

SPORT GAVE ME SOMETHING TO WAKE UP FOR:
ABORIGINAL ADULTS WITH DISABILITIES
SPEAK ABOUT SPORT

A Thesis Submitted to the
College of Graduate Studies and Research
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of Master of Science
In the College of Kinesiology
University of Saskatchewan
Saskatoon, SK

By

Melanie Dawn Elliott

PERMISSION TO USE

In presenting this thesis in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Postgraduate degree from the University of Saskatchewan, I agree that the Libraries of this University may make it freely available for inspection. I further agree that permission for copying of this thesis in any manner, in whole or in part, for scholarly purposes may be granted by the professor or professors who supervised my thesis work or, in their absence, by the Head of the Department or the Dean of the College in which my thesis work was done. It is understood that any copying or publication or use of this thesis or parts thereof for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission. It is also understood that due recognition shall be given to me and to the University of Saskatchewan in any scholarly use which may be made of any material in my thesis.

Requests for permission to copy or to make other use of material in this thesis in whole or part should be addressed to:

Dean of the College of Kinesiology
University of Saskatchewan
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan S7N 5B2

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this exploratory and descriptive study was to understand the experience of disability from the perspective of Aboriginal adults and the meaning they give to the importance of sport in their communities. The experiences of 3 Aboriginal adults with physical disabilities were captured using the phenomenological methods of one-on-one interviews, artifact collection, and field notes. The co-participants were provided the opportunity for collaboration at each research stage, from clarifying the purpose to finalizing and interpreting the emerging themes, in an effort to demonstrate sensitivity and respect for their Aboriginal culture, beliefs, and community. The conceptual framework utilized was the minority group model, which provided a framework for interpreting the sport experiences of the co-participants. The thematic analysis and interpretation of the findings facilitated by the co-participants revealed four themes: (a) we have to get out first, (b) not being a priority, (c) pride through accomplishments, and (d) the gift to grab others. *We Have to Get Out First* expressed the co-participants' feelings that persons with disabilities were somewhat invisible in their rural Aboriginal communities as they did not venture far from their homes. The second theme, *Not Being a Priority*, recognized the lack of sport opportunities for people with disabilities. However, according to the third theme, *Pride through Accomplishments*, for these co-participants it was their involvement in their Aboriginal community and sport that gave them a sense of self-worth and dignity. The final theme, *The Gift to Grab Others*, empowered them to share the richness of their experiences with other Aboriginal people with disabilities. The results reflected the need to educate and build awareness of sport opportunities

for Aboriginal people with disabilities. Furthermore, the co-participants expressed the need to encourage and support people with disabilities to get out of their homes and become active, visible members of society.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to share my gratitude and special thanks to Donna Goodwin, my thesis supervisor, for her guidance, support, and friendship throughout my journey through this project. Donna gave me the strength and encouragement to begin my Masters degree and provided me with the confidence and guidance to complete my Masters degree. Thank you from the bottom of my heart for everything you have done for me over the years.

I would also like to thank my committee members, Dr. Nancy Gyurcsik and Dr. Kent Kowalski, and my external advisor, Dr. Jennifer Poudrier, for their time and expertise throughout this project. Your advice and patience has been greatly appreciated.

In addition, I would like to recognize the Canadian Centre of Disability Studies for the funding I received to make this project feasible and successful.

Lastly, I have to thank the three individuals who made this project such an enjoyable experience. Throughout this journey, I worked with three incredible co-participants who trusted me as a friend and worked with me as a partner. If it was not for the three of you this project would not have been as valuable and rewarding as it was. Thank you for everything!!

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my two parents, Jerry and Glenda Elliott. You encouraged me not to give up and supported me in reaching my dreams and goals. Thank you for all of your love, support, and friendship!!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PERMISSION TO USE.....	i
ABSTRACT.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iii
DEDICATION.....	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	v
LIST OF APPENDICES.....	viii
LIST OF TABLES.....	ix
LIST OF FIGURES.....	x
1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....	8
2.1 Populations of Interest.....	8
2.2 Aboriginal People Living On and Off Their Reserves.....	11
2.3 Disability Identity.....	12
2.4 Disability Studies and Ethnic Identity.....	13
2.4.1 Cultural Uniqueness.....	14
2.5 Physical Activity and Aboriginal People.....	16
2.6 Conceptual Framework.....	19
2.7 Purpose of the Study.....	22
3. METHODOLOGY.....	24
3.1 Research Tradition.....	24
3.2 Method within Research Tradition.....	25
3.3 Entering the Field.....	27

3.4 Co-Participants and Community Partnerships Prior to the Study.....	28
3.5 Sampling Strategy.....	30
3.6 ‘Finding’ Co-Participants.....	32
3.7 Co-Participants.....	37
3.8 Pilot Testing the Interview Guide.....	40
3.9 Meetings and Introduction to Research Study.....	41
3.10 Ethical Approval.....	43
3.11 Data Collection.....	44
3.11.1 Interviews.....	44
3.11.2 Artifacts.....	46
3.11.3 Field Notes.....	47
3.12 Data Analysis.....	47
3.13 Trustworthiness.....	49
3.13.1 Overview.....	49
3.13.2 Credibility.....	49
3.13.3 Dependability.....	50
3.13.4 Confirmability.....	51
3.13.5 Positionality.....	51
3.13.6 Voice.....	52
3.13.7 Critical Subjectivity.....	53
3.13.8 Reciprocity.....	54
3.13.9 Sacredness.....	54
3.13.10 Sharing the Perquisites of Privilege.....	55

4. RESULTS	56
4.1 We Have to Get Out First	57
4.2 Not Being a Priority	64
4.3 Pride through Accomplishments.....	69
4.4 The Gift to Grab Others	74
5. DISCUSSION.....	78
5.1 We Have to Get Out First	78
5.2 Not Being a Priority	82
5.3 Pride Through Accomplishments	84
5.4 The Gift to Grab Others	86
5.5 Implications.....	87
6. RECOMMENDATIONS.....	90
6.1 Limitations to the Study.....	90
6.2 Future Directions	92
6.3 Exiting the Field.....	98
6.4 Final Thoughts	99
7. REFERENCES	102
8. APPENDICES	109
8.1 Appendix A: Co-Participant Information Form.....	110
8.2 Appendix B: Interview Guide.....	112
8.3 Appendix C: Ethical Approval.....	114
8.4 Appendix D: Co-Participant Informed Consent Form.....	115
8.4 Appendix E: Summary of CIHR Guidelines	118

8.5 Appendix F: Sample of Data Interpretation with Co-Participants.....121

LIST OF APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Co-Participant Information Form.....109

APPENDIX B: Interview Guide.....112

APPENDIX C: Ethical Approval.....114

APPENDIX D: Co-Participant Informed Consent Form.....115

APPENDIX E: Summary of CIHR Guidelines118

APPENDIX F: Sample of Data Interpretation with Co-Participants.....121

LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.1: Population of Aboriginal People in Saskatchewan by years of age	9
Table 3.1: Organizations and Communities Contacted for Co-Participant Recruitment.....	33
Table 3.2: Summary of Data Collection and Interpretation Procedures.....	42
Table 3.3: Summary of the Trustworthiness Criteria.....	50

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Shift from a biological to minority group model	23
Figure 2: Skating rink in Pooh's Aboriginal community.....	68
Figure 3: Outdoor ball diamonds on Pooh's reserve	68

1. INTRODUCTION

Throughout this thesis I will use stories to help describe my research experiences. The stories will explain what I was thinking and feeling during the last year and a half. I will begin by sharing with you three stories of how I became interested in the disability field and more specifically Aboriginal people with disabilities. I believe these experiences have helped define my identity as a researcher, but also friend, daughter, sister, student, and instructor.

When I was in grade 7, I spent quite a lot of time baby-sitting for neighbours and family friends. During that year I had the opportunity to spend a great deal of time with my neighbour's two children, Emily¹ and Dustin. Initially, I cared for Emily and Dustin while their parents were working in the yard, but eventually gained the families confidence to baby-sit while they left for the evening. Emily was 2 ½ years old, very shy, but also very energetic. Dustin was two years older and was born with very severe physical and intellectual disabilities. Dustin's parents were told at his birth that if they took him off the 'machines' he would not be expected to live much longer. They took a chance, removed him from the machines, and enjoyed more time with their son than they originally expected. During my time with Dustin he began to recognize my touch and on good days greeted me with a smile. Dustin, Emily, and I spent 2 years together going for

¹ Pseudonyms are used throughout the thesis to protect confidentiality.

walks, reading to each other, traveling to the Wild Animal Park and playing in their backyard. Through all of these moments, I always carried the fear that something might happen to Dustin which may hinder his life expectancy. I always slept with Dustin in my arms until his parents came home because I was scared that he would pass away in his sleep while in my care. At the end of grade 9, my dad accepted a transfer and we moved to a small town a few hours away. Even though I do not think Dustin knew who I was most days, I found it very difficult to leave him. What if his new baby-sitter did not feed him properly? What if she hurt him while she was changing him? What if Dustin never smiled for her when he recognized her touch? What if she did not cuddle with him like I did? After accepting that everything would be fine with the new sitter, I said my good-byes to the family and told them I would be back to visit soon. Two months after we moved, I got 'the call' from Dustin's mom telling me that he had passed away. After I received the news, I went back to my home town and spent the next week helping with the family and entertaining Emily. The day of the funeral, Emily and I shared a conversation,

Emily: Melly, where did Dustin go?

Mel: He had to go away sweetie.

Emily: Where to?

Mel: To heaven.

Emily: Will they cuddle him and kiss him in heaven like we did?

Mel: They sure will.

This conversation is so vivid in my memory. We were getting ready for the funeral when Emily asked me where her brother was. The minister over heard this conversation and told the story at Dustin's funeral later that day. I was absolutely

devastated the day of his funeral as all of the memories Dustin and I shared together came rushing back. A few weeks after the funeral, Dustin's parents wrote me a letter with a picture of Dustin and I at the Wild Animal Park. In the letter, his parents told me I have a bright future working with people with disabilities and I could not throw it away because of one bad experience. "The way you looked and were with our son was so natural and comfortable....It would be a shame to ignore a passion so powerful."

A few months after receiving this letter I began volunteering every Sunday at a large, urban rehabilitation centre and throughout the week with students from the high school I attended. My interest grew and became an important part of my life as I began to work in different care homes and day care centers for children, youth, and adults with disabilities. I also worked at Camp Easter Seal with children, youth, and adults with various physical and intellectual disabilities for several summers. Reflecting upon years of experience working with people with disabilities, I could think of so many additional stories to share with you but will tell you the story of how people with disabilities and my passion for sport began to make a connection in my life.

In the summer of 2000 at Camp Easter Seal, I was absolutely blessed with eight unforgettable men in my cabin. As I am writing this, a huge smile comes to my face as I recall the week we spent together. All eight men were competing on the same baseball team at the upcoming Special Olympics Summer Games, and from what I remember, our days at camp went something like this:

7:00 a.m.: The campers would sneak out of the cabin thinking I was sound asleep in my bed.

7:30 a.m.: They re-entered the cabin with my morning coffee so I was less 'owly' and more pleasant to talk to. After 'waking me up,' the nine of us would

visit until they felt I was perky enough to join the rest of the campers at breakfast.

9:00 a.m.: After breakfast we loaded the bus and traveled to the ball diamonds and practiced baseball ALL MORNING.

12:00 p.m.: We came back to camp, ate lunch, took part in camp activities and ate supper.

6:00 p.m.: We traveled back to the ball diamonds and played more baseball until we were tired.

10:00 p.m.: We laid in our bunk beds, giggled, and talked until each camper gave me a kiss good-night, tucked me in, and went to bed.

As camp was coming to an end, the nine of us sat and waited for their bus to take them home. As we were visiting, I tried to cover the tears in my eyes because I did not want to dampen their excitement for the Summer Games. Dwayne, giggling at my emotions, made me sit on his lap while he comforted and laughed at me. He said, “Mel, if I wasn’t so excited about going to the Summer Games, I would cry right now too....Oh, what the hell, I can’t let you cry alone.”

It became clear that my personal passion for sport and creating meaningful opportunities for persons with disabilities would blend as my future career path. In the summer of 2004, I added yet another dimension to my sport and disability experiences and developed sport camps for various rural communities throughout Saskatchewan. My assistant and I traveled to many First Nations reserves with a car full of games, balls, parachutes, and sports equipment. One of the First Nations reserves booked the program for the full five day limit. On the first day of the activity camps on this reserve nobody showed up, the second day we had an ideal number of 20 children and youth, and by the

last day I think the entire reserve showed up for the ongoing dodge ball tournament we started on day two. There were at least 50 children between the ages of 4 and 17 all wanting to take part in dodge ball. I attempted to split up the ages but had no success. Each age group appeared to have a purpose. The younger ones wanted to prove themselves to the older children and the older children were all trying to get the 'White girl.' As we were playing, a young boy with cerebral palsy walked into the gym. After a very competitive round of dodge ball, I sat down next to the young boy, introduced myself and asked if he wanted to take over my spot in the next round. He had no desire to join the game and I was too exhausted to go back in so we sat and visited for awhile. I realized that although he was in a gym amongst his Aboriginal community, he appeared to feel more like the minority than I did. I was comfortable being called the 'White girl' and appreciated the comfort level between myself and the youth. After my rest, I asked the young boy with cerebral palsy if we should join together. Quite contently he declined my offer and watched the game from the sidelines. This young boy's experiences caused me to reflect deeply.

For years I have been passionate about working with people with disabilities in a recreational or sport setting. But on this day, on this particular First Nations reserve, an experience surfaced that I wanted to further explore. Were there many people with disabilities living on their reserve? If so, were they welcome to take part in sport or physical education classes? Reflecting back on ten years of experience, I could not recall working with any Aboriginal people with disabilities. I had worked with people with disabilities and Aboriginal people, but never Aboriginal people with disabilities. Were there sport opportunities available in Saskatchewan for Aboriginal people with disabilities? Later that evening, I thought, "I am a White, middle class, able bodied

female, who has always had the opportunity to take part in sport. Was I lucky? Was I privileged? Or was I just what society defined as being ‘normal?’” But why wasn’t it ‘normal’ for an Aboriginal person with a disability to take part in dodge ball? What would my life be like if I was faced with being Aboriginal, having a disability, or both?

This question lingered in my mind as I embarked on a new and challenging journey into graduate studies. Given my summer experiences, it was very natural for me to want to learn more about the experiences of Aboriginal people with disabilities. Individuals from a minority, Aboriginal population may have a view of disability that is culturally distinct and therefore worthy of our understanding. Ethnicity and disability are often considered mutually exclusive categories, each with its own social, psychological, and political realities (Ali, Fazil, Bywaters, Wallace, & Singh, 2001). Resultantly, individuals with disabilities from the Aboriginal population may be living the reality of overcoming cultural identities, or what could also be considered oppressions (Ali et al.).

