

**Aboriginal Sport Circle
Indigenous Research Initiative
February 15, 2018**

Consultant's Report

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RESEARCH | STRATEGY | RESULTS

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Contents

Introduction 3

Session Objectives..... 3

Approach..... 3

Attendees..... 3

Findings 4

Consultant Observations..... 6

Conclusion..... 6

Appendix A – Session Agenda..... 7

Appendix B – Flipchart Notes..... 10

Introduction

Praxis Consulting was engaged by Sport Canada to provide facilitation services to Aboriginal Sport Circle to explore the development of a research strategy for Indigenous sport, physical activity and recreation. The design of the facilitated session was informed by a working group lead by Dr. Janice Forsyth. The facilitator, Valerie Sluth, met on several occasions with the working group prior to the session.

Session Objectives

Four objectives were established for the session:

- To explore a research agenda for Aboriginal sport and recreation in Canada;
- To generate thoughts and ideas regarding what is possible;
- To build enthusiasm and commitment to a collectively agreed upon vision; and,
- To generate early thoughts on an approach to providing leadership to the research agenda.

A copy of the session agenda is provided in Appendix A of this report.

Approach

An Appreciative Inquiry Approach was used as the underlying premise of the conversation complemented by an Indigenous talking circle method. The discussion was highly collaborative using a significant amount of large group techniques so that all attendees could hear the insights and ideas from others. Ideas were built upon in an organic manner.

Recognizing that it was an introductory conversation, the goal was to generate ideas and identify divergent thinking without the need to draw conclusions or make decision too early in the development process. The discussion was intended to inform the working group in its effort to develop a future research strategy.

Attendees

Participants included representatives from the ASC board of directors as well as selected individuals and key informants from the research community. The following individuals were in attendance:

Elder:

- Dan Ross

Participants:

- Kalley Armstrong (Western University, Master's student)
- Christine Cameron (CFLRI)
- Kelsey Dayler (ASC staff)
- Kathy Duval (SPC Rep)
- Ken Edzerza (ASC BOD)
- Dr. Janice Forsyth (Western University & ASC BOD)
- Debra Gassewitz (SIRC)
- Ted Hodgson (Alberta, PTASB)
- Heather Kaulbach (ASC, ED)

- Dr. Lynn Lavallee (University of Manitoba)
- Alwyn Morris (ASC BOD)
- Dr. Christine O'Bonsawin (University of Victoria)
- Dale Plett (ASC BOD)
- Gord Reed (ASC BOD)
- Sandra Roach (ASC BOD)
- Jerry Wetzel (ASC BOD)

Facilitator:

- Valerie Sluth (Praxis)

Findings

Session data is provided in Appendix B of this document. The following are themes drawn from that date.

Multiple roles to be played in the research agenda

Participants identified a number of organizations/participants to play a role in research pertaining to Indigenous sport, physical activity and recreation. First and foremost, they identified the need for a mechanism to provide leadership to the research agenda. It was believed there is currently no credible source from which research can be reviewed for both methods and content to ensure cultural appropriateness.

Participants agreed the ASC has a role to play. Suggested roles included leading, coordinating, and communicating research. It was thought that the ASC could lead the creation of a research agenda to encourage research into the areas with there is a clear need for data and understanding.

A number of other actors were identified as having a role. These included universities, Sport Canada, SIRC, INAC and national research organizations such as CRLRI, APS, FNIGC, and Stats Can.

PTASBs were regarded as having an important role in communicating community-based research needs to the research agenda. Further, PTASBs have a role in communicating research findings to communities and utilizing research findings in the development of programs and services.

Defining a research agenda

Attendees were excited at the opportunity to craft a research agenda. Many believe that the conversation was timely and that without quick action, many traditional ways will be lost without documented memory for future generations. Further, given scarce research resources, developing a coordinated agenda would help to ensure that as much could be accomplished as possible.

The manner in which the agenda should be developed was not contemplated although there were considerable comments that supported a community-based approach to defining research needs.

