furthermore, guardians explained that despite there being inclusive programs in most of their communities there was not anything happening in terms of actions to include more Indigenous youth and Indigenous components in those programs. This could potentially limit opportunities for talented Indigenous youth with ID in PA contexts from being able to experience competitions, travel, increased confidence, cultural pride and so much more that was expressed by their guardians.

Several notable themes became evident through the guardians' responses. Notably some of the guardians' experiences aligned with current research that expressed marginalization, ableism and lack of sport participation being a risk that Indigenous youth are vulnerable to (Friedman, 2023). For further connection to the literature, it was discussed that marginalization is seen in inadequately including or adjusting programs for those with ID which in turn includes and exacerbates Indigenous youth with ID as seen in this study's results (Gibson & Marton, 2017). These themes are explored in the following sub-sections and are, to some extent, interconnected and interdependent.

McGarty et al. (2018) also made similar conclusions that youth with ID are not usually targeted for pursuing sport or PA. This can be related to our Indigenous youth with ID in this study on preconceptions expressed by the guardians and their pursuit for inclusive PA. Bossink et al. (2017) also observed that ableism and discrimination were experienced by those with ID through program locations, cost, equipment and lack of trained instructors. This study correlates well with the above and has even emphasized that experience for their youth at the intersections of being Indigenous and having an ID.

5.1 Mitigating Ableism and Marginalization is Evident for Change

The participants responses showed that ableism had a large impact in their pursuit of inclusive PA for their Indigenous youth with ID as well as their enjoyment in current inclusive programs due to racialized differences between them and other participants. One aspect from the guardians that was new and not directly quoted in the literature was the importance of trauma-informed care in a sport setting. Commonly trauma-informed care is not used in this type of way but with guardians sharing the importance of it especially with Indigenous youth with ID it symbolizes its importance in the research conversation and importance in program development with the help from Indigenous communities. This is reiterated by Gerlach et al. (2022) indirectly with their discussion about oppressive conditions and colonial traumas that Indigenous youth with ID face due to residential schools and there being a generational gap in Indigenous culture. This correlates well with what guardians expressed in lack of Indigenous culture incorporated into their programs. Hiwa (2014) also explains that generational gap and the trauma in Indigenous culture has reenforced the loss of Indigenous cultural activities in inclusive PA settings.

Many of the guardians expressed that they were uncomfortable with asking non-Indigenous coaches to include such components but would be open to having them done if someone with expertise were to do it. This was also mentioned by Gaudry & Lorenz (2018) that Indigenous people would not be held responsible for not having those inclusive opportunities provided as its the responsibility is trusted with program creators. This relates back to the social model of disability and putting the blame outside of disabled Indigenous individuals. However, this is only useful if program creators have that information, some knowledge of Indigenous practices, needs and are open and willing to work with Indigenous communities on program

creation.

The guardians expressed that through the inclusive sport program their dependent participated in made them seen and comfortable in the community which led to jobs, friendships and other participants joining their program. McConkey & Menke (2022) discussed something similar in that inclusion into the community was often experienced for those youth with ID in result of their inclusive PA program in contrast to those with ID that were not involved. Weissman et al. (2022) expressed a similar opinion that representation of different marginal groups and the inclusion of youth with ID into PA, community support blossoms and forms spaces of social acceptance, and relationship development. This was an important component of an outside benefit of their Indigenous youth attending an inclusive PA program.

Guardians mentioned that it would be beneficial for some inclusive PA programs to be offered to school age children as there were not many options. Barber (2018) explains that to counteract ableism in the school system and how inclusive sport programs are run, there needs to be further education around disability and to challenge the process they follow in teaching physical literacy. Many guardians mentioned that their dependent had done some kind of PA in school which made them inquire about maybe something more in the community. Hassen et al. (2012) reported that the lowest participation in sport program is youth with ID and could be improved by school based inclusive PA settings as an introductory for inclusive sport opportunities.

5.2 Decolonizing Approaches to Including Indigenous Youth with ID and Their Cultures

Participants reported that preconceptions about what Indigenous youth with ID want and need regarding inclusive sport programming has gone greatly misunderstood as confirmed with not being targeted in program creation or execution. This sentiment is shared by McGarty et al.