When reflecting back upon the game of dodge ball played on the First Nations reserve, the possible challenges residing in rural communities and the experiences of sport for people with disabilities also surfaced as an area of further exploration. Recreation and sport can play an important role in the identity, culture, and traditions of an individual and their community (Durst & Bluehardt, 2001). Sport providers have worked with the Aboriginal population and separately individuals with disabilities in urban centers. However, when combining ‘Aboriginal people’ with ‘disabilities’ there is a general lack of understanding in their personal interest or involvement with sport (Durst & Bluehardt).

With these areas of interest resting in the back of my mind, I entered graduate studies with a strong passion to begin my Masters thesis. I felt that by exploring this

particular area, I had something very valuable I could offer others. Feeling motivated to begin, I developed a purpose for my journey and of course my thesis.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Populations of Interest

My research interest explores the intersection of two minority populations within Saskatchewan; individuals with disabilities and individuals who identify as being Aboriginal. Although the Aboriginal community is currently considered a minority population in Saskatchewan, it is interesting to note that by 2016, it has been predicted that half of the children in Saskatchewan will be Aboriginal children (Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations, 1997).

The Aboriginal groups of Canada comprise numerous cultural and ethnic groups, with unique cultural systems and historical experiences (Northern Saskatchewan Health, 2004). Aboriginal individuals are defined as “those persons who reported identifying with at least one of three recognized Aboriginal groups, ‘Métis’, ‘Inuit,’ or ‘First Nation’ and/or who are reported being a Treaty Indian or a registered Indian, as defined by the Indian Act of Canada, and/or who were members of an Indian Band or First Nation” (Northern Saskatchewan Health, 2004, p. 18). According to the Canadian Census (2001), there are just fewer than one million people in Canada who identify themselves as Aboriginal. Of this 1 million, 13.6% reside in Saskatchewan, totalling 130,185 people, with the largest population being between 25 and 34 years of age. The breakdown of Aboriginal people in Saskatchewan by age is summarized in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1 *Population of Aboriginal people in Saskatchewan by years of age*

Age	Total	Age	Total
0-4	16,785	25-34	18,870
5-9	17,885	35-44	16,355
10-14	16,855	45-54	9,890
15-19	13,395	55-64	5,375
20-24	10,570	65 +	4,210

Note. From the Canadian Census, 2001

Although the term ‘Aboriginal’ is a broad term used to define all people who identify with their Aboriginal ancestry (Durst & Bluecharadt, 2001), it is important to recognize there are cultural distinctions between Métis, Inuit, and First Nations groups. According to a Métis individual, Métis are said to be “a people set apart. With one foot planted in our white European ancestry and the other foot planted in the timeless, tribal customs of the Indians, we belong wholly to neither and, as a result, hold on to each other and our traditions all the more tightly” (Senator John Boucher, cited in National Health Organization, 2003, p. 6). The number of Métis people in Canada in 2001 according to Statistics Canada was 307,845 with the largest population residing in Alberta, Manitoba, and Ontario (Statistics Canada, 2001).

The second Aboriginal group in Canada is the Inuit who live primarily in Nunavut, Nunavik (Northern Quebec), and Nunatsiavut (settlement in Labrador) and have a total population of 150,000 people. The final Aboriginal group of Canada and the background of the co-participants in this study are the First Nations people (Statistics Canada, 2001). Many First Nations people continue to live on their reserves and

maintain traditional activities such as hunting, fishing, or trapping. Although the co-participants self-identify with a First Nations community, the term Aboriginal will be used when describing the experiences of the co-participants in this study.

Although the 2001 census provided demographic information on the Canadian Aboriginal population it did not provide information on the sub disability population. To my knowledge there is no recent data available, and therefore, I have provided the most recent information available from the 1994 Statistics Canada data.

The rate of disability among the Canadian Aboriginal population was reported to be 2.3 times that of the national average in 1994 (National Aboriginal Network on Disabilities, 1994) with approximately 494,000 Aboriginal people having disabilities. In the 1991 Canadian census, the proportion of the Aboriginal population that reported having a disability, age 15 years or older, was 31%. Aboriginal people in Canada have congenital disabilities² at approximately the same rate as the rest of Canada; however, they have a higher rate of disability due to acquired disabilities³ caused by environment and trauma related events (Halliday, 1993). Among the three different Aboriginal groups, First Nations people living on their reserves had the highest percent of disability with a percentage of 33% (Fricke, 1998). First Nations people living off their reserve had a slightly lower rate of disability at 30%. The “disparity between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal rates of disability correspond to disparities in rates of injury, accident, violence, self-destructive or suicidal behaviour, and illness (such as diabetes) that can result in permanent impairment” (RCAP, 1996, p. 148).

² Congenital disability refers to a condition present at birth (Sherrill & Yille, 2004).

³ Acquired disability refers to a condition that occurs after birth (Sherrill & Yille, 2004).

2.2 Aboriginal People Living On and Off Their Reserves

In Saskatchewan, over 50% of all Aboriginal people live off their reserves, often in large urban centers, such as Regina, Saskatoon, Prince Albert, North Battleford, and Yorkton (Department of Culture, Youth, & Recreation, 2005). Aboriginal people living in urban centers and away from their reserve have been recognized as being in the “worst of all possible positions” (Sibbald, 2002, p. 1). In 2000/01, a Canadian Community Health Survey found that people living away from their reserves were more likely to have chronic health conditions such as arthritis, hypertension, and diabetes and long term restrictions on their activity levels than non-Aboriginal people living in urban centers (Sibbald). Unfortunately, the Canadian Community Health Survey did not provide a reason for this statement.

The reality for most people with disabilities living in rural communities (reserve or non-reserve) is that they must travel to urban centers to access health and social services (Durst & Bluehardt, 2004). Durst and Bluehardt (2001) found that if the disability was a result of an accident or deteriorating condition, such as diabetes or arthritis, moving to an urban centre was necessary to access rehabilitation or treatment. This move, initially intended to be temporary, often turns into years due to the barriers evident in their rural communities. Reported barriers people with disabilities may face included lack of (a) qualified health professionals, (b) support systems from community members and Elders, (c) accessible transportation, (d) employment opportunities, (e) accessible paths, houses and schools, and (f) limited access to recreation (Durst & Bluehardt, 2001). Castledon (2002), for example, found that children who were hearing impaired and living in a remote, Aboriginal, northern community had to migrate to urban centers to gain access to resources, services, and health support (e.g., access to

health professional who know sign language). Limited services in their northern communities were often due to delays in the response rate from health professionals and the high expense of delivering services, because of their geographical location and exacerbated by low retention rates of health professionals in the remote communities. Members of these Northern communities expressed frustration and sadness at their inability to provide services for the children with disabilities in their home communities.

2.3. Disability Identity

Aboriginal persons with disabilities may identify with their Aboriginal culture and furthermore may also identify with a disability culture. Gill (1997) presented four types of integration in disability identity development. The first type of integration was *coming to feel we belong (integrating into society)*. People with disabilities strive for a comfortable identity and a role in society despite being part of a marginalized and minority group. People with disabilities want to be included into society with everyone else and expect to be accommodated for their differences. *Coming home (integrating with the disability community)* describes the comfort that people with disabilities may have with people ‘who have been there.’ There is a level of connection, understanding, acceptance or culture that people with disabilities share within their disability community. Relevant to this study, it is important to mention that for some people with disabilities living in a rural community, they may have few options for meeting other people with disabilities and may therefore find it difficult to integrate into a disability community. The third form of integration Gill identifies is *coming together (internally integrating our sameness and differentness)*. According to Gill, people with disabilities have the right to embrace their sameness with the human family as well as their

differences as part of the disability family. There is often a tension experienced by people with disabilities that is resolved as people blend their disability into a positive self-identity. The fourth and final form of integration is *coming out* (*integrating how we feel with how we present ourselves*). People with disabilities accept their differences and are ready to present themselves in public. In coming out, individuals with disabilities present themselves without any internal conflict or social discomfort (Gill). As Gill states, “The ‘coming out’ process is often the last step towards disability identity in a path that begins with a desire to find a place in society, continues with a discovery of one’s place in a community of peers, and builds to an appreciation and acceptance of one’s whole self complete with a disability” (p. 45). It has been suggested that Aboriginal persons with disabilities are in double jeopardy as they strive to find their identity in a predominately Caucasian, able bodied culture (Durst & Bluehardt, 2004).

2.4 Disability Studies and Ethnic Identity

During the later part of the 19th century and the early part of the 20th century, people with disabilities were viewed as sub-human or ‘objects’ to be feared (Wolfensberger, 1973). After World War II, due to war trauma, there was a dramatic increase in people with disabilities followed by a large increase in disability organizations (Wehmeyer, Bersani, & Gagne, 2000). Continuing through the 1950’s to the 1970’s there was a rapid growth in services, legislative protection, and the emergence of self-determination and self-advocacy for individuals with disabilities (Wehmeyer et al.). This “disability movement” achieved a shift from a lack of empowerment for people with disabilities to increased opportunities for self-control and self-determination. The disability movement has been exemplified by integrated and

inclusive education programs, and improved employment in mainstream society (Ali, Fazil, Bywaters, Wallace, & Singh, 2001). Nevertheless, the disability movement has been criticized for assuming a medical model focus, aimed at rehabilitation while failing to take into account the nature of the functional impairment, whether it was acquired or congenital in origin, and the gender or age of those involved (Ali et al.). Moreover, the disability movement has traditionally silenced members from a minority population with a disability (Ali et al.). In addition to the impact disability may have on function, the perception of disability may differ depending on the individual's culture and ethnic identity. Research into the intersection of disability and ethnicity is needed to further our understanding when these two cultures merge.

2.4.1 Cultural Uniqueness

Disability studies is a field that focuses on the experiences, history and culture of people with disabilities (Ali, Fazil, Bywaters, Wallace, & Singh, 2001). The disability movement, disability studies, and disability literature has been defined and dominated by the mainstream 'Caucasian' population⁴ (Ali et al.). Ethnicity and disability are often considered two separate 'issues' and people with disabilities, from a 'minority' population (i.e., population of color) may be living the reality of overcoming multiple oppressions throughout their lives⁵. For example, the Black Disabled Peoples' Group was founded in 1990 to battle racism that exists in society but also within the disability

⁴ I recognize that the terms mainstream and Caucasian are very general terms in describing the population by race and not ethnicity. The literature typically uses race (e.g., Caucasian) rather than ethnicity (e.g., European American, Italian American) as a descriptor for a target population. Therefore, I will continue to use this term in the literature review as it is consistent with the articles that I am discussing and reviewing.

⁵ It has been suggested that the term 'minority' should not be used in reference to persons of color as it has a negative connotation which marginalizes the group further (Burden, Hodge, O'Bryant & Harrison, 2004). However, Aboriginal people do not refer to themselves as 'people of color' so I will continue to use the term minority when describing the population in this study.

movement and disability community (Ali et al.). Members of this group have challenged discriminatory practices such as Eurocentric service provision and hostile social structures internal and external to the disability community (Hill, 1994). When accessing services, various ethnic groups have been exposed to mainstream priorities and can find their cultural traditions and language ignored (Hill). The Black Disabled Peoples' Group emphasized that service providers should effectively meet the needs of their group by providing opportunities for involvement in issues that directly impact their lives.

When studying the Aboriginal population of Saskatchewan, Durst and Bluehardt (2004) found that the cultural traditions of the Aboriginal communities they studied may hold different views of the meaning of social inclusion, self-sufficiency, and social independence when compared to mainstream society in Saskatchewan. Mainstream society values independence and rejects dependency on others, whereas Aboriginal communities value interdependency, creating a belief that all individuals can contribute to the group as a whole (Durst & Bluehardt). Furthermore, inclusive programs have not been viewed as a priority amongst Aboriginal people. It has been suggested that segregated programs (i.e., programs specific to Aboriginal people) may be necessary to build self-confidence and remove emotional barriers before integrating themselves into inclusive programs for people of all abilities and ethnicities.

Aboriginal people with disabilities may have diverse cultural beliefs of people with disabilities. In some First Nations communities, an individual with a disability may be considered a "gift from the Creator" (Durst & Bluehardt, 2004, p. 5) who should be cherished and respected. Individuals with disabilities may therefore be viewed as 'natural' and 'normal' and may be accepted more readily in Aboriginal communities than in non-Aboriginal communities. They are viewed as possessing special gifts

enabling them to communicate with the spiritual world. On the other hand, some individuals with disabilities experience a sense of dismissal and endure ignorance and ridicule in their rural Aboriginal communities (Durst & Bluechardt).

Recently at the 2006 North American Federation of Adapted Physical Activity, I had the opportunity to listen to a presentation that highlighted the racial biases and trends in research participant recruitment seen in empirically based studies published in *Adapted Physical Activity Quarterly* and *Journal of Teaching in Physical Education* (Hodge, Kozub, Robinson, & Hersman, 2007). The authors concluded that research participants were predominantly White, which creates concerns over the generalizability of the research findings (Hodge et al.). Furthermore, it was stated that contributors to these two widely respected journals often neglected to report the participants' race or ethnicity, and in instances where race/ethnicity was identified, the terms were used interchangeably (Hodge et al.). Hodge et al. suggested that because race/ethnicity and culture do matter, researchers should be encouraged to pay attention to these variables and an individual's ethnic background in selecting participants and interpreting findings of future research.

2.5 Physical Activity and Aboriginal People

Sport and physical activity have the potential to impact Aboriginal youth by helping to gain a positive self-identity (Durst & Bluechardt, 2001) through personal expression of physical abilities and playfulness on the court and in the field (Halas & Hanson, 2001). Physical activity and sport provides youth an opportunity to compete

and focus on an event outside of their ‘troubled’ lives⁶. Sport and recreation programs can also contribute to reducing alcohol abuse and lowering the incidence of crime in rural Aboriginal communities through programs such as the Northern Fly In Sports Camps and the Northern Recreation Director Training Program. Proponents of these programs indicated that through sport and recreational activities and leadership training, alcohol abuse and crime levels were diminishing in Northern Aboriginal communities (Dawson, Karlis, & Georescu, 1998). This evidence suggests that recreational events such as the North American Indigenous Games can be a vehicle to help overcome alcohol abuse and crime in Aboriginal communities.

The North American Indigenous Games (NAIG) provides the Aboriginal people of Canada and United States an opportunity to compete in sport and take part in cultural activities. NAIG was designed with the hope that the prestige of competing in an all-Aboriginal event would motivate Aboriginal leaders throughout North America to develop sport and recreational programs for their people (Forsyth & Wamsley, 2006). The games include 16 sporting events and 2 Special Olympics sporting events open to individuals between the ages of 13 and 19 years. They also provide a great opportunity for Aboriginal people to discover more about their culture by showcasing their heritage, history, and beliefs in traditional dance and song (Dawson et al.).