Legitimizing research

Many discussions centred around the need to create a mechanism to legitimize research topics, methods and reporting of research. Without a “seal of approval”, researchers and consumers of the research have no means to ensure that the research was conducted in an ethical manner consistent with tradition and culture nor can they ascertain the legitimacy of the context and findings. It was agreed that the Indigenous community must have play a central role in approving research regarding Indigenous people(s). In absence of an authority, well-intended organizations and researchers may be proceeding in ways that are harmful or bring limited or no value to the collective research need.

Positioning research for success

Participants were asked to reflect on research they deemed successful and to share the conditions that led to that success. It was suggested that successful Indigenous research involves researchers who understand the community they are studying. Further, that research is driven by community needs versus that funder requirements.

Engaging Indigenous people as researchers and data gathers was also suggested as a best practice. It was reported that researchers themselves but have the trust and respect of those being researched.

Critical success factors for the future of research

Participants identified a number of factors which they believed were critical for the success of an Indigenous research agenda. These included:

- Development of a national research agenda including short, medium and long term priorities;
- Recognition of the diversity Indigenous communities;
- Appropriate resourcing;
- Communication of a research framework;
- Inclusion of the TRC CTAs;
- Community buy-in inclusive of the PTASBs; and,
- Consideration to both regional and national level agendas.

Development of tools to support research

It was suggested that a research strategy could include the development of a research and teaching toolbox to provide information regarding research within Indigenous communities. Information pertaining to preferred ways and protocols in conducting research with Indigenous people would be helpful to researchers.

Potential research topics

A number of potential research topics were cited throughout the session. Potential topics included:

- Self-governance/national building through sport, physical activity and recreation
- TRC CTAs
- Recognition of aboriginal rights via sport, recreation and wellness

- Demonstrated impact of ASC and PTASB programming on youth
- Social and economic impact studies of NAIG and related programming
- Participation surveillance studies
- Impact of the ALTPD
- Factors impacting participation rates
- Policy/governance

Consultant Observations

An effective session design

The combination of “Appreciative Inquiry” facilitation methods and a traditional talking circle allowed for the flow of creative ideas in a culturally appropriate manner. All participants had opportunity to share their ideas. There was a well-planned mix of Aboriginal sport specialists and Indigenous researchers to allow participants to hear and build upon one another’s ideas.

High degree of support for a research agenda

Participants agreed the research discussion is timely if not urgent. There is a fear that delaying action will result in a loss of knowledge regarding traditional games and traditional ways of being. Apart of the urgency, participants were excited at the opportunities to conduct meaningful and useful research in a manner that is driven by an Indigenous agenda and conducted with an Indigenous lens. All participants invited the opportunity for future conversations.

A Research Strategy is desired

In order to advance the work derived from the session, it is clear that a research strategy is required. A Strategy should involve the development of a governance structure to support a research agenda as well as partnerships with complementary and supporting organizations. Further, the strategy should contemplate a means by which research can be reviewed, approved and sanctioned by a representative grouping of the Indigenous community.

Conclusion

Dr. Janice Forsyth and the ASC research working group should be commended for their leadership launching this important conversation on research within the Indigenous sport, physical activity and recreation community. Much was achieved and there is significant opportunity to build upon this discussion. It will be important to maintain momentum so that energy around the agenda can be encouraged. Praxis was pleased to provide facilitation services and this final report and look forward to future opportunities to support this important initiative.

Appendix A – Session Agenda

**Aboriginal Sport Circle
Research Initiative
February 15, 2017
Agenda**

Objective:

- To explore a research agenda for Aboriginal sport and recreation in Canada
- To generate thoughts and ideas regarding what is possible
- To build enthusiasm and commitment to a collectively agreed upon vision
- To generate early thoughts on an approach to providing leadership to the research agenda