(2018) as Indigenous youth is rarely targeted for sport programming. It was not an experience any of the guardians had been asked about before and thus just confirms the omission of them in discussion about Indigenous components in their programming pursuit and involvement.

Nesdoly et al. (2021) shares that targeting program to include cultural relevancy and people with ID has youth with ID feeling increasingly included in their communities. Halas (2004) also agrees by saying Indigenous Canadians did not have a say in PA opportunities that could have focused on incorporating their culture.

Indigenous youth with ID and their guardians are continually seeking inclusive physical activity programs in their community and were excited about the potential to incorporate some Indigenous component into the program. However, there was the concern on doing it properly and respectfully to all the Indigenous members and the community surrounding the program. This is helpful in providing clarity to program planners and inclusive sport organizations in assisting with some of their programming and policies in the future. Nesdoly et al. (2021) mention that Indigenous communities are keen on decolonial approaches to PA and to have Indigenous communities involved in creating inclusive programs for them. There is a need and want from Indigenous communities for PA opportunities, but they want them to be decolonized and to be key member in the whole process.

Bossink et al. (2017) explained how lack of trained instructors enabled ableism and discrimination in inclusive PA programs for those with ID. In agreement were the guardians interviewed as one of the main findings suggested that most instructors were unknowledgeable about disabilities and even less experienced in equity, diversity, and inclusion principles around Indigenous athletes and their culture. Gaudry & Lorenz (2018) shared that Indigenous perspectives and cultural components were not part a sport program being offered and were not

from a culturally informed Indigenous community.

Goyal et al. (2020) explain that for Indigenous communities to have the resources to provide inclusive PA programs, they need support from program providers which is needed to limit the extra barriers Indigenous athletes with ID face day to day. Rivas Velarde (2018) added to the rhetoric of inclusion for Indigenous athletes by saying reducing barriers can happen by supporting and including Indigeneity to improve cultural relevancy. Paraschak (2019) explains that inclusive PA programs in Indigenous communities were heavily impacted and influenced by the residential school era and complete lack of sport opportunities to what we see today, which is very limited opportunities. However, guardians were intrigued by the interview and probing questions that sparked some deeper thoughts about their Indigenous culture. Dubnewick et al. (2018) share that incorporation of traditional ways and values has shaped Indigenous youth in PA and their experience positively.

Guardians expressed their excitement when they talked about the potential impacts of participating in inclusive PA with Indigenous components, such as cultural pride, having elders come to their practice, connecting with the land and personal development. This was also seen through the study by Dubnewick et al. (2018) which had almost identical benefits explained as well as developing movement skills. For a truly decolonized approach to incorporating Indigenous components to an inclusive PA program mentioned by Dubnewick et al. (2018) they say the resources to implement such programs and be appropriate and meaningful need to come from the expertise of Indigenous people and their traditional sport activities. This in lieu will support researchers and policy makers in a decolonial approach to PA programs. Wheeler (2014) also states that there is an opportunity for a growing relationship with Indigenous communities and to incorporate inclusive programming how they see best.

5.3 Intersectionality Perspectives

Many guardians did not have knowledge of the term intersectionality which did not affect the findings as one might think. After discussion of how their dependents' social identities, and systems of oppression work off each other it was clear to the researcher that these Indigenous youth were at the intersections of marginalization and privilege. It was clear that most Indigenous youth and their experiences in their inclusive PA programs differed based off them being Indigenous and the diversity of other participants in the programming. Many of the guardians expressed how being Indigenous and as teenagers, the community was not very accepting of them in their pursuit of physical activity but also having an Intellectual disability enhanced that stereotype (Carbado et al., 2013). Some key aspects leading to such intersections were, no trauma-informed care, lack of Indigenous opportunities in their community, growing up without a large Indigenous cultural presence due to residential school cultural loss of their family members and how location of program and proximity to Indigenous land affected their experience.