To ascertain the impact of sport and recreation on youth, an initiative from the Department of Culture, Youth, and Recreation (2004) prioritized capacity building among Saskatchewan First Nations and Métis youth through accessible recreation

⁶Troubled youth is a term used to define youth that are living in some form of disharmony within society, have an emotional or behavioural disorder, have a learning disability or display deviant or delinquent behaviour. Halas and Hanson (2001) use the term troubled youth to describe young Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal students.

programs and leadership opportunities. The initiative involved a study (Department of Culture, Youth, and Recreation, 2005), which included these research questions: (a) are Aboriginal people's motivations for participation different than non-Aboriginal people? (b) does a sense of self-determination/ownership help maintain participation? and, (c) what influences Aboriginal children and youth's decisions about participating in sport, culture, and recreation? The participants involved in the study were Aboriginal service providers ($n=20$) and Aboriginal ($n=401$) and non-Aboriginal youth ($n=400$) from rural and urban communities. Although there were many limitations to this study (i.e., number of participants, targeted locations), the key findings indicated that the top three reasons that both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal youth did not participate were the cost of the programs, the availability of local programs, and lack of time (Department of Culture, Youth, and Recreation). Aboriginal respondents also agreed that being too shy to start a new activity was a barrier to participation. The authors concluded that Aboriginal leadership, early involvement in sports to establish an interest, celebrating successes, and keeping things fun were critical factors in sustaining participation. Furthermore, service providers and Aboriginal youth remarked that the following challenges need to be addressed to increase sport and recreation participation among First Nations and Métis youth in urban and rural communities: (a) lack of educated staff, (b) lack of leadership at the community level, (c) internal politics from self-governed communities, (d) lack of finances leading to discontinuity in programming, (e) lack of accessible and available resources and infrastructure, and (f) lack of activities for those who are not interested in sport (Department of Culture, Youth and Recreation).

Durst and Bluehardt (2001) conducted a benchmark study on the barriers to sport participation that Aboriginal people with physical disabilities faced in their urban

communities. They conducted interviews with seven Aboriginal people with disabilities and 13 recreation and sport providers, assessing the availability of services, participation levels, needs, and interests in sport and recreation. They found that low participation in sport and recreational activities was primarily attributed to financial and transportation barriers, a finding supported in the 2005 study of Aboriginal youth without disabilities (Department of Culture, Youth and Recreation). At the time of the study, they concluded that participation in physical activity was not viewed as a priority amongst Aboriginal people with disabilities. Of the participating organizations, Saskatchewan Special Olympics was the only other organization beginning to collect data to obtain a better understanding of sport participation for Aboriginal people with disabilities. They discovered that when financial and transportation barriers were removed in their organization, approximately 40% of their athletes were Aboriginal.

2.6 Conceptual Framework

Theory can be defined as a system of statements or propositions that can explain the relationship between two or more objects, concepts, phenomena, or characteristics of individuals (Berg, 1995). Within qualitative inquiry, theory can function as *theory before research* or *research-before-theory* (Sandelowski, 1993). In *theory before research*, theory drives the inquiry process, prior to data collection, analysis, and interpretation. *Theory before research* is used to organize, analyze, interpret and provide a context for the findings that the researcher has collected. I viewed using theory as a framework at the beginning of a research project to be problematic from an Aboriginal perspective. Theory is considered very Western and is seen as intimidating within the

Aboriginal community ⁷ (Smith, 1999). By using a preconceived theory, the researcher may bias his or her approach to the study and may be obliged to interpret the findings in a manner that supports a pre-established mainstream theory, drawing attention away from the language, ways of knowing, culture, values, and beliefs unique to the Aboriginal community (Relland, 1998).

Comparatively, in *research before theory*, theory functions to rationalize or justify the approach or to explain the data. According to Sandelowski (1993), “theory *fits* the data well when it easily permits comparison to its major components, when it provides a useful framework for organizing the data for representation, and when it does not distort the meaning of the data” (p. 216). Prior to data collection I proposed this study without providing a theoretical framework to guide the interview guide or one-on-one interviews. I entered data collection, gathered the findings, and data analysis without the use of a theoretical framework. I believe using theory first would have restricted what I saw in the data and how I saw it. By doing this, I believe I stayed as true as possible to the Aboriginal community and their preference for *research before theory*.

I felt theory was appropriate to utilize when the results of the analysis required thoughtful and reflective interpretation. The minority group model has been developed for the analysis of groups disenfranchised because of their ethnicity, gender, class or sexuality (Gill, 1998). Aboriginal people with disabilities find themselves in two minority groups given societies response to their perceived ability and their ethnicity.

⁷ A community refers to a sense of belonging together. An Aboriginal community can refer to a group of people who share a religion, ethnicity, or other characteristics, even when they do not live in the same geographical area. According to the CIHR Guidelines for Health Research, “Aboriginal conceptions of community often encompass relationships in a very broad sense, including relationships of human, ecological and spiritual origin” (2005, p. 7).

The minority group model was developed in the 80s and 90s to explain the social barriers that people with disabilities and other marginalized groups face (Block, Balcazar, & Keys, 2002). The minority group model purports that self-advocacy through group association can bring about the social, political, and economic change needed to overcome the barriers they face in society.

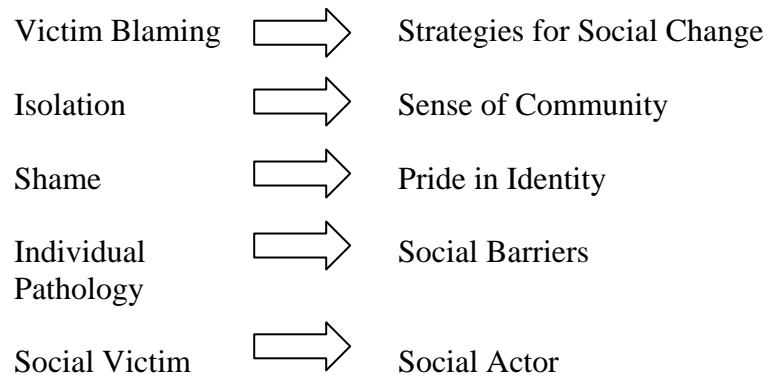
The minority group model is a dynamic view of disability that acknowledges the interaction between the individual and the environment, thereby challenging the assumptions that people with disabilities are the primary source of their problems. It is not only the perceived physical or intellectual limitations of people that are problematic; barriers are also created by social attitudes. Hahn (1993) explains:

- 1) social attitudes rather than physical and/or mental inabilities are the primary source of the problems confronted by disabled women and men;
- 2) all aspects of the social and physical environment are shaped or molded by public policy; and
- 3) public policy is a reflection of pervasive social attitudes and values (p. 41).

The minority group model shifts the blame from the individual who is responsible for his or her own situation to the larger social context (see Figure 1).

Individuals are no longer considered to be the victim for capable of bringing out social change. A sense of social isolation resulting from being “different” now provides a foundation upon which to build a sense of community and shared experiences. Shame gives way to pride as a group identity emerges. Individual pathology or disability does

Figure 2.1 Shift from a biological to minority group model



not define the person, but highlights the social barriers that have been created by those who are not of the minority. Finally, assuming the role of social victim gives way to empowerment as people within the minority use their group voice to be social actors or agents for change in their communities.

The minority group model has been often been used to describe a single issue or frame discussions specific to a single minority group (e.g., disability, ethnicity, gender, sexuality) (Block, Balcazar, & Keys, 2002). For this reason, it is felt that the minority group model was well suited to address the multiple identities of disability and aboriginal ethnicity that was held by the co-participants of this study, disability, and ethnic minority.

2.7 Purpose of the Study

The experience of disability may be influenced not only by the nature of the impairment, but also how it is viewed within the context of the strong cultural values held by an ethnic community. Our understanding of issues and celebrations surrounding disability sport opportunities within Aboriginal communities have yet to be ascertained even though sport and physical activity have the strength to positively impact Aboriginal

people. The purpose of this exploratory and descriptive study was to understand the experience of disability from the perspective of 3 Aboriginal adults and the meaning they give to the importance of sport in their communities

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Tradition

The research question was investigated using a qualitative approach. The overall focus of a qualitative approach is to understand how people make sense of their lives and their experiences (Merriam, 2002). Furthermore, qualitative researchers are interested in how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their lives and experiences (van Manen, 1997).

More specifically, phenomenological researchers aim to gain a deeper understanding of the nature or meaning of an individual's everyday experiences and anything that presents itself to consciousness (i.e., a phenomenon). To be conscious is to be aware of an aspect of the world as "whatever falls outside of consciousness therefore falls outside the bounds of our possible lived experience" (van Manen, 1997, p. 9).

Phenomenology as a qualitative approach is well suited to Aboriginal people as some people have suggested that lived experience is viewed as a legitimate form of knowledge by Aboriginal peoples, as much as of their living culture is passed along to younger generations through story (Relland, 1998). They believe that stories are an expression of the truest form of knowledge because they originate from lived experience (Relland). Moreover, according to Bishop (1996), exploring the lived experiences of Aboriginal people is respectful of their culture.

3.2 Method within Research Tradition

Within the phenomenological research tradition, I employed a collaborative approach. Historically, Aboriginal people have been the “subjects” of research by non-Aboriginal individuals (CIHR Aboriginal Research Ethics Guidelines, 2005). The emerging approach to research with Aboriginal people is to respect their right to participate in the research process. According to CIHR Aboriginal Research Ethics Guidelines, Aboriginal people must be given the opportunity to actively participate in the research project as equal partners. In designing this study, I collaborated with members of the Aboriginal community (see Section 3.3) in efforts to demonstrate sensitivity and respect for their culture, beliefs, and community. As a researcher, I attempted to relinquish some of my position of power, as a White, middle class member of the University, and worked towards establishing an equal relationship with the co-participants (Bishop, 1996). The research process proceeded in a manner that was culturally sensitive, relevant, and respectful promoting a partnership of mutual trust and cooperation (Relland, 1998).

The first question I was often asked when meeting an Aboriginal person interested in this project was ‘why are you interested in our community?’ This was never a question intended to intimidate me but a question people were interested in knowing. Always nervous that I would provide the ‘wrong’ answer or stumble across my words, I would stutter out a response. I was frustrated with myself because I knew I was passionate about the area but seemed to be intimidated by such a direct question. After meeting with members of the Aboriginal community about the research study, I would doubt myself and my ability to take this project on in a successful manner. I often debated the appropriateness of initiating this research study because I felt a tremendous

amount of pressure and sense of responsibility to the Aboriginal culture and their traditions.

In order to become more confident in my abilities to carry out this study, I attempted to develop a solid understanding of the Aboriginal culture so I could utilize culturally appropriate methods (i.e., recruitment strategies, rapport building sessions) in conducting the research study. To develop a truly respectful project, researchers need “to acknowledge our participatory connectedness with the other research participants and promote a means of knowing in a way that denies distance and separation and promotes commitment and engagement” (Bishop, 1996, p. 23). In my efforts to honour the Aboriginal community, I (a) respected the co-participants as active partners in the research process who possessed meaningful experiences, concerns and questions; the co-participants were provided the opportunity for collaboration at the initial stages of research by clarifying and discussing the research purpose (Osedowski, 2001), (b) recognized that the co-participants could involve their community Elders in the study if they desired, because Elders have a right to be consulted in research that focuses on members of their community and culture, and (c) worked with the co-participants in articulating a shared experience or truth by involving them in the analysis of the results (Relland, 1998). The co-participants and myself decided that I would also visit with appropriate and interested community members after the study was completed to share the findings as a display of continued partnership and on-going trust (Osedowski). Together, the co-participants and I explored their experience of sport.

3.3 Entering the Field

When standing back and examining my position in this study, I acknowledge that I am an outsider in both the Aboriginal and the disability community. I am a Caucasian, middle-class, able-bodied female. When first entering an Aboriginal community or a meeting with a potential co-participant, I believe there may have been a level of disappointment when he or she realized the person entering the meeting was not an Aboriginal person or a person with a disability conducting and furthering the research agenda for their community. As an outsider, I felt that my credibility was in question.

In the literature review, the terms majority and minority were used to define the Caucasian population and the Aboriginal population. When I first met people from the Aboriginal community, the terms I felt best described my position were ‘outsider,’ and ‘minority.’ It was a very peculiar feeling looking at myself, and being looked at in a reversed manner. The diversity of our skin color was apparent and the differences in our ethnic background appeared to be ‘more’ of an issue rather than ‘less’ of an issue.

When entering an Aboriginal community, both in the past and for this study, I felt like a stranger negotiating between knowledge overload and learning the ability to cope and deal with strangers (Holstein & Gubrium, 2003). I believe that my past experiences working on Aboriginal reserves developing sport programs helped increase my comfort level and also prepared me for the initial feeling of being in the minority myself. My comfort level increased and my anxiety and apprehension diminished each time I entered a new meeting or community, as I came to the realization that the community members may only have been trying to protect their community.

3.4 Co-Participants and Community Partnerships Prior to the Study

Prior to the study, I consulted with influential individuals within the Aboriginal community, SaskSport, the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations (FSIN), and people within the field of recreation. These people helped me formulate my research question and provided valuable information in the development of the methodology. I was in contact with (a) an employee of Saskatchewan Health who had extensive experience with participatory research and talking circles within his First Nations community, and assisted me with co-participant recruitment and expenses for the proposed budget, (b) a First Nations elementary teacher who assisted me with the development of the interview protocol, (c) a First Nations man and program coordinator for the BC Wheelchair Sports Association who assisted in participant recruitment, and (d) the Executive Director of the Aboriginal Sports Circle who had contact with members of First Nations communities and organizations. While working in rural Aboriginal communities in the summer of 2004, I also developed important relationships with the Recreational Director of two First Nations reserves.

I also consulted with three Aboriginal women who expressed support for the project. They were a former Coordinator with the Saskatchewan Prevention Institute, the Community Research Facilitator of the Indigenous Peoples Health Research Centre, and the counsellor and instructor of the Indian Teacher Education Program (ITEP) at the University of Saskatchewan. These women assisted me with gathering relevant literature and protocol required for working with Aboriginal people. Two of the most important protocols I learned from them were the use of ‘circles’ and the presentation of tobacco to the Elders. Talking circles are used in the Aboriginal community for telling stories and for Elders to counsel members of their community. I was also informed that when

approaching or making a request of an Elder, it was important to present the Elder with a gift of appreciation. In many First Nations communities the protocol involves presenting the Elder with tobacco, which is spiritually significant in most First Nations cultures. According to Darrell Greyeyes, Elder (Community Education, 2001), “The act of giving tobacco is important. When you give an Elder tobacco you are saying ‘I respect your wisdom and knowledge, I welcome you, I want you to provide a service of information’” (p. 6). With the assistance of the community members mentioned above, I felt fully prepared and comfortable if a co-participant wanted me to approach the Elder of his or her community.

Feeling this level of comfort was not always the case, however. When I first met the counsellor of ITEP in one of my graduate classes I was very intimidated of her and her strong passion for her Aboriginal culture. As part of our class evaluation, we were required to present the first draft of our research proposal to our classmates. The presentation at term end was followed by comments and suggestions from our peers to improve the proposed study. Throughout class discussion, she challenged me endlessly, both indirectly and directly, and initially I felt that I should not conduct research in an Aboriginal community. As I strengthened my own beliefs, I began to challenge her ideas back. By the end of the term she became one of my strongest support systems providing me with ideas, feedback, and insight into this project. In return I believe I provided her with another perspective on cross cultural research. Because of this interaction and many other interactions with community partners, my outlook on this study became increasingly positive. The partnerships I developed were solid, leaving me with full confidence that I would succeed in all aspects of the research process.