Time	Item	Approach	Working Group Notes (Not to be included in distributed agenda)
9:00	Opening Prayer (Elder) Opening Comments (Janice Forsyth)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>(Janice will explain her role in her presentation)</i> - <i>Val will provide an overview of the day and explain why we are going about this with a broad approach</i>
9:15	Introductions and Expectations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Share with the group your name, your interest, relevant background and what you are hopeful will be accomplished today. - What do we expect of one another for the day? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Participants share by going around the circle - Expectations captured on flipchart 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Val and Janice to generate “rules of engagement” from the group and captured on flipcharts.</i> - <i>Debra to provide</i>

			<i>overview of research and acknowledge that research happens in different ways</i>
9:30	Overview of Research (Debra Gassewitz)	- Presentation	-
9:45	Exploring the Opportunity <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What excites you about research and the potential of this conversation? 2. What trends and issues are we seeing that make research an important conversation? 3. Many of you have engaged in research projects in the past either as a researcher, participant, partner, funder, etc. Focusing on successful project, share your experience: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Describe the project and who was involved. - What difference was made as a result of this project? - Describe the factors that made this project successful? - What did you learn from the experience? 	- Large Group	- <i>Facilitated by Val</i> - <i>Record the content</i> - <i>Have some one start the conversation – seed a few people who will start it off positively</i> - <i>A break will be offered at an appropriate time in the conversation</i>
11:00	Overview of ASC (Alwyn Morris)	- Presentation	- <i>Heather to create a flipchart with Acronyms</i>
11:30	Lunch		
12:30	Visioning Imagine we are successful in advancing a research agenda for Aboriginal sport and recreation in Canada. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What kind of changes or impacts do we want to see from this research agenda? What are we as leaders in this initiative most proud of? 2. What could be accomplished within the next 1-3 years? Long-term? 3. Within this exciting vision, who is involved? Why are they involved? How are they involved? 	- Small Group Discussion	- <i>Facilitated by Val and Small Group Facilitators</i> - <i>Small group discussions (preselected groups)</i> - <i>Need four small group facilitators</i>

	4. What kinds of systems and structures exist to make this successful?		
1:45	Report Out	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Small Group Presentation - Member of group selected to present 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Each group presents one question with others adding their additional comments</i>
2:15	Making it happen <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What do you believe are the most promising areas to gain traction on a research agenda? Consider research topics, programs, etc. - Where do we see strengths can be built upon? - What is the role of the ASC in this research agenda? Who are other primary stakeholders and what is their role? What is the role of PTASBs in this agenda? - What are the critical components that must be included in a strategy to make this successful? - What early thoughts do we have on structure? Where do you see yourself involved? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Graffiti Wall 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Facilitated by Val and Small Group Facilitators</i> - <i>Participants go around the room and write their responses on butcher block paper</i> - <i>Facilitators stand at questions and offer support</i> - <i>Facilitators report out on responses</i>
3:00	Report Out	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Facilitators present 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Facilitators report out on responses</i>
3:30	Tactics to maintain momentum <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What must be accomplished in the next six months to keep this conversation live? - Who should be involved in the short term? - What does this group expect in terms of ongoing involvement? Is there anyone else that should be engaged? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Large Group Discussion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Facilitated by Janice and Val</i>
4:00	Closing Prayer (Elder)		

Appendix B – Flipchart Notes

Role of the ASC

- To present the research agenda to the SC research conference in the fall (2018)
- Coordination
- Leadership
- Communication & sharing
- Research office – possible partnership with an academic institution (e.g., Research Centre for Indigenous Sport)
- Leader in the knowledge of ‘cultural governance’
- Working session organized by ASC, ‘governance committee’
- Leadership with guidance for research – content, terminology, relevance
- To become the NSO for traditional indigenous sports/games

Other Primary Stakeholders

- Education institutions – universities
- Sport Canada
- SIRC
- INAC
- Universities
- Community services departments
- Research organizations (CFLRI, FNIGC, APS, Stats Can, others, etc.)