These discussions can help illuminate the huge impact that intersectionality has on Indigenous youth with intellectual disabilities in their communities in Canada. A disability perspective for Indigenous youth is not a discussion often had and to intertwine and learn firsthand just how greatly these intersections affect their experiences of marginalization, segregation, ableism, and racism (Friedman, 2023).

For an organization such as Special Olympics to properly include Indigenous focused programming it is necessary to look at more than just the intersections of disability and sport as Indigenous culture intertwined creates a whole new set of barriers and experiences different than those non-Indigenous participants (Harada et al., 2011). Hassan et al. (2012) discuss that Special

Olympics programs already have the foundations for people with intellectual disabilities and that through education surrounding respectful Indigenous practices and inclusion of Indigenous community members their program could be further beneficial and inclusive towards their Indigenous athletes. Further to that, Intersectionality awareness and education for program implementation involving Indigenous youth with ID participating in Special Olympics or another inclusive program is a crucial step towards better inclusion for these athletes.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

6.1 Overview

The study's primary purpose was to gain insight into the experiences of Indigenous youth with ID in their inclusive PA programs told by their guardian. To achieve this information and relationships the researcher used a qualitative methodology and semi-structured interviews to gather guardians' perspectives across two different provinces as well as differing in urban and rural program locations.

The results highlighted that guardians overall were intrigued and excited about the potential to incorporate Indigenous components in their PA programs. Outlook on how to do that varied greatly between location, how many Indigenous youths were in the program and the background and comfortability of the guardians.

It also highlighted that there were several barriers to incorporating more Indigenous participants and Indigenous components into their inclusive PA programs. These included but were not limited to, scared to misappropriate an Indigenous aspect, mostly non-Indigenous participants, location of the program, lack of awareness, trauma-informed care, and support and resources from Indigenous community members.

Incorporating Indigenous components into any inclusive PA program is a complex and sensitive process the researcher learned. There was a variation of different themes expressed by the guardians. Having Indigenous components incorporated would be fantastic but only if it is done properly and with the help of an Indigenous community member. Guardians felt that there needed to be more education surrounding Indigenous communities, Indigenous participants and an overall trusting relationship with Indigenous members to act as key stakeholders for the program. There are organizations who have the fundamental building blocks for inclusive PA but

overall, there needs to be further research and integration of how to advocate and incorporate Indigeneity for the Indigenous athletes.

6.2 Practical Implications

Based on the findings, several implications for inclusive program creation exist for organizations offering programs for Indigenous youth with ID. Firstly, it could be beneficial for Indigenous youth with ID in programming to have more familiar and meaningful components to their PA program and embrace their culture in that context. There needs to be Indigenous community members incorporated into the program creation portion with the organizations. Organizations need to incorporate trauma-informed resources in their programs to fully support Indigenous youth and their families. Organizations could benefit by working with different Indigenous communities to build lasting, trustful relationships while also specializing the programs to suit each Indigenous community's differences.

Programs that aim to be inclusive but are not a recognized organization, specializing in such can improve and collaborate with organizations focusing on PA participation for people with ID. Using Indigenous resources around the community to include, incorporate and assist with program delivery and Indigenous components into the program would be beneficial for participants. Providing education and resources to more programs aiming to be inclusive and having them willing to work with Indigenous communities on collaborating would provide better awareness and potential program availability.

For future researchers, there are vast amounts of information and experiences that need to be obtained as this project only looked at a small number of participants and only from Manitoba and Ontario. If researchers can directly work with inclusive organizations over a longer span of time, there could be relationships developed in Indigenous communities and their surrounding to

assist with program availability, its Indigenous components and longevity of such. For future studies it would be practical to get a larger sample size across different parts of Canada and different Indigenous communities and to branch out to more than just youth.

6.3 Recommendations

Organizations such as Special Olympics are already doing great things in inclusive sport programming. A trauma-informed approach would make them stand out compared to other inclusive sport programs that could be offering Indigenous focused programming. Working with Indigenous communities would allow for better resources, partnerships and understanding when it came to program creation, location, and volunteers and potentially how it could operate entirely. Inclusive organizations such as Special Olympics already have such a large athlete population and are well known for their programming. They could potentially take some of the initiation challenges as they already have successful programming but now just need to focus on Indigenous some of it to suit surrounding Indigenous communities.