3.5 Sampling Strategy

Qualitative inquiry typically focuses on small purposefully selected samples that can provide information rich cases to illuminate an in-depth understanding of the question under study (Patton, 2002). In qualitative research, we may learn a great deal more from a small number of carefully selected individuals than from larger samples (Patton). The sample size suggested for phenomenological studies is 3 to 10 individuals (Creswell, 1998). Given the exploratory and descriptive nature of this study, I aimed to collaborate with 4 co-participants, holding the assumption that the final sample may be 3 due to the potential attrition of one person.

When purposefully selecting information rich cases there are many different strategies that can be utilized (Patton, 2002). Criterion based sampling is a suggested sampling strategy for phenomenological research studies and was employed for this study (Creswell, 1998). In a criterion based selection a predetermined set of criteria are developed to purposefully select individuals who can provide detailed, information rich stories about the phenomenon of interest.

A maximum variation sampling strategy was also employed, meaning that within the participant group of interest, the co-participants represented a broad range of its members (Patton, 2002). The individuals who were eligible for this study were not limited to a specific disability classification (i.e., spinal cord injury). Therefore, the reasons for the physical disability could include congenital disabilities (e.g., cerebral palsy, spina bifida) or acquired disabilities (e.g., spinal cord injury). This sampling strategy was particularly useful for capturing central themes that cut across the experiences of individuals with physical disabilities irrespective of their disability

classification, thereby enhancing the transferability of the findings and adding to the diversity of experiences. The sampling criteria included individuals who:

- (a) Had a physical disability for five or more years⁸ (e.g., spinal cord injury, paralysis, spina bifida),
- (b) Identified with their Aboriginal ancestry, as defined by the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People,
- (c) 18 years of age and older⁹,
- (d) Male or female, and
- (e) Were currently involved in sport as athletes¹⁰ or were interested in promoting sport.

Individuals were not eligible for this study if they had an intellectual disability, as individuals with intellectual disabilities have distinct life experiences from those with physical disabilities. I determined whether potential co-participants should be excluded due to an intellectual disability through an ecological assessment that involved level of communication and information provided by the recruiting organizations. For example, Special Olympics Saskatchewan contacted me with two potential co-participants. When I asked the organization about the youth, I discovered they both had Down syndrome, thereby excluding them from the study.

⁸ The co-participants had to live with their disability for five or more years. Therefore, if their injury was acquired, they had time to reintegrate back into their communities, establish a new identity, a sense of self, and become comfortable with their disability (Gill, 1998) before reflecting and articulating their experiences. Individuals with acquired spinal cord injuries reported between 4-6 years to integrate themselves into sport after rehabilitation and to gain a sense of comfort with their new identity (Levins, Redenbach, Dyck, 2004).

⁹ Individuals over the age of 18 were recruited because of the breadth of experiences provided with age and the practical issues regarding informed consent and collaboration.

¹⁰ An athlete in sport can be defined as an individual who participates in sport or is physically active or fit. In general, an athlete is defined as one's view of self in relation to his or her involvement in sport (Anderson, 2004).

As mentioned in the literature review, there are approximately 80 Aboriginal groups in Canada, each with its own cultural identity (Pidgeon & Cox, 2002). To consider all Aboriginal people to be a homogenous group would be incorrect and inappropriate. Pidgeon and Cox (2002) state that “Aboriginal people are not a homogenous group with similar histories, beliefs, cultures, and needs” (p. 5). I was aware and sensitive to the cultural diversity of the Aboriginal population, and therefore, aimed to target the First Nations communities in southwestern Saskatchewan. However, this was not possible due to the difficulty experienced in recruiting the co-participants.

The co-participants of the study ultimately came from three First Nations groups throughout Saskatchewan.

3.6 ‘Finding’ Co-participants

I watched two hockey games in a community that had a large First Nations population the previous winter to initiating my study and saw two Aboriginal people in wheelchairs. As well, I worked in my mother’s elementary school assisting some of her Aboriginal students with disabilities. So beginning this research project, I held a very strong assumption that I would be able to target the First Nations communities in this geographical area of Saskatchewan. However, the process of ‘finding’ co-participants was much more challenging than I had anticipated.

A recruitment table was created as I contacted individuals and community organizations (see Table 3.1). The table was divided into four groups based on the commonality of the organizations and the order in which they were contacted. The table was generated to organize the contacts and as a future reference for myself, the co-

Table 3.1 *Organizations and Communities Contacted for Co-Participant Recruitment*

Group Developed	Who Did I Contact
Group 1: Personal Network	Coordinator at Last Touch Regional Recreation Association Coordinator at Saskatchewan Sport Coordinator at Saskatchewan Wheelchair Sports Association Friend at Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations Director of Camp Easter Seal Director of SK Population Health & Evaluation Research Unit Director of Aboriginal Sports Circle
Group 2: Referrals from Group 1	Canada Summer Games Prince Albert Grand Council Saskatchewan Aboriginal Network on Disability Neil Squire Foundation Saskatoon Public Schools Regina Catholic Schools Regina Public Schools
Group 3: First Nations Communities	Fort Qu'Appelle, Saskatchewan Kawacatoose First Nations Pasqua First Nations Muskowekan First Nations Standing Buffalo First Nations Peepeekisis First Nations Piapot First Nations Day Star First Nations Gordons First Nations Pelican Narrows
Group 4: Referrals from Groups 2 & 3	Aboriginal Coordinator for Regina Public Schools Aboriginal Consultant for Regina Catholic Schools Saskatchewan Sport Zone Coordinators Regina Métis Sports and Culture Prince Albert Services Rehabilitation Counsellor Skiing for the Disabled Wascana Rehabilitation Centre Prince Albert Community Living Gary Tinker Federation Northern Recreation Coordinator

participants, and my graduate supervisor. People I had previously worked for or were in close and recent contact with were initially contacted (see Group 1 in Table 3.1). After speaking with these people, I was referred to organizations and school boards they had collaborated with in the past or organizations they felt would be of assistance in recruiting co-participants (see Group 2 in Table 3.1). While contacting various directors of organizations and coordinators of school boards, I simultaneously began to phone the Recreational Directors in the First Nations communities with whom I had previously worked (see Group 3 in Table 3.1). The Recreational Directors did not know any individuals from their communities who fit the criteria developed for the study. The contacts from Groups 2 and 3 resulted in a final group of organizations that I subsequently contacted.

Throughout this process, there were many communities and organizations that expressed no interest in the study, did not return my phone call or personally hung up on me. When reflecting back on my phone conversations, I thought, “Why would someone want to keep listening to a stranger? How would someone know to trust me over the phone?” If I was busy that day, I would have probably just answered the questions quickly and moved on. When reflecting back on a few of my conversations, I laughed thinking of a salesperson trying to sell her research project. Indeed this is a reflection of the importance behind promoting personal relationships with the Aboriginal community and diminishing the distance between myself, as the researcher, and the Aboriginal community (Bishop, 1996).

The waiting game...there were only so many people I could call and after spending many days calling organizations and communities, I began to feel a sense of discouragement. I was frustrated that I could do nothing but wait for someone to call

me back. I felt like I disappointed myself and my supervisor by attempting this study. People had warned me that I was taking on a huge task but I thought the challenge would eventually be worth it. After two or three weeks of watching Oprah and sitting by the telephone I contemplated an alteration in my thesis. I thought of taking out the 'Aboriginal' part of the study and exploring sport for people with disabilities in rural communities. I also pondered the idea of changing the disability from physical to intellectual or to open the study up to Manitoba and Alberta. Patience was not my strength and my mother reminded me of this daily. I decided to wait a little bit longer before changing my thesis in anticipation that my phone would eventually ring with an interested organization.

As I was sitting on my couch waiting for the phone to ring, I began to question my position in the study. I could not help but think that if I was a member of the Aboriginal community, or a member of the disability community, I would not be having such a difficult time making contact with potential co-participants. Further thought was given to the possible intimidation I was feeling in contacting people who were older than me. After years of working with children and youth with disabilities, maybe I developed a comfort level with younger people. I believe that older Aboriginal people are tied closely to their community and their culture causing me to feel intimidated and hesitant in saying or doing something 'inappropriate' to disrespect their language or culture. The people I spoke to may have felt my insecurity.

While self-reflecting one day, The Director of Skiing for the Disabled returned my phone call with two possible co-participants from Northern Saskatchewan. She contacted both individuals and requested their co-operation in meeting with me. After these two individuals agreed to meet, the Director of Skiing for the Disabled shared their

contact information with me. I personally contacted these two individuals via telephone to set up a meeting to discuss the study and their interest in sport and recreation. Of these two individuals contacted by the Director of Skiing for the Disabled, only one completed the entire study due to a lack of interest towards the research study from the first individual. Knowing that I wanted to find four co-participants I continued to brainstorm new approaches to finding other individuals.

I believe the organizations from groups one, two, and three struggled to find possible co-participants because of the original criteria. Initially, I was looking for four Aboriginal youth who (a) had a physical disability, (b) lived on their rural Aboriginal reserve for two or more years, (c) were eligible for youth sport (age 18 to 23) and, (d) were currently involved in competitive sport for two or more years. I realized after I began the recruitment process that in order to find co-participants I would have to broaden the criteria. Due to the incidence of persons with disabilities in rural Aboriginal communities and the lack of involvement in sport by Aboriginal people with disabilities, the criteria were broadened as seen in section 3.5.

My patience was rewarded further. A short time after talking with the director of Skiing for the Disabled, I was invited to attend a Centennial Symposium and strategic planning session organized by the Saskatchewan First Nations Network on Disabilities. The individual that I initially contacted from the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations was organizing this session and called to extend an invitation to me. She felt that it would be very valuable for me to attend and a possible opportunity to make connections with Aboriginal people with disabilities. The aim of the symposium was to build a strategic plan by working together in developing sport and recreation opportunities for Aboriginal people with disabilities. At the symposium, a young First

Nations man spoke of his experiences with sport and recreation. I introduced myself to him after his presentation and he expressed his interest in participating in the study.

The Saskatchewan Wheelchair Sports Association (SWSA) was contacted in group one of the recruitment process. The program coordinator of SWSA mentioned a young man who was associated with the SWSA through his participation in track and field. He identified with his Aboriginal ancestry but was residing in an urban community. Because the SWSA was one of the first organizations I contacted, I initially dismissed this possible co-participant in hopes to discover another co-participant who better fit the criteria. As mentioned earlier, the criteria was broadened which then opened up the study for this young man. Saskatchewan Wheelchair Sports Association then contacted this individual and discovered he was interested in participating in this study.

3.7 Co-Participants

Ultimately, three Aboriginal individuals took part in the study, one woman and two men. Pseudonyms were used to protect the co-participants' identity. Each co-participant picked his or her own pseudonym and chose a name that held inner significance. I feel that this was a very significant and meaningful component of the study and would like to elaborate upon the pseudonyms the co-participants suggested. The name of the first co-participant, "Wheels," was selected because he reported he was always on the go and loved moving quickly in his wheelchair. The pseudonym "Pooh" was picked by the co-participant because it was a 'pet name' given to her by her husband. She reported her husband has been her strongest support system and love of

her life. The third co-participant chose Pedro as his pseudonym as it was a nick name given to him by his team-mates.

The first co-participant Wheels, was a 23 year-old-male with spina bifida. Spina bifida is a congenital disorder of the neural tube. Wheels walked until he entered grade 9 and soon after began using a wheelchair for mobility. Wheels has lived in an urban community his entire life and was raised by a foster family until he moved into a care home. He identified himself as being a First Nations individual and recognized the First Nations reserve where he was born. Wheels told me on a number of occasions that he was not very happy at the care home. He never elaborated as to why he was unhappy, but was striving to find an apartment in which he could be fully independent. Wheels participated in hockey, basketball, rugby and soccer before joining track and field. At the time of the study he was a highly involved track and field athlete who practiced daily and competed regularly in provincial and national sport events. He was not employed in the community because he considered himself to be a full time athlete.

The second co-participant, Pooh, was a 57-year-old woman with paraplegia due to a spinal cord injury. Pooh was in a car accident 15 years ago and has used a wheelchair since then. She identified with her First Nations reserve but was living with her husband on a different reserve near a rural community in Northern Saskatchewan. The reserve in which she resided was four hours away from an urban centre in Saskatchewan. She was employed at the Band office. Since her accident, Pooh reported that she has attempted to develop sport and recreational programs in her adopted community for Aboriginal people with disabilities. She was very interested in wheelchair basketball and strove to find anybody in her community dedicated to developing a team. Pooh has been a long time advocate for sport and was a competitive

athlete prior to her accident. Although an advocate, due to the lack of sport opportunities for people with disabilities in her community, she herself was not involved in competitive sport. I felt she held a very valuable perspective on sport and recreation for Aboriginal people with disabilities and could provide valuable information that was relevant to the research question.

The third co-participant, Pedro, was a 33-year-old Aboriginal man who has always resided on his First Nations reserve 30 miles from an urban centre. He rented the basement suite of his sister's home. Pedro worked as a guidance counsellor at the local elementary school and a professional stalker (i.e., surveillance worker) at an urban casino. Pedro has had one arm since birth and competed as an amputee athlete. He organized and took part in as much sport as possible and participated competitively in ice hockey, baseball, and soccer with able bodied teams on his reserve. Pedro was also highly involved with coaching and developing sport and recreational opportunities in his rural community.

The co-participants completed a general information form to assist in gathering this background information. From the general information form, I collected their contact information, basic demographic information, and previous and current experiences in sport. The co-participant information form appears in Appendix A.

I do not remember feeling hesitant about meeting Pooh, Pedro, or Wheels. I was excited to begin this phase of the study, meet new people and learn of their life journeys. I felt lucky to have finally met three people who wanted to talk to me and take part in this study. At this point, I did not perceive myself to fill the role as an 'outside' researcher. Ethnicity appeared to be 'less' relevant as we were 'just' four individuals passionate about sport for Aboriginal people with disabilities. I had been welcomed into

three people's lives and was about to learn about their stories and experiences being an Aboriginal person with a disability.

3.8 Pilot Testing the Interview Guide

To accommodate for the differences in minority cultures between myself and the co-participants, the interview guide and information form was developed with the assistance of a member of the Aboriginal community. A member of a First Nations community and elementary physical education teacher with experience working with First Nations people in recreational settings supported me in the development of culturally sensitive questions. The interview questions appear in Appendix B.

By using an interview guide, I departed from a strict phenomenological conversational format, however, because this was my first interviewing experience, I took the advice of van Manen (1997) and used an interview guide to keep me focused on the research question. Learning how to conduct a successful interview is primarily through one's own experience and acquired through practice (Kvale, 1996).