Role of PTASBs

- Communication link
- Identifying key gaps within their P/T
- Identify local level needs (communities)
- Respondents
- Try outs / pilots
- Participate a ‘cultural governance’ workshops
- Participant engagement

Hopeful of what will be accomplished

- Build commitment to research agenda
- Direction on next steps
- Ideas for where research could go
- Find ways CFLRI can be involved
- Clear vision
- Direction for ASC to build a foundation
- Commitment to a proper framework for research in our communities

- Where is the Trojan horse?
- Achieving a common approach across all communities
- Build cooperation
- Ignite & sustain the fire
- Frame-out how research is being conducted
- Leave behind a true story for future generations
- A coordinated approach to research – address gaps & avoid overlaps
- Use research for justification

What's exciting

- Understanding the needs of Aboriginal athletes
- Are we approaching research the best possible [way]?
- Are we getting information that applies to coaches, athletes, officials, from urban, rural, areas, etc?
- Building best practices
- Revitalization of communities through sport
- How to transition from rural to urban?
- Create a foundation of documents
- Document things that are currently happening, and historical – research allows us to accurately document current practices
- Get a 'seal of approval' from ASC (which projects/researchers/etc)
- A legitimate way to involve community
- A collective mind for research
- A different way of proving that sport works
- Aboriginal community needs to approve research
- Researching the success of NAIG from individual to community

Trends

- Sport for nation-building
- Documentation of traditional games, e.g., AWG – manuals have been developed, but because their northern they aren't seen elsewhere but the same could be done in the south
- Traditional games may no longer be alive
- We have not integrated culture into the NAIG
- Activities are driven by where government funding is
- Create research guide
- We don't have enough info to stop assimilation
- Competition for money at the community level – many funders, no coordination
- Lack of capacity, regionally and nationally
- Groundswell of a lack of quality information – TRC is driving interest but no real quality data => who do they talk to?
- Research doesn't involve important entities like ASC
- If absence of voice of authority, organizations do their own thing – well intended but wrong guidelines
- How do we hold researchers and ourselves accountable to standards?

- How do we link research to innovation?
- Reviving the roots – understanding foundation of community
- Increase interest in Indigenous research – need to have accountability to communities – Indigenous protocols are different than university based ethics
- Sport as a community building tool – there are limitations to sport
- Too much emphasis on competitive sport

Stories: what made it successful?

- Use of an action / logic model
- Researchers understood the research questions & problem
- Internal champion to use & implement the research and recommendations
- Informed by those in the organization – key informants
- Allowed us to define the questions
- Research as activism
- Using Aboriginal researchers to gather data – hiring people from the community
- People have time to commit to participate in the research
- Research team needs to understand the communities
- Are we asking the right questions [for the research project]? Funder driven vs. community driven

Visioning, Group #1

- Integrated – every PTASB operating at an efficient level , driving by their own research needs
- Research meets ASC needs, and this structures PTASB direction (to some extent) + NAIG, etc
- A coordinated communication plan for dissemination (What is out there? How to interpret it?)
- National philosophical approach to sport for a national agenda – take into account equity
- Community has to buy-in at the ground, community level
- A more equitable, affordable sport system (Aboriginal sport)
- “Our movement is ...” vs. “Our vision is ...” with culture at the heart (and sport is part of that movement)
- community development approach to doing research and sport development
- need research to build trust and build lives
- OCAP – modify and update (quick ‘win’)
- Identify whose interests are most important because this is how decisions will be made, e.g., NAIG – high performance or culture or saving lives?
- Create a new ‘tool box’ that communities can use & fit for themselves
- Identify areas of responsibility (e.g, ASC – NAIG) but still be independent and helpful, e.g., PTASB
- Future – have younger generations involved at the NAIG
- ASC – help AB [Aboriginal or Alberta] to build capacity as an organization via research
- What is our responsibility with/for PTASBs?
- Have ‘teaching tools’, opportunity, etc.
- Take what we know, codify it, disseminate it in a user-friendly way, e.g., so don’t have to start over with each NAIG) – also workforce/capacity issue (paid permanent jobs) – links to students?
- Organizational well-being (how to develop?)