Including Indigenous components into inclusive programs could help spread knowledge and awareness about Indigenous athletes as well as people with ID simultaneously. It would assist in creating a socially acceptable place for Indigenous athletes that they can practice their culture and be proud of who they are. In turn, it would open a community for connection with Indigenous people in Canada and the disability communities. Indigenous organizations could also take initiative to reach out to inclusive organizations and seek partnerships to allow acceptance of their Indigenous culture and PA opportunities into other communities.

In addition, community resources can be open and willing to seek education and resources regarding supporting Indigenous community members and their pursuit for physical activity. Having allies or stakeholders within organizations and facilities could assist in easier

program locations, funds, training and other resources needed for further acceptance of Indigenous individuals with ID.

6.4 Limitations and Delimitations

The measures used to collect data could have caused some limitations. The organizations sent out emails on behalf of the researcher and the researcher got very limited information or leads on participants from such. The researcher also is limited as this depends on if the organization follows through on sending out the information. During the interviews and the open-ended questions, the researcher noticed that the participants got off topic and talked about things that were not related to responses that could be helpful to the study. The researcher also noticed that participants answered similarly depending on their location and what programs were attended.

The researcher had to take the self-reported data from the interviews at face value and therefore cannot be verified in anyway. Some participants struggled with remembering all their experiences as some participants had been involved for over ten years and participated in inclusive and non-inclusive sport experiences. This study was also limited in participant recruitment as people who fit the requirements are a very small niche group among Canadians. Finding connections and people within communities who would respond or had the understanding to answer the questions in depth proved to be difficult. The researcher reached out to many Indigenous communities and Indigenous organizations and received no response or that they were unable to help.

There were a few delimitations that were considered for this study. This study limited questions to only the guardian of the Indigenous youth with ID who fit the inclusion criteria and had to identify as Indigenous and had to be in Ontario or Manitoba. It might be valuable to

interview Indigenous adults with ID to compare the perspectives and differences coming from a firsthand experience. The inclusion criteria excluded adults and focused on youth's guardians as to get in depth and elaborate responses while also safeguarding and protecting the youth from any harm. It was determined it would provide better insight and understanding of complex problems such as decolonization and Indigenization if the guardians were interviewed.

Semi-structured interviews were used to allow for open ended questioning to provide quality responses and to let the conversation flow with the participant. This allowed for ease of conversation and led to some discussion that may not have happened otherwise. This study was limited to guardians of Indigenous youth with ID, and they all had different contexts and experiences for these interviews.

6.5 Future Research Studies

The researcher suggests that there are still numerous studies that need to take place to get a full picture of sport experiences of Indigenous youth with ID across Canada. Every Indigenous community differs greatly and if implementing Indigenous components in a program it will not be a one size fits all approach. Each community will need a program curated to their specific Indigenous needs for it to be successful and meaningful. Although this study was greatly important to add to the literature in this regard, there needs to be further uptake by larger organizational bodies and researchers regarding this topic. The researcher suggests that by directly targeting and working with Indigenous communities and having them create relationships with organizations such as Special Olympics, Jordans principle, etc. It is a good foundation to start building inclusive programs with Indigenous components.

Future research could work with one or two specific Indigenous communities and get a full in-depth picture of their needs and experiences to assist in developing a data base of

information for potential program practitioners. Expanding the research to include any Indigenous athletes with ID and not focusing on children might develop a further interpretation of needs for successful implementation of Indigenized programming.

6.6 Contributions

This will inform me as a practitioner in ways that hopefully will make a difference in the inclusive sport world. As an Indigenous woman I hope to be able to take away the highlights of this research project and make some proposals to some inclusive sport organizations on how to get things started for Indigenous program marketing, recruitment, retention etc.

This study can be looked at for the intersectionality and importance of Indigenous youth with ID and their pursuit for physical activity. This study is one of the first of its kind and has scratched the surface into a niche but important topic in Canadian society. This research will hopefully help continue the conversation and action in better inclusion of Canada's Indigenous population with ID into inclusive physical activity settings.