The interview guide was pilot tested and my interview skills were refined prior to the implementation of the research interviews. The pilot interview was conducted with a colleague who has a spinal cord injury and was involved in wheelchair sport. Following the pilot interview, the interview questions were modified to more open ended questions thereby encouraging further discussion. I also learned that a few of my interview skills needed to be refined prior to my first individual interview. According to Seidman (1998), the following skills are important and I noticed they were also the skills I needed to improve upon prior to the next individual interview: (a) follow up on what the co-participants say, (b) ask questions when the context is not clear, (c) avoid leading

questions, (d) avoid interrupting the co-participants when they are talking, (e) keep the co-participants focused and asking for concrete details, and (f) tolerate silence. The skill I needed to strengthen the most was my ability to tolerate silence. In the pilot interview, I found myself moving on to the next question if there was a break in the conversation. I did not recognize that this could be a moment of reflection and thought for the co-participant.

3.9 Meetings and Introduction to Research Study

The steps undertaken in the study are outlined in Table 3.2. The intent of the ‘meeting and introduction phase’ was to meet with the co-participants who expressed interest in the study. An overview of the proposed study was discussed at this time. I also aimed to work towards developing rapport with the co-participants in an attempt to build a comfort level so that the co-participants would be willing to talk about their experiences (Holstein & Gubrium, 2003). I hoped to gain the trust of the co-participants by (a) participating in community activities, (b) sharing friendly conversations over coffee and lunch with community or family members, and (c) disclosing something about myself on a personal level. The discussions during the first meeting were very relaxed, consisting of conversations related to our pasts, what we currently do, our interest in the area of Aboriginal people with disabilities, and sport and physical activity. I was anticipating this stage may take two or three different occasions. However, the co-participants indicated they were ready to take part in the interview after the first meeting.

Aside from building rapport and getting to know one another, I also utilized the first meeting as an opportunity to provide background information on the study and ask for the co-participants’ feedback on the proposed purpose. We discussed the context of

Table 3.2 *Summary of Data Collection and Interpretation Procedures*

1. Development of interview guide
 2. Piloted interview with colleague
 3. Meetings and introduction phase with co-participants
 4. Consent process
 5. Interview one with co-participants
 6. Interview two/artefact collection with co-participants
 7. Data analysis/thematic development
 8. Data interpretation with co-participants
 9. Meeting with community organizations to discuss dissemination of results
 10. Plan for dissemination of results formulated
-

the study and the significance of the proposed work for the Aboriginal population. We also talked about the methods, including possible approval from the Community Elders (see Section 3.7.3) and approval from the University Research Ethics Board. I also outlined ideas for how the data could be collected, analyzed, interpreted, and disseminated. I discussed the co-participants' role in the data analysis and the follow up steps that they would like to see pursued. The outcome of these discussions will be highlighted in the data analysis and future implications sections.

3.10 Ethical Approval

This study was approved by the University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board on October 24, 2005 (see Appendix C). The co-participants indicated their consent by signing the consent form (see Appendix D).

As well as being bound by the University Ethics Board, this study followed the CIHR guidelines for health research involving Aboriginal peoples. These guidelines were designed to facilitate health related research while valuing the Aboriginal communities' traditions and beliefs (see Appendix E). This document is updated every four years with the last revisions completed in 2005. The guidelines promote research partnerships and include protocols to achieve and encourage culturally competent research.

When a research study involves Aboriginal individuals it has been suggested that researchers consider the interests of Aboriginal communities (Battiste, 2000). Respecting Aboriginal communities within a research context requires consent of multi sections of that community, for example, the recreational directors, the Elders, and the co-participants. I wanted to seek verbal consent from each co-participants community before proceeding with data collection. I was excited to meet with the Elders, present them with tobacco as a gift, and ask for their permission to begin this study.

I approached the co-participants at our initial meeting about gaining community consent. Pooh, Wheels, and Pedro did not believe it was valuable to ask their community recreational directors or Elders for verbal consent. Pooh had recently moved to her current reserve and did not feel a strong connection with her Elder. Wheels had never lived on his home reserve and was not familiar with his Elder or the protocol involved in approaching his Elder. Pedro did not give an explanation as to why he did not see the

necessity of achieving consent from his community Elder. The co-participants made the decision to involve community members at the conclusion of the research study, if appropriate.

3.11 Data Collection

3.11.1 Interviews

The research data was collected by ways of one-on-one face to face interviews, artefacts, and field notes. Semi-structured individual interviews were used to explore recollections of disability and sport. A one-on-one interview seeks to allow both the interviewer and the interviewee to open up to the other person, explore his or her point of view, and truly understand what he or she says (Kvale, 1996). A phenomenological interview was viewed as an appropriate method of gathering stories with members of an Aboriginal community as they promoted personal relationships and allowed myself and the co-participants to give their undivided attention to each other (Friesen & Orr, 1998). Phenomenological interviews also helped the researcher minimize her position of privilege over the co-participants (Friesen & Orr) as the co-participants were free to contribute information they felt was useful to the study beyond the questions outlined in the interview guide. The semi-structured format of the interviews in this research study allowed the co-participants to guide the direction of the conversation, as the questions were open ended, enabling them to discuss experiences of meaning to them. Although the interview guide was followed, additional probing questions were asked to encourage the co-participants to talk about their experiences and feelings that they were motivated to discuss.

In the first one-on-one interviews, the questions were focused on the co-participants' experiences as Aboriginal people with disabilities (i.e., What does the word disability mean to you? Tell me about your sport experiences as an Aboriginal person with a disability? How do you feel you are perceived as a person with a disability in your community?).

The second one-on-one interview was designed to clarify and expand on questions from the first interview and took a different form depending upon the co-participant. Pooh took part in a second one-on-one semi-structured interview lasting approximately 60 minutes. Pedro and Wheels chose to decline the second interview from the study due to time constraints (e.g., sport competition and careers). In place of the second interview, Pedro and Wheels made themselves available via telephone and e-mail if I had questions arising from the first one-on-one interview.

I traveled to the co-participants' communities for the one-on-one interviews. The interviews took place in a comfortable and relaxed location, mutually decided upon. Pooh and Pedro requested a private location (i.e., conference room) that was as secluded as possible. Wheels felt more comfortable in a public meeting place, therefore we met at a coffee shop. Most importantly, it was essential that I met the co-participants at a time and place that was convenient for them. Each interview was approximately one hour and was tape recorded. According to Schwalbe and Wolkomir (2003), tape recorders are signs of an interviewer's power and can be very intimidating to the respondents. To overcome these feelings, I explained why I wanted to tape the interview, to what use the tape would be put, and who else might hear it. In the event that the co-participant did not want the interview recorded, I was prepared to set the tape recorder aside and carry on the conversation recording their stories and experiences on paper. This issue did not

arise and the tape recorder was used. I transcribed each co-participant's interview verbatim prior to the second interviews or telephone and/or e-mail contact to identify areas for expansion or clarification.

3.11.2 Artefacts

Artefact collection can help pull together the meaning of the experience and attempts to build an in depth picture of his or her story (Creswell, 1998). At the conclusion of the initial one-on-one interview, I had planned to distribute art supplies and ask the co-participants to bring a completed art project, which represented him or herself as an athlete, to the second one-on-one interview. The art project was suggested by a member of a First Nations community because art was a culturally relevant form of expression. However, during the one-on-one interviews, Pooh and Pedro expressed their preference to use photographic images as their artefacts. Throughout the second interview with Pooh and over the telephone with Pedro, suggestions for photos that would capture the experience of living as an Aboriginal person with a disability and their experiences of sport were made. The interview in which Pooh suggested the photographs was recorded and transcribed. I traveled through Pooh's community and took eight pictures at her suggestion, as she was unable to take these pictures due to time restraints from work. Two of the eight pictures appear in Section 4.2 and are supported with a written letter of consent for their use.

I was planning on traveling to one of Pedro's sporting events to gather photographs of his involvement with sport. Unfortunately due to an injury, Pedro did not compete and therefore the pictures were not taken. The third co-participant, Wheels, expressed his feelings and experiences in the form of poetry.

3.11.3 Field Notes

At the end of each interview, I recorded reflections on the study as a whole, impressions about what was said at that interview, ideas for further probes, and preliminary thoughts about the themes that may emerge from the stories. In addition to being a data source, the field notes were also valuable in conceptually returning to the setting during the analysis of the shared stories (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992).

3.12 Data Analysis

Data analysis is the process of systematically searching and arranging the interview transcripts, field notes, and artefacts that have been accumulated to increase our understanding of the experiences or phenomenon being investigated (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). Within a phenomenological study, a common analysis process is thematic analysis (van Manen, 1997). According to van Manen (1997), thematic analysis is simply “a free act of ‘seeing’ meaning” (p. 79). Thematic analysis is an act of developing meaning using an organized and systematic process (van Manen).

The findings were analyzed using the following steps: (a) the interviews were transcribed verbatim, (b) the transcribed interviews were read and reread by myself to obtain a broad understanding of the findings, (c) after the text was read through and organized, I searched for statements and phrases of importance that spoke directly to the research question, (d) the data was sorted by highlighting, coding and categorizing according to their similarities (e.g., perceptions, barriers, and priorities), (e) grouped and organized specific words and phrases into preliminary themes, (f) inspected these meanings for what they reveal about the phenomenon being studied, (g) re-organized the data into themes with a description of each theme, (h) discussed the themes and the

thematic descriptions with my graduate supervisor to generate further insight into themes, (i) shared the themes and thematic descriptions with the co-participants to gain a deeper understanding of the meaning from their perspectives, and (j) re-organized the themes and thematic descriptions from the co-participants' suggestions (Patton, 2002; van Manen, 1997). I met with each co-participant in person for approximately one hour to discuss the findings.

In these one-on-one, member checking (i.e., data interpretation) meetings, we attempted to interpret the significance of the preliminary themes within the context of the research question. Prior to our meetings, I highlighted quotes and phrases from the first draft of the results section that I was hoping the co-participants would expand upon (see Appendix F). We also discussed the final themes and how they could be best presented. While reading the highlighted themes and descriptions to the co-participants, questions were asked such as (a) What does this mean? (b) What is the significance of this statement? (c) What does this sentence reveal about the experience you described? (d) How did this feel? (e) What does this theme mean to you? and (f) Does this theme help understand disability from your perspective and the meaning given to participation in sport. The co-participants reflections and explanations of these questions were recorded on the first draft of the written results (see Appendix E). The co-participants' shared their views on the descriptions I developed, as well as examined, articulated, re-interpreted, omitted, added, or reformulated the themes (van Manen, 1997). Initially, six different themes emerged but after discussing these six themes with the co-participants we believed the results were better represented in four solid themes. The themes were explained through the words of the co-participants and will be described in detail in Section 4. For the majority of the results, the themes were developed together by the co-

participants. However, the first theme was dominated by Pooh's words. Pooh's stories and passion towards disability, ethnicity, and sport were very powerful and dominated the first theme due to the nature of her experiences. Although the other two co-participants' words were not as evident in this theme, their stories do support the essence of the experiences and meaning behind sport for Aboriginal people with disabilities.

3.13 Trustworthiness

3.13.1 Overview

Trustworthiness refers to the quality of an investigation and its findings that make it noteworthy to its audiences (Schwandt, 1997). This research study established trustworthiness through strategies aimed at credibility, dependability, and confirmability (Guba & Lincoln, 1982; Creswell, 1998). As well, Lincoln's (1995) emerging criteria of positionality, voice, critical subjectivity, reciprocity, sacredness, and sharing the perquisites of privilege were applied to determine the quality and value of the study (Lincoln, 1995). Lincoln's emerging criteria, in essence, also define trustworthiness. An overview of the trustworthiness criteria appears in Table 3.3.

3.13.2 Credibility

Patton (2002) suggested that researchers gain credibility through the research methods, design and analysis, given the nature of the phenomenon and the circumstances of the research. A strategy to enhance credibility used in this study was purposive sampling using criterion based strategies. Purposive sampling allowed me to examine information rich cases, in depth and detail to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of interest (Patton). Multiple methods (e.g., interviews, photographs,

Table 3.3 *Summary of the Trustworthiness Criteria*

Trustworthiness Criteria	Application to Study
1. Credibility	Purposive criterion based sampling Multiple methods
2. Dependability	Member checks with co-participants Audit trail
3. Confirmability	Multiple investigators/peer de-briefing Data triangulation
4. Positionality	Rich, contextual description of co-participants Maximum variation sampling Honest about position of researcher
5. Voice	Refining the project Analysis and interpretation
6. Critical subjectivity	Bracketing my experiences
7. Reciprocity	Summary of research study Financial compensation
8. Sacredness	Collaborative approach Co-participants rather than participants
9. Sharing Perquisites of Privilege	Benefits to co-participants

poetry, and field notes) were also incorporated into the research design to ensure data triangulation.

3.13.3 Dependability

Dependability is the ability to collect a true and accurate account of the co-participants' lived experiences (Patton, 2002). Dependability was established through member checks with the co-participants. The co-participants had the opportunity to review the transcripts for accuracy, send any changes back to me and indicate they felt

the transcripts accurately portrayed their stories by signing the transcript release forms. A second level of member checking (i.e., data interpretation) involved a face to face discussion for reflection and discussion of their stories. I achieved this by following up with the co-participants in a one-on-one meeting and throughout the process via meetings, phone conversations, and e-mail.

An audit trail is the documentation gathered (e.g., interview transcripts, field notes, artefacts) and a running account of the research process (Guba, 1981). The creation of an audit trail was used to monitor the collaborative approach with the co-participants, methodological steps, and decision points that were made by the co-participants, my supervisor, and myself throughout the process. The audit trail is a file saved on my computer.

3.13.4 Confirmability

Guba and Lincoln (1982) defined confirmability as the ability to collect trustworthy information using suitable data sources through appropriate data collection procedures. Confirmability was established using multiple investigators, including myself and the co-participants as the primary researchers, my graduate supervisor, and my graduate committee members (Patton, 2002). Peer debriefing was utilized to discuss the study and expose our ideas to one another. Together, we explored the meaning of the research question and the basis for interpretations (Guba & Lincoln).

3.13.5 Positionality

Positionality recognizes the postmodern argument that a research study is always socially, culturally, and racially incomplete and can therefore never represent any one

truth (Lincoln, 1995). I recognized that this study would not present universal or generalizable knowledge. The knowledge that was generated applied to the individuals within the study and may lead to awareness amongst similar individuals or groups across varying contexts, or transferability. Generalized knowledge was apparent in the design when maximum variation sampling was utilized, allowing central themes to surface amongst individuals with a physical disability based on their experiences irrespective of their disability classification.

Positionality was also achieved by displaying honesty about my own stance as the 'researcher.' I presented my position as an outsider and acknowledged my position both socially and culturally within society. This occurred throughout the initial meetings with the co-participants, the consent process, and the interpretation and presentation of the findings. In addition, I provided descriptions of my co-participants and their surroundings in some detail.

3.13.6 Voice

Voice can be viewed as resistance against silence, resistance to disengagement, and as resistance to marginalization (Lincoln, 1995). Lincoln believes that attention to voice is important "to who speaks, for whom, to whom and for what purposes" (p. 282). The research study can be judged to be trustworthy by the extent to which voices other than my own were expressed and heard and by the engagement of Aboriginal individuals within the study. According to Battiste and Henderson (2000), "to act otherwise is to repeat the familiar pattern of decisions being made for Aboriginal people by those who presume to know what is best for them" (p. 133). The individuals involved in this study had the opportunity to provide input into refining the proposed research study. The voice

of the co-participants was present primarily through their words in the interpretation phase of the study. The preliminary themes, narratives, and quotes were shared with the co-participants. At this point they shared their views on the themes and descriptions and provided a more in-depth, meaningful view of the statements and their quotes.