- ASC driven research doesn't create/reinforce gaps within / with PTASBs, therefore, research has to keep the intact/whole – this goes beyond the PTASB, e.g., friendship centres, and deals with urban issues, and most reserves, etc
- 'bank of trusted researchers' (1-3 years) – researchers who are on the same page as the ASC, and this will legitimize the view/framework
- take control of the chaos (1-3 years)
- longer term – build out the framework and do research
- want to frame the problem
- 'gap' – need to close between researchers and the ASB/PTASB (how to close, e.g., have them at our table for meetings, e.g., research as community)

Visioning, Group # 3

- increase participation – in what? Community? Elite? Don't want to get caught in the elite model
- a national perspective AND an Aboriginal perspective AND a cultural perspective
- accessibility + flexibility – no cookie cutter
- we need to see things at a regional level as well (within the national model)
- partnerships are essential – form where they may not exist
 - build credibility and buy-in
 - keep resources flowing
 - more stability and increased capacity with coaches / officials (internal, to make change)
 - creating a consistency
- changes in sustainability (long-term funding) to see change
- reducing barriers to participation
- some communities don't have this internal capacity – communities are having to start from scratch – how do we avoid communities starting from scratch?
- 1-3 years?
 - Leverage onto systems – establish these partnerships because mechanisms are already there, e.g., cultural exchanges within our culture, surveys
 - Have an overall plan – where we started, what we did, where we are going
 - Strengthening relationships – national, provincial, municipal levels
 - Knowledge sharing resources, e.g., NAIG – deliverables in current plan – get back into understanding our youth, why NAIG is important
 - Inclusion part of the Games
 - be able to come forward with documents saying this is why this is important
 - how do we work with organizations to create documents?
 - A mandatory requirement of traditional component at NAIG
 - inclusion to show value of training to get to the Games
 - practicing and learning – transferability of skill and knowledge – teachings behind sport
 - how can you learn about our sports?
 - Traditional games presence – there is no traditional games body (national) – is there an interest?
- Who?
 - Indigenous – still adapting to this terminology
 - Researchers – need to find our allies
 - Funders – Sport Canada, INAC, etc

- ASC
- PTASBs – communities, event hosts
- Think about why involved - Indigenous linkage to funding
- Systems and structures – AGM, working groups, conference calls, entities: NAHC, NAIG, PTASBs, Aboriginal coaching module
- Research surveillance system - identify what is out there from a research perspective
- There is an influx of money
- Sport governing bodies – regional and national => ongoing initiative

Most promising areas

- Self-government
- Ability to address TRC
- Recognize aboriginal rights via sport, recreation, and wellness – react immediately to the legislation
- Demonstrated impact of ASC programs on youth
- New political reality
- Network
- NAIG – social / economic impact studies
- NAIG – data / results collection
- Setting measurable indicators around research in sport, physical activity, recreation, physical education – what is realistic
- ALTPD – implementing
- Participation rates – factors influencing participation, including social / individual / environmental / community / policy
- Policy, governance
- Programming
- What is the best / preferred way to do research with Indigenous people or on Indigenous people?

Strengths to build upon

- Resilience
- Past history
- Experience / knowledge of communities / issues – how to build on this by leveraging that experience / knowledge as legitimate
- Diversity
- National perspective
- Current plan – 5 year plan
- Bring Indigenous traditional games into NAIG and Aboriginal schools
- Current large scale and comprehensive surveillance system on PA, sport, recreation is available to adapt with Indigenous perspective
 - Provides national, provincial, territorial data
 - Existing FN data (trend) through FNIGC
- NAIG research as part of development – trends, sustainability
- Basing research on Indigenous knowledges vs. western theory

Critical components to include in the strategy?

- Short | medium | long term projects with high / low priorities
- Diverse sectors within Aboriginal community
- Who? – partners
- \$ (levels)
- promotion of the strategy (communication)
- cultural perspective that reflects our diversity
- build network (key contacts) to partner & research
- reflections & strategies based on TRC
- a governance structure that is inclusive of PTASB in development of national policies & decision, and respectful of consensus decision making