6.7 Concluding Thoughts

When analyzing the perspectives and experiences of the guardians the researcher felt a bit of familiarity in terms of barriers and struggles for the participants due to past experiences within their inclusive sport involvement. This study shared new ideas and information regarding Indigenous experiences in sport and firsthand information about potential opportunities to improve those experiences. This study was greatly important to the researcher as an Indigenous woman with a strong passion for advocating for people with disabilities and now specifically Indigenous people with ID. This research reconfirmed and sparked curiosity for the researcher to engage with organizations and programs to start this Indigenization process in their community

upon return post graduate school completion. This study has also helped inform the researcher of the importance of trauma-informed care and given them helpful trauma-informed resources for potential future programming requirements in their pursuit to help Indigenize inclusive PA opportunities.

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**Appendix A: Recruitment Email Script sent on Behalf of the Researcher
by the Holder of the Participants' Contact Information**

**Study Title: WEAVING INTERSECTIONAL WISDOM, EMBRACING DIVERSE
EXPERIENCES: GUARDIAN' PERSPECTIVES ON DECOLONIZING AND
INDIGENIZING PHYSICAL ACTIVITY FOR INDIGENOUS YOUTH WITH
INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES**

Email subject line: Participants needed! Guardian perspectives on decolonizing and Indigenizing physical activity for Indigenous youth with intellectual disabilities.

Dear Special Olympics Members,

Erin Harper, a McMaster Masters student, has contacted Special Olympics asking us to tell our members about a study they are doing on decolonizing and Indigenizing physical activity opportunities. Erin is conducting research to understand the perspectives of guardians of Indigenous youth with intellectual disabilities regarding their experiences, needs, and goals related to Indigenizing and decolonizing adaptive physical activity program. The research is part of their research Master's Thesis research project at McMaster University's Kinesiology Department in Hamilton, Ontario under the supervision of Dr. David Yi of McMaster's Kinesiology Department.

If you are interested in getting more information about taking part in Erin's study, please read the Letter of Information attached and/or **CONTACT ERIN DIRECTLY** by using their McMaster email address. **Email:** harpee7@mcmaster.ca. Erin will not tell anyone at Special Olympics who participated. Taking part or not taking part in this study will not affect your status or any services you receive through Special Olympics.

The following is a brief description of the study

Participation in our study involves taking part in a one-on-one interview with you, where we'll discuss your experiences, needs, and goals related to Indigenizing adaptive physical activity programming. The interview will take approximately 60 - 90 minutes and will be conducted in a private and comfortable setting of your choice, in our lab, or online using ZOOM. There may be an additional follow-up interview if further clarification is needed. Participation in the study is completely voluntary and there are no consequences for not participating or for withdrawing after giving consent.

To be eligible to participate in this study, participants must be guardians of Indigenous youth with intellectual disabilities living in the Southern Ontario region or in Manitoba. For the full details of the study, please read the attached Letter of Information.

Erin would like to thank you in advance for your time and consideration.

If you are interested in participating or if you have any questions, please contact:

Student Investigator:

Name: Erin Harper
Department of Kinesiology
McMaster University
Hamilton, Ontario, Canada
E-mail: harpee7@mcmaster.ca

This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance from the McMaster Research Ethics Board (Project #7140)

Appendix B: Recruitment Email Script sent DIRECTLY to Participants

Email subject line: Participation Interest: GUARDIAN' PERSPECTIVES ON
DECOLONIZING AND INDIGENIZING PHYSICAL ACTIVITY FOR INDIGENOUS
YOUTH WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES

Dear Community Member,

Thank you for taking interest in my study. My name is Erin Harper and I am conducting research to understand the perspectives of guardians of Indigenous youth with intellectual disabilities regarding their experiences of Indigenizing and decolonizing their adaptive physical activity programs. This research is part of my Masters Thesis project at McMaster University's Kinesiology Department in Hamilton, Ontario under the supervision of Dr. David Yi of McMaster's department of Kinesiology Department.