3.13.7 Critical Subjectivity

Subjectivity allowed dialectic relationships to form and to discuss issues of interest (Lincoln, 1995). The co-participants and I carried on casual, friendly conversations outside of the study during which time we discussed topics unrelated to the study. This can best be described by the friendship that developed between Pooh and I. Pooh and I started our relationship off with the ‘awkward’ conversation....“How are you,” “What do you do?” “Have you always lived here?” After that initial meeting, Pooh and I had a very difficult time staying focused on the interview because we developed such a bond and just wanted to talk. It is a feeling that is very hard to explain, but the level of comfort between us was undeniable. There is an excitement in our voices every time we talked, and there were tears the final time we met. The ‘research’ journey between us ended, but I think the lifelong friendship we share has just begun.

My position as an outsider was acknowledged throughout the entire process. I was up front in my proposal, to the community, and to the co-participants regarding my experience working with people with disabilities and Aboriginal youth. I documented my feelings and reactions and have included them throughout this thesis. Subjectivity allowed me to better understand and write about my emotional states before, during, and after the study.

3.13.8 Reciprocity

As the co-participants adjusted their priorities and routines to be involved in the research study, they gave up something for which I am grateful. To accept my presence and my ‘intrusion’ on their culture and community, I responded by indicating I would give time back to their community after the study was completed (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). For an update of the initiatives following the study please see Section 6.3.

Reciprocity also entails honouring each other’s roles in the study (Pidgeon & Cox, 2002). Prior to the study, the co-participants and I discussed each person’s roles and expectations to ensure that all individuals involved would respect each other and work together. At the conclusion of the research study, the co-participants were also presented with an honorarium for their time and expertise in the research study. The honorarium was provided on the advice of my early study contacts who informed me that it is proper protocol to present an honorarium to thank the co-participants for their stories, expertise, and time.

3.13.9 Sacredness

Reason (1993) argued that science has a sacred and meaningful side that emerges from the concern for human dignity and interpersonal respect. By acknowledging sacredness as a criterion for judging qualitative research, human dignity is gained and deep appreciation of the human condition is respected (Lincoln, 1995). To respect the individuals involved, the study took a collaborative approach within the phenomenological tradition. This created relationships that were not based on hierarchical power, but on mutual respect. The idea of sacredness shifted the individuals involved in the study from participants to co-participants.

3.13.10 Sharing the Perquisites of Privilege

Research is often conducted and written for ourselves, our academic community, and our own consumption (Lincoln, 1995). This study has acknowledged the benefits that the co-participants and the community members acquired throughout the process. While negotiating agreements, I was upfront as to the benefits that I would be receiving while working on this study, as well as the benefits that the community and the individual members of the study received (e.g., reimbursement, awareness of disability sport). By encouraging the participants to become co-participants, to tell their own stories, and to re-create their lives as they deemed appropriate was also a method used to share the benefits of the project (Lincoln, 1995).

According to Lincoln (1995), these 'emerging' methods of judging qualitative research have not been tested as to the wide applicability they have for all qualitative research. However, I found these criteria fitting and appropriate for the cross-cultural research study that I conducted. Furthermore, Lincoln's emerging criteria may be more difficult to judge because they are not as common and familiar as dependability, confirmability, and credibility. This study was tailored to the communities in which I was working; therefore, I felt the combination of emerging criteria and more traditional trustworthiness criteria were appropriate because the combined criteria recognized the value of connectedness between the co-participants and the researcher (Lincoln, 1995).

4. RESULTS

Four themes emerged from the thematic analysis (a) *We Have to Get Out First*, (b) *Not Being a Priority*, (c) *Pride Through Accomplishment*, and (d) *The Gift to Grab Others*. As confirmed during the member checking process (i.e., data interpretation), the co-participants felt that each theme portrayed an integral role in their life journey and reflected their experiences of disability and the meaning they gave to participation in sport.

We Have to Get Out First expressed the co-participants' feelings that Aboriginal people with disabilities need to get out of their homes first before participation in their larger communities, and sport in particular, was possible. There was a perception that some members of the Aboriginal community did not understand disability, which could potentially impact the extent to which persons with disabilities would have opportunities to participate in activities of their larger Aboriginal communities.

Not Being a Priority indicated the co-participants faced a lack of sport opportunities. There was a perception that sport within some Aboriginal communities received little priority. Furthermore, sport development for people with disabilities was perceived to be even less of a priority. The co-participants felt that once sport became a priority for the general Aboriginal population, the communities would begin to focus on developing sport for Aboriginal people with disabilities.

Pride Through Accomplishment emerged as the third theme of the co-participants' experiences of disability and sport. The co-participants considered

themselves successful members of their Aboriginal communities, in part due to their interest and accomplishment through sport. They highlighted the benefits that sport brought to their lives and could potentially bring to other Aboriginal people with and without disabilities.

The Gift to Grab Others was the final theme to emerge from the co-participants' stories. The co-participants were at the place in their lives where they felt they developed the gift to grab others. They wanted to use their experiences of sport to 'recruit' other Aboriginal people with disabilities into sport. They also wanted to use their 'gift' to continue the cycle and help people with disabilities become more visible.

Each of the four themes will be presented in further detail, using photographs, quotes and poetry to illustrate their meaning.

4.1 We Have to Get Out First

The co-participants spoke of the lack of Aboriginal people with disabilities visible in rural and urban Aboriginal communities. The co-participants suggested that Aboriginal people with disabilities needed to become involved in their communities. By doing so the contributions they could offer their communities would be witnessed, thereby potentially dispelling assumptions of frailness and dependency. As Pedro stated, "Community members must see a person with a disability before they are expected to understand a person with a disability." The co-participants hoped that once Aboriginal people with disabilities get out of their homes and become visible to their communities, members of their communities would begin to understand more about the abilities and needs of people with disabilities.

As I was talking to the co-participants it became apparent that they did not feel there was a group of people with disabilities within their Aboriginal communities to which they could relate or belong even though they knew there were people with disabilities living in their communities. Wheels made the choice to reside in an urban community because he felt there was a stronger opportunity for him to meet and feel a sense of belonging with other individuals with disabilities. However, Wheels admitted that although he knew there were other Aboriginal people with disabilities in his community, he never saw them and did not share a sense of community with them.

Pooh shared very strong feelings about the lack of people with disabilities “getting out” in her community.¹¹ Throughout our one-on-one interview, Pooh used words such as ‘us,’ ‘we,’ ‘them,’ and ‘they’ when telling personal stories. Pooh was not aware that she was dichotomizing her representation of Aboriginal people with disabilities into two groups, us and them. Upon the shared interpretation of her stories however, it became clear that within her community, Pooh felt people with disabilities were divided into two separate disability groups. The first group was referred to by Pooh as ‘us’ meaning those people with disabilities whom were integrated and visible to their communities. As an example, Pooh told me of an experience while grocery shopping for her and her family. On one very memorable day Pooh encountered another Aboriginal woman grocery shopping from a wheelchair. Pooh immediately wheeled over to her, genuinely thrilled to see another person in public. Pooh claimed, “This lady was in a chair...out in public....and buying her own groceries!” As Pooh was telling me this story she was smiling and vibrating in her chair as if she was reliving the excitement of

¹¹ As mentioned earlier, Pooh’s words dominate the first theme. Although the other two co-participants’ words are not as evident in this theme, their stories do support the essence of the experience of needing to get out into their communities.

the experience she felt that day she encountered another person with a disability at the supermarket, visible to her community. The meeting in the supermarket was a single occurrence, as Pooh continued to feel that people with and without disabilities did not yet recognize the importance and value of getting out. Pooh strove to take control of this situation by attempting to connect with people with disabilities and build a sense of community. She believed only by 'getting out,' and taking control would she be able to do that. Pooh stated:

Here [my community] you have to get *them* out first, cause you don't see too many of *them* around. Talk to my old man and he will tell you how excited I get if I see someone in a wheelchair...like I'm just tickled, I can hardly wait to get at her and ask "What's your name?" "Where are you from?" "How long have you been in a chair?" I let them know that there are more of *us* around, you just don't see them. I want to talk to them right away and say "Right on! You're getting out" and let them know that there are other people like *them* out there too.

Pooh was proud of her disability identity and because of that pride, without conscious awareness, internally imposed the status 'us' as a term to describe herself and other people with disabilities who integrate themselves into society. It was evident that Pooh perceived herself to be a visible member of her Aboriginal community and acted on her desire to be a member and feel a sense of belonging within her larger community. Pooh stated:

It was important for me to get out and into the community cause I've never seen anybody in a wheelchair before I first moved here. It's gotta change...I told myself it's gotta change, you've gotta see people out in wheelchairs. Just because they're in a wheelchair they can't be stuck in the house. So I went out and did

my own grocery shopping and stuff like that. I'll just let the Aboriginal community see me.

The second group that Pooh made reference too was 'them' meaning those individuals with disabilities who were hidden in their homes and invisible to the community. Pooh described 'them' with an example. When Pooh went into public she indicated that people approached her and said, "Oh my Auntie is in a wheelchair and she never comes to the café." After she heard this comment, Pooh expressed her frustration and responded by saying, "Have you asked her if she would like to go for coffee? Have you ever tried to bring her to the café for a cup of coffee?" Pooh felt that "Auntie" was identified primarily by her wheelchair and isolated from society because of it.

Although Pooh made an attempt at encouraging people with disabilities to get out of their homes, she felt the lack of disability presence in her community may have been directly influenced by some family's perceptions about the stigmas of disability. These external social influences have helped impose the status of 'them,' thereby further separating those with disabilities from their community. Pooh stated,

They (their family) still hide them away, like it reflects bad on the family to have someone with a disability. I still think...just like Aboriginal people and what they do with people with AIDS. It's the same thing.

When Pooh was asked to reflect upon this statement, she felt the comparison to AIDS was because some Aboriginal people and their families perceive AIDS and physical disabilities to be a disease that is contagious by touch. When Pooh goes back to her home reserve there are people that will not talk to her because they think her disability might be contagious and they might, "get what she's got." Pooh looked disgusted when talking about this but still managed to present a positive outlook on the

situation. Pooh said, “I don’t think that people fully understand the two because they don’t have the full story and there is not enough education provided.” Pooh further clarified her point by adding that Aboriginal people do not talk about AIDS or people with disabilities because they may not really understand the situation people are faced with and may not know how to talk about it.

Following the interview, I recorded my thoughts as field notes about the comparison of disability to AIDS. I personally feel that in some communities and parts of our country there can be a social discomfort towards people with HIV or AIDS. I believe this social discomfort is reflective of the many false stereotypes towards individuals with AIDS (e.g., contagious through casual contact, acquired by deviant behaviour) due to the lack of awareness and education some members of society possess. When analyzing the findings with Pooh, I was hoping that she could expand the link she made between AIDS and disability, and her suggestion that they are something of which to be ashamed. However, Pooh chose not to speak about the perceived assumptions people held and focused on the lack of education about both disability and AIDS. I felt this was a very enlightened and positive reflection of a complex issue.

Pooh presented another social stigma that is associated with physical disabilities. There are members of her community (i.e., external influences) that associate disability with ‘old age.’ Pooh felt this further dissociates people with disabilities from their community, as she felt Aboriginal people perceived wheelchairs to be a sign of frailness associated with older adults. Pooh suggested that the Aboriginal community appeared to view people with disabilities as those who needed to be looked after and people who were past their productive years of life. The community’s view of disability focused on the individual pathology of the person (i.e., biological model of disability), rather than

the interaction between the individual and the environment. As Pooh wheeled through her Aboriginal community she was identified as a person with a disability and was faced with looks of sympathy that filled her with frustration and anger. For example, as Pooh was wheeling down the street one day, a person walking behind her started pushing her chair. She interpreted the push to be offered because she was perceived as weak and in need of help. She turned around and was very assertive with the person. Pooh glared and said, "Excuse me, did I ask you for your help? Well no. Well don't push my chair. I'm quite capable of getting from point A to point B. If I wanted your help I would ask you." Pooh wheeled away annoyed because people assumed that because she used a wheelchair she needed help and required someone to care for her.

Pooh was very comfortable at work because the people she worked with did not look upon her as someone with a disability. She did not want people to view her as a dependent person who needed to be looked after. Being visible to her colleagues on a daily basis was a benefit because they did not perceive her to be frail or weak, but a very able individual. Pooh explained:

...Like I'll go to our Christmas party because all the staff have seen me around and they aren't going to come up to me and say, "Oh my grandma is in a chair," and feel sorry for ya cause you're in a chair. People don't stop and think "What could that person do?" or "What do they do?"

Pedro related to the comfort level Pooh experienced at her workplace as he also felt comfortable on his reserve living as a person with an arm amputation. Pedro described walking through his reserve as a very comfortable and 'normal' part of his life. This was a benefit of being out in the community and integrating into his community. He did not feel that people on his reserve were looking at him or treating

him any differently than his able bodied friends or colleagues. However, the co-participants concurred that there may be a greater acceptance towards people with higher levels of mobility. The more functional the person (e.g., amputation versus wheelchair), the less different the individuals were perceived to be from the mainstream Aboriginal population. There may be a pressure within the Aboriginal community to conform to their view of normalcy. Pedro had an easier time 'conforming' because his disability provided a greater level of function compared to the two co-participants who used wheelchairs.

Pooh and Pedro indicated that their community Elders are very highly respected and have a great deal of influence on their community and community events. Therefore in order to 'convince' the communities that people with various types of disabilities can and should be visible members of the community, Pooh and Pedro have met with their Aboriginal Elders on their reserves. Pooh and Pedro wanted to improve the relationship between people with disabilities and their mainstream Aboriginal community. They emphasized to the Elders the need for social change within their communities and the importance of shifting the emphasis from the disability and individual pathology to society and the effects of the environment. Pooh and Pedro wanted their Elders to know that they were visible members of their community, although perceived to be part of a group marginalized by members of their community. They have attempted to communicate with the Elders ensuring the Elders know where they work and what they do as people with disabilities. Pooh explained, "You gotta look at it in stages I guess. Maybe they [Elders] gotta make people aware first before they [people with disabilities] can start doing things. The community has to become more aware of disability first maybe."

The co-participants also told me how important it was that people with and without disabilities in the Aboriginal community saw them taking part in daily and community activities. Pooh actively embraced the concept that social attitudes and stigmas are a primary reason behind people not getting out rather than an individuals physical and/or intellectual inabilities. According to Pooh, there has been a shift in beliefs and she feels that, “We have a long ways to go yet....We’re getting there....There’s awareness out there now though....There is way more out there than when I was first in a chair.”