Participation in our study involves taking part in a one-on-one interview with you, where we'll discuss your experiences, needs, and goals related to indigenizing adaptive physical activity programming. The interview will take approximately 60 - 90 and will be conducted in a private and comfortable setting of your choice, in our lab, or online using ZOOM. There may be an additional follow-up interview if further clarification is needed. Participation in the study is completely voluntary and there are no consequences for not participating or for withdrawing after giving consent.

To be eligible to participate in this study, participants must be guardians of Indigenous youth with intellectual disabilities living in the Southern Ontario region or in Manitoba. For the full details of the study, please read the attached Letter of Information.

For the full details of the study, please read the attached Letter of Information.

I would like to thank you in advance for your time and consideration.

If you are interested in participating or if you have any questions, please contact:

Student Investigator:

Name: Erin Harper
Department of Kinesiology
McMaster University
Hamilton, Ontario, Canada
E-mail: harpee7@mcmaster.ca

This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance from the McMaster Research Ethics Board (Project #7140)

Appendix C: Letter of Information/Consent

STUDY TITLE: WEAVING INTERSECTIONAL WISDOM, EMBRACING DIVERSE EXPERIENCES: GUARDIAN' PERSPECTIVES ON DECOLONIZING AND INDIGENIZING PHYSICAL ACTIVITY FOR INDIGENOUS YOUTH WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES

Student Investigator:

Erin Harper
Department of Kinesiology
McMaster University
Hamilton, Ontario, Canada
(905) 525-9140 ext. 28609
E-mail: harpee7@mcmaster.ca

Faculty Supervisor:

Dr. Kyoung June Yi
Department of Kinesiology
McMaster University
Hamilton, Ontario, Canada
(905) 525-9140 ext. 28609
E-mail: david.yi@mcmaster.ca

What am I trying to discover?

The aim of this research is to look at perspectives of Indigeneity and decolonization in inclusive physical activity programming for Indigenous youth with intellectual disabilities. By gaining Indigenous knowledge from participants like you, we hope to identify ways to meaningfully and culturally relevantly impact Indigenous participation of youth with intellectual disabilities in their pursuit of adaptive physical activity. The findings of this research will help the development of more inclusive, supportive and culturally focused community programs and resources for physical activity.

I am doing this research to complete my master's thesis research project, under the supervision of Dr. David Yi. This is a line of research that I hope to continue in the future and will use our findings for this project as well as to guide future related studies.

What will happen during the study?

Participation in this study involves taking part in a one-on-one interview with you, where you will be asked to share your experiences, and perspectives related to decolonizing and indigenizing adaptive physical activity programs. The interview will be conducted in a private and comfortable setting of your choice such as through Zoom or in our lab at McMaster University, and it will last approximately 60 - 90 minutes. There may be an additional follow up interview if further clarification is needed due to the direction of conversation and how much information is being shared to fully explain your thoughts and experiences regarding the interview questions. Your input will be confidential, and your identity will be protected throughout the study. Typed notes will be taken to record responses to our questions, and with your permission, supplemented by audio-recording using our encrypted audio recorder. Sample questions I will ask are listed below:

1. Tell me about a positive experience you have had with your Indigenous dependent (son/daughter) in inclusive physical activity programs.

2. Think back over the past few years and tell me about your experiences with such programs involving Indigenous aspects. What went particularly well? What needs improvement?
3. What are the benefits of incorporating Indigeneity in the inclusive physical activity program for your dependent (son/daughter) and what opportunities do these programs provide?

Are there any risks to doing this study?

The risks involved in participating in the study are minimal. Potential psychological risks may include feelings of discomfort or distress when you are discussing personal experiences, challenges, and barriers related to Indigenizing and decolonizing physical activity. The discussion of sensitive topics, such as decolonization, processes involved with Indigenization and personal limitations, could evoke emotional responses or trigger negative feelings. To manage and minimize psychological risks, I (the student investigator) will prioritize creating a supportive and respectful interview environment. Support resources will be made available to you once you agree to participate. This will help me establish rapport and trust with you before the interview begins, clearly explaining the purpose of the study and assuring confidentiality of responses, and practicing active listening and empathy to validate your feelings and perspectives, to name a few. You do not need to answer questions that you do not want to answer or that make you feel uncomfortable. The data received will be strictly de-identified for the semi-structured interview responses. The data will be stored in a locked cabinet in the research lab being used and only accessible by my supervisor (Dr. David Yi) and I (student investigator).

Are there any benefits to doing this study?

It is possible that you will not benefit from the research directly. However, by sharing your experiences and perspectives, you could possibly contribute to raising awareness and advocating for improved incorporation of Indigenous components to adaptive physical activity opportunities within your community. This research adds valuable insights that can inform future interventions, policies, and programs aimed at promoting culturally inclusive programming and improving health outcomes for Indigenous youth with intellectual disabilities. Understanding the perspectives and needs of guardians of Indigenous youth with intellectual disabilities regarding adaptive physical activity programs could lead to the development of more inclusive community resources and programs.

Confidentiality

You are participating in this study confidentially. No one but my research supervisor and myself will know whether you were in the study unless you choose to tell them. Every effort will be made to protect your confidentiality and privacy. I will not use your name or any information that would allow for you to be identified. However, we can be identifiable through the stories we tell. Please keep this in mind. I will never tell leaders and/or coaches about your participation in this study.

This study may use the Zoom platform to hold interviews and collect data, which is an

externally hosted cloud- based service. A link to their privacy policy is available here <https://explore.zoom.us/en/privacy/>. You may choose to keep their camera (video) off for the duration of the interview. Please note that whilst this service is approved for collecting data in this study by the McMaster Research Ethics Board, there is a small risk with any platform such as this of data that is collected on external servers falling outside the control of the research team. If you are concerned about this, we would be happy to make alternative arrangements for you to participate, perhaps via in-person. Please reach out to me if you have any concerns of this manner. The information you provide will be kept in a locked cabinet where only my research supervisor and I will have access to it. Information kept on the lab computer will be protected by a password. Once the study has been completed, the data will be destroyed after 3 years following publication, in a manner which abides by the disposal of sensitive information guidelines set in place. During this 3 years, this data set will not be used for future research studies.

Participation and Withdrawal: What if I change my mind about being in the study?

Participation in this study is completely voluntary, and you have the right to withdraw without any consequences, up until June 30, 2025. After the completion of data transcription (between April-May 2025), you will receive your individual transcripts for review and validation. You will have up to one month to check the accuracy of the text of the interview and make any necessary changes. This process ensures that you will have an opportunity to confirm the accuracy of your responses with me. Once data analysis is complete (June 16, 2025), you will again be given two weeks to review the research findings. During this time, you will still have the option to withdraw from the study if you choose to do so. However, withdrawals cannot be made after June 30, 2025 following the analysis. After the final check of the research findings, you will be contacted to ensure your satisfaction with the results. If you are content with the findings, you will let me know. Your decision to participate or not participate will not affect your relationship with me (the student investigator) or any services you may receive. In cases of withdrawal, any data you have provided will be destroyed unless you indicate otherwise. If you do not want to answer some of the questions you do not have to, but you can still be in the study.

How do I find out what was learned in this study?

I expect to have this study completed by approximately July 31, 2025. You will be provided with the results of the research and informed that the results will be published in a paper and made available to institutions to help implement inclusive programming. If you'd like, there will be a summary of results provided to you within 2 weeks of research completion, and we will gladly send the results to you via your delivery method of choice.

Questions about the Study: If you have questions or need more information about the study itself, please contact me at:

Erin Harper Email: harpee7@mcmaster.ca
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This study has been reviewed by the McMaster Research Ethics Board and received ethics clearance under project # 7140. If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a

participant or about the way the study is conducted, please contact:

McMaster Research Ethics
Office Telephone: (905) 525-
9140 ext. 23142

E-mail: mreb@mcmaster.ca

CONSENT

- I have read the information presented in the information letter about a study being conducted by Erin Harper of McMaster University.
- I have had the opportunity to ask questions about my involvement in this study and to receive additional details I requested.
- I understand that if I agree to participate in this study, I may withdraw from the study at any time or up until **June 30, 2025**.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Name of Participant (Printed) _____

Consent Questions:

1. Would you like a copy of the study results? If yes, where should we send them (email, mailing address)?
2. Do you agree to an audio recording? Yes / No
3. Do you agree to be contacted for a follow up interview? How do you prefer to be contacted?
4. Do you agree to allow the researcher to keep the de-identified data for the 3 year period of post completion?