4.2 Not Being a Priority

The co-participants presented many social barriers within their communities that lead to not being a priority in sport as advocates, athletes, or spectators. According to Wheels, Pedro, and Pooh, members of their communities assumed people with disabilities were not interested in sport and therefore did not feel the need to make sport and recreational facilities physically (e.g., architecture) or psychologically (e.g., welcoming environment) accessible. The co-participants explained people’s perceptions towards sport, lack of sport programming, lack of interest, inaccessible facilities and poor fields as social barriers all leading to them (people with disabilities) ‘not being a priority.’ When I asked the co-participants who did not view them as a priority in sport, they felt it was Aboriginal individuals with disabilities, members of their reserves, the larger Aboriginal community, and provincial sport organizations. The co-participants, both on and off reserves, had minimal opportunities to interact in sport with other Aboriginal people with disabilities. Pedro stated, “I’m just trying to think of anyone else who has a disability that enjoys sports. But right now it is very hard.”

Pooh helped illustrate her community's perception of sport for people with disabilities through a story about dancing. Pooh began dancing when she was three-years-old in front of the mirror. She used to go out to community dances and dance all night, as a young adult, waking up feeling "pretty good" because she felt like she had a good workout. After her injury she did not believe that she would be able to dance again, which was devastating for her as dancing was one of her favourite activities. As Pooh became more knowledgeable about her disability, and understood of what she was capable, she realized that she was able to dance in her wheelchair. She liked to tell the children at wedding dances she attended that she can still go out on the dance floor but just may take up a little bit more room. Pooh felt that her community would have expected her to give dancing up, but she wouldn't just because she was in a wheelchair. The focus was placed on her inabilities because of her wheelchair rather than her abilities 'despite' her wheelchair. Pooh felt this story also applied to sport as a whole and expanded, "I think right now too it [sport] depends on people's priorities. I think there are still a lot of people that see someone in a wheelchair and they don't even think that person would be even interested in sports....but they are."

Pooh spoke in frustration when she recalled people making generalizations, such as an interest in sport for people in wheelchairs. Pooh strongly felt that people should just ask them questions rather than making assumptions about their interest in sport. Pooh said, "If someone asked me if I was interested in sport, they would be very surprised by my answer I'm sure."

Pedro spoke more globally about the interest level in sport by his able bodied community members. He indicated that sport was not perceived to be a priority in his community. Pedro struggled to find people who wanted to help develop sport programs

for the children and youth without disabilities. Pedro attempted to find parental and community involvement and claimed, “Like there is just no organization here, no nothing. They [community members] have to help the kids first before they would even think of having something for people with disabilities.” Pedro was supported by Wheels as he also agreed sport programming was important for all Aboriginal people. However, because they had a disability they were also motivated advocates and social actors for sport opportunities for people with disabilities. Wheels stated, “I would just like to generally see more Aboriginal people getting involved with sport and specifically more people with disabilities.” Pedro added,

I know there’s not a lot of programming out there for Aboriginals, period. They have to set programs for just Aboriginal people before they even think of getting to Aboriginals with disabilities.... I look at it as being Aboriginal first, not being disabled. So once we fix the Aboriginal part of it, then we can start looking at the disability.

From my field notes, I noted that Pedro spoke with a level of acceptance and comfort in explaining the order of priorities within his Aboriginal community. He did not appear rattled by the lack of opportunities specific to people with disabilities. Pedro carried a sense of optimism because sport programming was in its early stages of expansion for Aboriginal people. Pedro used the Saskatchewan Soccer Association as an example and recalled, “I see the Saskatchewan Soccer Association doing that right now. I know they are trying to get the programs started for Aboriginal athletes.”

The experience of sport was interpreted by the co-participants as (a) active participant, (b) advocate for, and (c) spectator of. The co-participants acknowledged that people with disabilities have a difficult time accessing sport programs as athletes as well

as spectators at sporting events. Pedro and Pooh agreed their reserves lacked facilities that people in wheelchairs could easily access. Pooh was very limited to the buildings she could access in her community. As an advocate and spectator of sport, Pooh enjoyed watching sporting events, and being seen as a spectator. Pooh loved to watch sports but when she went to a hockey game in her community she had to sit at ice level in front of everybody. She was constantly moving because people were coming in and out and there was no place for her to go and be 'out of the way.' Her chair blocked access into the bleachers so Pooh stopped going to hockey games. There were many additional cultural events that took place in the skating rink that people in wheelchairs could not attend, such as dances, concerts, and career symposiums. Pooh spoke with a tone of disgust in her voice as she felt people in her community did not think about what people who used wheelchairs could be excluded from in the skating rink.

When I asked Pooh about photographs to describe her feelings towards 'not being a priority,' she instantly referred to the picture of the inaccessible skating rink in her community she asked me to take earlier (see Figure 2). Pooh explained that there is only bench seating. A person in a wheelchair is required to sit next to the bleachers where the majority of the spectators would be walking, which is inconvenient for everyone and places Pooh on public display. The skating rink demonstrates physical inaccessibility as Pooh is 'in the way' and psychological inaccessibility as she is not integrated amongst the crowd and therefore lacks a sense of belonging.

As I was taking this picture, one of the caretakers from the facility was very interested in who I was and what I was doing. After talking for a few minutes we discovered we knew a few common friends in the hockey community. At that moment I thought I would present him with strategies for accessibility and the idea of building a



Figure 2. Skating rink in Pooh's Aboriginal community

wheelchair accessible spectator ramp. I mentioned the issues people in wheelchairs may face in the rink. He was surprised because had never really thought of that and said he would take the time to look into the cost of making it accessible for people in wheelchairs.

A second image that Pooh spoke to was the ball diamonds on her reserve. The ball diamonds on Pooh's reserve were located at the top of a small gravel hill with no bleachers or flat ground for wheelchairs. When I was taking the picture, I noticed the only parking available at the ball diamonds was at the bottom of the hill as seen in Figure 3.



Figure 3. Outdoor ball diamonds on Pooh's reserve

To attend a baseball or hockey game as a spectator was often difficult for people in wheelchairs because the facilities were not easily accessible.

4.3. Pride Through Accomplishments

The co-participants had little contact with Aboriginal people with disabilities in their communities or through sport. Although the co-participants did not perceive that their interest in pursuing sport was a priority in their Aboriginal communities, through personal determination they discovered the significance of sport in their lives and the lives of others. Pedro was first attracted to sport because of the competition and feelings of success and used his success to stay motivated as an athlete. Pedro clarified:

The feeling of succeeding...I use it to motivate myself and to take the next step [in sport]. Like even if I had a good game the one day, I'd take the day off and then the next day I would be back on the field or ice trying to prove myself...I do the best that I can.

Adding to the strength of this quote was the topic of a phone conversation with Pedro during which time he expressed his strong passion for sport. Pedro was busy most nights of the week either coaching, playing, or practicing. He called me at my work one day devastated that he might have stretched a ligament in his knee. He called asking for advice and an approximate timeline to practice and compete again. When talking to him, Pedro sounded discouraged that he might have to take 4-6 weeks away from sport. He was accustomed to taking one day off between games and found it difficult to adjust to a 4-6 week break.

Wheels expressed a similar passion for the role sport played in his life. Wheels was heavily involved in track at the time of the study, but recalled participating in able

bodied sports, such as hockey, prior to life with his wheelchair. Wheels said, “I preferred trying able bodied sports at that time because it was more difficult, more challenging.”

Although Wheels has tried other sports in the past, he was currently dedicated to wheelchair track. When I asked Wheels how he felt when he was competing and practicing in track, he said that regular practices were a commitment he made to himself and his coach, but the competition was a passion, “The only way I miss a race is if I’m absolutely sick and cannot do anything. Otherwise I’m here [at track] whether you like it or not.”

Wheels reflected back upon the uncertainty of his life before joining track. In high school, Wheels used to hang out with friends whom were heavily involved in drugs and gangs and, according to Wheels, lived destructive lives. Wheels tried to become a healthy influence for his group of friends. Although he felt unsuccessful, Wheels strove to pull his able bodied friends in a more positive direction in life. At age 22, he said, “It’s a relief I found myself in track or I would have been one of them.” Wheels found it easier to express himself on paper than during the interviews and wrote a poem to help describe the meaning behind his experiences. The poem that Wheels wrote for this study was very significant as it described Wheels’ life prior to finding sport, and his pride in his accomplishments under difficult circumstances. Wheels never expanded on this poem when probed for more information as he felt it spoke to his experiences. The poem described his entrance into sport as a vehicle to fill the void and the emptiness in his life. Wheels joined sport independently striving to change the negativity in his life. Wheels felt there were social barriers present as nobody was available to train him and went about a regime on his own. Wheels progressed from “having not much going for him” to gaining a coach, participating in a competition, and becoming a mentor. Wheels was

proud to identify himself as an athlete, and as a young man who chose to leave his negative lifestyle for a more positive one. He felt sport gave him a sense of belonging within society and the larger community. Wheels also felt that sport could influence other people with disabilities in the same manner. Wheels added, "I'd like to see more people with disabilities getting involved in sports like this because it gives us a way to express ourselves and something to work for, something to make our lives worth waking up for." This portion of Wheel's poem, tells his story of track,

When I started track in March of 2000
It was because I needed to fill a void in my life
That could have drove me to destroy myself
Or cause me to get into a lot of trouble
With the principal at my school.
I knew I had nothing to lose cause I felt
I didn't have much going for me anyways
So I gave sport a try and signed up, then a week or two later
I went to my first practice, totally unaware of what I'd have to do to get there
And also completely unaware of how willing I was to do it.
I had to train myself because there was no one
In my surroundings that knew how to train someone in a wheelchair.
So I simply went about doing as many laps around the gym
That my small arms could push me
Then I also got myself a weight room pass and
Asked if I could use the upstairs hallway as my race track after school
Because it was the longest straight flat surface that there was

And it was long enough.
So finally, after doing that for 3 months
It was time to test my very own unorthodox training regime
Against some actually racers
Somehow my training came through with flying colors
And I made it to provincials where I was really tested
That year, I picked up my first coach
And not to long after I had my first racer,
And then my real racing competition
It was good!

For the co-participants, past and present involvement in sport had many rewards. Pooh, Pedro, and Wheels perceived sport to be an opportunity to improve their sense of self and pride in themselves. Wheels felt, "Sport gives you something to do with yourself....People could have a whole new respect for themselves." Pedro expanded on this by saying:

Sport makes you feel good, it builds your inner self, it helps you cope with your problems for one thing....a good stress reliever....and it could get you recognized if you're good enough...it could open a lot of doors for you.

Pedro sensed that sport could also teach children and youth important aspects of life such as teamwork and problem solving skills. From Pooh's past experience in sport, she expanded on Pedro's and Wheels' thoughts and wanted Aboriginal youth to understand that:

Sport would make them feel better about themselves, give them something to do, they aren't on the street getting into trouble....It would give them confidence.

That's what sport did for me, gave me confidence and I think that doesn't hurt anyone to have a little confidence in themselves.

The co-participants indicated that sport was also an opportunity for people to feel pride in being perceived as 'equals.' When Pedro initially joined a team or started a game he was viewed as a spectacle, someone his team-mates and competitors viewed with scepticism regarding his ability. Pedro elaborated:

When I start or when I meet a new team, every team, I've noticed that they're watching me. Like saying, "hey look at that guy over there, he has one arm and he's going to play hockey with us." And they don't realize, they don't feel the impact until I start skating with them or playing them. Same with soccer, same with ball. Ball tournaments, people will be watching me warm up and throwing the ball around. Then I come up to bat and they all move in on me and boom over the fence. Then after that, its just, they just can't believe it. And after that it just seems to go away...they're um what they see me as, a guy with one arm playing ball, or hockey, or soccer. Then they just see me as a regular person, the same way my friends see me.

Pooh described a very different experience that linked her to her community and also left her with a feeling of pride. Her community participated in, and raised money for persons with disabilities. Pooh explained,

My community is finally getting involved in Telemiracle.¹² They are raising funds and I guess that would be the closest I felt to my community when they sent the money in....That's never happened before.

¹² Telemiracle is a provincial organization that raises funds to help people with disabilities that have nowhere else to turn and need help financially. The money that is raised supports, promotes, and fosters

The co-participants appeared to have gained a strong sense of strength from their past experiences of sport. The co-participants were proud of their accomplishments as they set personal goals for sport, worked towards them, and became dedicated athletes or advocates of sport.

4.4 The Gift to Grab Others

All three co-participants agreed they have worked hard and now possess a ‘gift to grab others,’ and wanted to be seen as role models who could potentially motivate Aboriginal people with disabilities to participate in sport. The co-participants shared their life experiences as persons with disabilities and their perceptions of sport. In doing so, each co-participant reflected upon the people who supported and encouraged them throughout their lives.

As a child, Pedro spent much of his time with his older brothers and sisters. Pedro and his older sister developed a very close bond due to the amount of time they spent together while growing up. Pedro remembered being raised primarily by his older sister because his parents were always busy working. Every morning Pedro woke up and his older sister would cook him breakfast. Pedro stated, “Those [breakfasts] are my fondest memories of being with my sisters and my older brothers. They kept us together, my family that is.” Pedro played outside with his brothers, and his sisters drove him to team practices and competitions, when necessary. This support helped Pedro increase his involvement in sport and discover sport opportunities available for people of all abilities.

programs that will benefit people with disabilities throughout Saskatchewan. Telemiracle also strives to facilitate an improved quality of life and independence for people with disabilities. Telemiracle brings communities together on an annual basis while they, as a community, work together to raise money and build awareness for people with disabilities in Saskatchewan (<http://www.telemiracle.com>)

Pooh and Wheels admitted that because of the support from their family members, they were motivated to become visible and accomplished members of their community. Pedro wanted to touch other families who had members with disabilities by sharing his accomplishments through sport. Pooh strove to be part of her Aboriginal community in a positive and successful manner. As an Aboriginal person with a disability she not only wanted to draw people with disabilities out of their homes, she advocated for increased sport opportunities for Aboriginal people with disabilities. Pooh made herself accessible to her community by offering to speak at schools about her life as a person with a disability.

Wheels perceived being an accomplished athlete as a ‘gift.’ He worked hard at becoming a wheelchair athlete, but also felt he was given a gift of natural talent. Wheels wanted to utilize his experiences in sport to help other Aboriginal people with disabilities understand the importance sport can play in their lives. Wheels strove to use his gift as a strategy to affect people’s attitudes and perceptions towards sport. A portion of Wheels’ poem he wrote for this study describes his thoughts. Wheels wrote,

It began to sink in that I had been given a gift
So I used it to promote track and wheelchair racing
One of the things that I would truly like to see is more
Aboriginal people involved in athletics

In our interview, Wheels portrayed himself as a confident athlete who felt he had the ability to help other people. Wheels hoped that by participating in a variety of provincial and national competitions, he would be viewed by others as a role model, or at the very least noticed as an Aboriginal person with a disability involved in sport. Wheels expressed a desire for acceptance from his rural Aboriginal community. Wheels

wanted to be recognized as a success and when he was told that the Chief of his reserve was at the Canada Summer Games in which he was completing, he felt that he had reached his goal of informing others, about the impact of sport for Aboriginal people with disabilities. Wheels hoped that his presence at the games would be used to recruit other Aboriginal people with disabilities to become involved. Wheels recalled an incident at the Canada Summer Games that he integrated into his poem,

I recently found out that the Chief of my reserve
Was present at the 2001 Canada Games
And that my people were told of what I was doing
Which was a shock to me
Because I thought that my own people had forgotten about me
But it was good news to hear

As I was developing the interview guide with a community partner, I had a preconceived notion that the benefits of sport (i.e., health, reduced crime levels) would be predominant in the co-participants reasons for participating and advocating for sport. However, I found the meaning of sport was much deeper for the co-participants than my assumptions suggested. According to the co-participants having the ability to ‘grab others’ and promote the benefits of sport may have been as rewarding as actually taking part in sport itself.