Yes / No

Appendix D: Screening Questions

Thank you for your interest in our study WEAVING INTERSECTIONAL WISDOM, EMBRACING DIVERSE EXPERIENCES: GUARDIAN' PERSPECTIVES ON DECOLONIZING AND INDIGENIZING PHYSICAL ACTIVITY FOR INDIGENOUS YOUTH WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES, led by Erin Harper, Principal Investigator.

Our study has some eligibility criteria – some qualities that all participants need to have in order to take part. To save you some time, we are hoping you will answer a few questions now, before going through the consent process, to determine if you are eligible to take part. [The screening information will be kept on a password protected folder on a password protected computer in a secure laboratory space. If people are not eligible the material will be disposed of according to McMaster policy.

1. Does your dependent (youth) identify as a person with an intellectual disability that was present at birth, caused by an accident, or developed over time;

- that encompasses any degree of mental or developmental disability
 - that may affect full participation in society (school/work)
 - that may have been accommodated in workplace/school because of functional limitation as a result of the disability or,
 - who, as a result of self- perception, perception of others environmental barriers, inaccessible attitudes, or any combination of these factors, may experience unequal opportunity to access services by reason of the disability?
- a) No
 - b) Yes
 - c) Prefer to self-identify: _____
 - d) Prefer not to answer

2. Are you a Guardian of an Indigenous youth who identifies as a person with an intellectual disability (as identified in the previous question)?

- a) No
- b) Yes
- c) Other: _____

3. Does your dependent (youth) identify as Indigenous?

- a) No
- b) Yes. Please self-identify:
 - o First Nations (status/non-status)
 - o Métis
 - o Inuit

- c) Prefer to self-identify:
- d) Prefer not to answer

Once the researcher has received your response, they will reply within 3 days. If you are eligible, we will continue with the consent process and arrange an interview. If you are not eligible, we thank you for your time and consideration for this study.

Appendix E: Semi Structured Interview Guide

- 1) How have your dependents (son/daughter) been involved in inclusive physical activity programming in your community?
- 2) How do your dependents (son/daughter) view their experience in their inclusive physical activity programming?
- 3) Tell me about a positive and negative experience you have had with your Indigenous dependents (son/daughter) in inclusive physical activity programs?
- 4) How does your community run programs or physical activity opportunities for those with intellectual disabilities? If so, do they have any Indigenous components incorporated?
- 5) Think back over the past year few years and tell me about your experiences with such programs involving Indigenous aspects. What went particularly well? What needs improvement?
- 6) What would be the meaning of decolonization and Indigenization in this physical activity context?
- 7) How does your dependent (son/daughter) experience disability and Indigeneity in Inter-relational ways in physical activity programs?
- 8) What are the benefits of incorporating Indigeneity in the inclusive physical activity program for your dependent (son/daughter), how would it look and what opportunities do these programs provide?
- 9) What has interfered with or gotten in the way of your dependent (son/daughter), participation in inclusive physical activity programming in your area
- 10) How does/would participating with respectful Indigenous practices change your dependent (son/daughter) experience of these inclusive physical activity programs?

- 11) What type of physical activity opportunities do you partake in or would like to see that uphold Indigenous practices and beliefs?
- 12) If you were discussing with a potential fellow guardian about incorporating Indigeneity in your current programming, what would you say about the program to promote and improve it?
- 13) What would you say were the biggest impacts and barriers to including more Indigenous participants and incorporating Indigenous traditions, cultures and practices into the programming?
- 14) What are your ideas for better inclusion of Indigenous athletes and their Indigenous practices in their pursuit for inclusive physical activity programming?
- 15) Please share any last thought to uphold Indigeneity in inclusive physical activity programming.