In Chapter 1, I presented three personal stories that clarified my passion to explore the three different dimensions of *disability*, *sport*, and *ethnicity* and their relationship to one another. The areas of disability, sport, and ethnicity guided the literature review and the purpose of this study. Therefore I feel it is important to clarify

which dimensions dominated each of the four themes of the study. *We Have to Get Out First* described **disability** from the perspective of an **ethnic**, minority population. The distinction was made between those with disabilities that were comfortable with their disability identity and those that were not present in their communities and out of their homes. The perception and stigmas towards Aboriginal people with disabilities was also presented. The theme *Not Being a Priority* blended the three dimensions of disability, ethnicity, and sport the strongest. Social and environmental barriers were present in the co-participants **Aboriginal** communities that resulted in a lack of **sport** participation due to their **disability**. The co-participants felt they were defined by their disability when entering a sporting environment in their Aboriginal communities. *Pride through Accomplishments* was dominated by the co-participants view of **sport** and the benefits sport can play in an individual's life. Sport was an avenue to achieve success in life as they overcame multiple stigmas of belonging to an **ethnic** minority and **disability**. The final theme, *Gift to Grab Others*, demonstrated that the co-participants attempted to use their experiences of **sport** and **disability** to help other **Aboriginal** people with disabilities get out of their homes and become involved in sport as athletes or advocates.

5. DISCUSSION

This descriptive and exploratory study aimed to gain an understanding of disability and the meaning given to sport by the Aboriginal co-participants. The results chapter provided quotes and stories from the co-participants in support of the themes that emerged. This chapter will discuss and interpret the meaning of the findings and their implications, from the co-participants' lived experiences, with the support of the minority group model and within the context of reviewed literature.

5.1 We Have to Get Out First

The first theme, 'we have to get out first,' reflected the perception that there may be two groups of people with disabilities within the co-participants' Aboriginal communities. The first group, *us*, referred to the people with disabilities who were visible and integrated themselves into society. The co-participants were all active and visible members of their community. They were seen daily out in the community and would consider themselves to be part of the 'us' group.

According to Gill (1998), there are four types of integration in relation to an individual's psychological sense of identity, three of which were heard in the words of the co-participants (i.e., coming home, coming to feel we belong, and coming together). Pooh felt as if she was 'coming home' when she encountered another person with a disability in her community. There was a level of connection between Pooh and the

woman she encountered in the supermarket because they had both shared similar experiences and had both ‘been there.’ According to Gill, there is a level of acceptance and understanding that able bodied peers and family members may not be able to share with people with disabilities. When people with disabilities begin to connect with each other, they may then start to develop a sense of disability community or disability family. As a community, people with disabilities may then lend support to each other as they integrate themselves into the larger social context.

The co-participants in this study did not have the opportunity to experience an Aboriginal disability community as so few people with disabilities were perceived to be active in their communities. If more of ‘them,’ (i.e., people with disabilities hidden in their homes) emerged from their homes, the opportunity to meet other people with disabilities may present itself. Furthermore, people with disabilities who live in remote, sparsely populated areas, such as a First Nations reserve, have very little opportunities to meet other people with disabilities and therefore may not have the opportunity to connect with people “who have been there” (Gill, 1998).

The phrase ‘coming home’ has been used to describe a connection made between people with disabilities. However, there is no mention in Gill’s (1998) article as to unique connections that may be shared amongst people with disabilities from common ethnic backgrounds. A unique bond may be experienced by people of the same culture (i.e., Aboriginal population) as they can identify with both their identity as a person with a disability and their identity as an ethnic minority.

Due to the lack of presence of people with disabilities in the co-participants’ Aboriginal communities, a second form of integration, ‘coming to feel we belong’ was apparent. According to Gill, people with disabilities establish a comfortable social role

and identity, and integrate within an able bodied society despite their membership in a socially marginalized group. The co-participants carried a strong identity and felt comfortable relating to their Aboriginal communities. They had career or athletic roles in their communities and also felt confident enough to approach their community Elders. Pooh, Pedro, and Wheels expressed the desire to fit into their Aboriginal communities unconditionally and felt they had the right to belong within their urban or rural communities despite being part of a minority group. This study did not investigate the extent to which the co-participants felt integrated into an able bodied, Caucasian society. This is an important study for future considerations.

The third type of integration apparent in the results was “coming together.” As a result of societal expectations, there can be an internal struggle within people with disabilities as individuals with disabilities internally integrate their sameness and differentness (i.e., coming together). Gill (1998), stated that family members, professionals or other social figures may carry perceptions of disability that can lead to stereotypes or misconceptions. For example, members of Pooh’s community carried the belief that physical disability can be a disease that is contagious by touch and therefore would not touch an individual with a disability because they might “get what she’s got.” All of the co-participants could see beyond the negative views of disability experiences in their Aboriginal communities, in part due to their sport involvement.

Although the co-participants felt they had integrated themselves into their rural and urban communities and possessed a strong personal disability identity, they acknowledged that having others with disabilities to converse with and share their experiences would have enriched their journey and facilitated a larger sense of disability community. The minority group model as it applies to disability and Aboriginal persons

highlights the adaptive behaviour displayed by the co-participants as they recognized the significance of having a disability community. A common voice can lead to social change.

The strong positive disability identity portrayed by the co-participants as reflected by expressed confidence in their abilities and their current and future contributions to their Aboriginal communities was in strong contrast to the depictions of other members of their communities. Stories of social isolation due to being house bound, lack of social contact with family members founded in part by individual pathology (i.e., person uses a wheelchair therefore not able or interested in community outings), and victim blaming and exclusion due to misperceptions that disability was contagious reflected the experiences of others. These experiences by some members of the Aboriginal community suggests that the biological model of portraying persons with disabilities may be the predominant framework around which social attitudes, physical environments, and public policy are structured.

Stories about disability being ‘contagious,’ being viewed as ‘frail,’ and people being ‘locked’ up in their homes, suggests that the biological model of disability (Block, Balcazar & Keys, 2001) was also supported in the attitudes and practices of the co-participants’ communities. The biological model of disability places a strong emphasis on the individual as a victim, isolated, and the focus of shame by community and family members. Although the trends of the biological model were apparent in the co-participants’ communities, there was also evidence of an unmistakable shift to the minority group model. The shift reflects a transferring of beliefs that people with disabilities themselves are their primary source of problems to a belief that social attitudes and social barriers evident in the large environment are the primary source of

problems. It could be argued that the shift that may be occurring was being led by persons with disabilities themselves, the co-participants in this instance. The three co-participants took pride in their identity to the extent that two of them approached the Elders of their respective communities, recognizing their influence in bringing the need for attitudinal and social change forward. By doing so, the co-participants wanted to alter the perceptions and relationship between people with disabilities and the able bodied community. Furthermore, by collaborating on this project, it was apparent that they were not ‘subjects’ of isolation, but ‘co-participants’ striving to develop strategies for social change.

Sport was not apparent in the description and meaning of the theme *We Have to Get Out First*. What was apparent in the stories of the participants was that having a presence in their communities and a sense of place was required before they could identify and address the social barriers that were inhibiting sport opportunities for Aboriginal people and Aboriginal people with disabilities in particular.

5.2 Not Being a Priority

Within the minority group model, Asch and Fine (1988) stressed the importance of separating an individual’s impairment, (i.e., physiological condition), from the social ramifications of the condition. The biological model of disability emphasizes an individual’s pathology rather than the social or environmental barriers that may need to be overcome for them to be full members of their disability and Aboriginal communities. All three co-participants faced multiple social and environmental barriers. In this study, social barriers refer to the interpersonal aspects of sport participation (i.e., sense of belonging and societal attitudes) in comparison to environmental barriers which

refer to infrastructure and architectural barriers to sport participation (i.e., hills and stairs). The existence of these barriers was interpreted to mean that they were not valued, and their needs to lead physically active and inclusive lives were not a priority to their larger community.

People with disabilities are often only disadvantaged when environmental barriers and social barriers prevented participation in activities that would be open to them if they did not have a disability (Department of Culture, Youth and Recreation, 2004). The ball diamonds and skating rink on Pooh's reserve were examples of environmental barriers that can limit people in wheelchairs from watching and participating in sporting events.

There was also a perception by the co-participants that members of the Aboriginal community assumed that people with disabilities would not be interested in sport, either as a spectator or participant. People saw the co-participant's physical impairment first and assumed they were a weaker competitor or not inclined to participate in sport at all. When the co-participants entered new facilities or joined sport teams, they often became defined by their disability, leading to the assumption that they would not be interested in sport due to their disability. For the co-participants, it was important to exercise an interaction between themselves and the environment because people focused primarily on their disability and individual pathology (Block, Balcazar, & Keys, 2001), rather than the environmental and social barriers present in their communities. For example, people within Pooh's community saw Pooh as a person in a wheelchair that could not be 'fixed.' The community members did not recognize the hill leading up to the ball diamonds that could be 'fixed,' allowing Pooh an opportunity to play or watch a ball game. In order to introduce this social change to their community,

the co-participants need to educate their community members about disability, and the simple alterations that can be made to facilities and the environment that would welcome and include people with disabilities.

The environmental and social barriers articulated can be identified with one of the key findings from the study completed by the Department of Culture, Youth, and Recreation (2005) addressing First Nations and Métis youth in urban and rural communities. Lack of accessible and available resources and infrastructure was among the 4 leading barriers to sport participation. In this instance, accessible and available resources refer to the number and quality of facilities and services. Aboriginal people with disabilities could be considered to be in double jeopardy as many existing facilities are not physically accessible to people who use wheelchairs. A lack of leadership by community members and parents on Pedro's reserve also led to a decrease in sport accessibility.

As was highlighted by the co-participants, however, the argument becomes somewhat circular. If members of the community with disabilities are not visible, then the incentive to increasing facility and resource accessibility is not present. The significance of creating a disability community with a common voice (e.g., minority group model), a common message, and a shared vision as a means by which to foster social, policy, and economic supports becomes increasingly clear.

5.3 Pride Through Accomplishments

Within the minority group model, a single issue, such as disability, is usually the focal point for identity formation (Block, Balcazar, & Keys, 2001). We also know from previous literature (Ali, Fazil, Bywaters, Wallace, & Singh, 2001) that disability has

been in part defined by the attitudes and beliefs held by members of the mainstream Caucasian population. The experiences of people with disabilities have at times been generalized and assumptions made that people with disabilities, regardless of their cultural background, share common experiences with others based on their disability alone with little acknowledgement of the interaction between the person and their environment (Block, Balcazar & Keys, 2002). The co-participants in this study were faced with multiple stigmas, as people with disabilities from a minority, Aboriginal population. Caucasian individuals with disabilities can recognize that their disability is the primary reason they may be discriminated against or excluded from sport programming (Block et al.). Comparatively, the co-participants may face discrimination on multiple fronts, making it more difficult to identify the most poignant negative influences on their opportunities for social inclusion and sport participation. Moreover, identifying and implementing action plans that may have the largest impact on perceived barriers becomes complex. The co-participants recognized that sport for youth with disabilities would not occur outside of the larger framework of all youth. As was found in the work of Durst and Bluehardt (2001), the co-participants found they had to be self motivated as knowledgeable coaches and sport leadership was lacking in their communities. Until the leaders of their Aboriginal communities made sport for all youth a priority, their efforts to advance sport for youth with disabilities would be very challenging.

The stories of the co-participants revealed their ability to overcome the multiple stigmas they faced. Pooh, Pedro, and Wheels were aware that to take part in sport they would have to present their strengths and focus on the benefits sport had played in their

lives. The co-participants did not focus on their disability and therefore never emphasized their ‘deficits’ and limitations (Miller & Keys, 1996).

In the face of identity challenges that can arise when people are faced with multiple stigmas, the co-participants found that sport provided an avenue to achieve success and make good choices particularly with regard to drug and alcohol substance use. Making positive personal lifestyle choices was also noted in the work of Dawson, Karlis, and Georescu (1998) and Halas and Hanson, (2001). The co-participants did not match the portrayal of people with disabilities reflected through the biological model. The sport experiences were a deterrent to succumbing to the social roles imposed by those around them. The co-participants’ stories were not ones in which they perceived themselves to be victims of the circumstances imposed by their disabilities, socially isolated, acquiescing to feelings of personal shame due to inability, or defined by their individual pathology.

5.4 The Gift to Grab Others

At the time of this study, the co-participants reported that they witnessed small but positive changes in their communities. The co-participants felt that their journeys of sport participation, program planning, and healthy living placed them in a position to be role models for members of their communities who had disabilities. For example, Wheels felt the recognition he received from the Chief of his First Nation for his local, provincial and national sport accomplishments made him a positive figure that others could look up to and aspire to be. By portraying a strong disability identity that was based on good decision making, goal setting, hard work, and self motivation, the co-participants felt they presented an empowered and self-determined image that they could

use to “grab others” and help others find a place in their disability and Aboriginal communities (Gill, 1997).

One of the most important messages apparent in the fourth theme was that the co-participants made the most of what they had in life and that they were thankful at all times for the gift they had been given. The support and encouragements of the co-participants families motivated them to become accomplished members of society and empowered the co-participants to participate in sport.

A quote from an unknown Aboriginal lady stated, “What you are is the Creator’s gift to you, what you become is your gift to the Creator.” This speaks to the co-participants’ stories as they used their gift as successful, integrated members of society to help promote athletics, sports, and awareness for people with disabilities. The co-participants strive to pass on the feeling of success and accomplishment to other people with disabilities.

5.5 Implications

This study brings up many issues regarding Aboriginal people with disabilities in sport. When reflecting back upon the interviews with the co-participants, I came to the clear realization that people with disabilities were not always valued within their communities. I felt that the transition from the biological to minority group model of the experiences of disability may be slower than that of the predominantly Caucasian mainstream population. I learned from this study that acceptance towards disability varied amongst communities. Lack of exposure of people with disabilities into society was one of the biggest barriers to social change in Aboriginal communities. Once Aboriginal Elders and influential community members take a more active role

advocating for people with disabilities, people with disabilities may feel more welcome in their communities.

This study also demonstrated the importance of sport for Aboriginal people with disabilities. The participants found sport to be a medium through which they could feel as if they were valued, equal members of their community. Advocating for sport became an important goal for the co-participants as they were trying to slowly increase the awareness of sport for people with disabilities. At the time of this study people were advocating for sport and recreation for Aboriginal people but had yet to recognize that support also needed to be provided for Aboriginal people with disabilities. When service providers make the effort to target this population, I would suggest that the organization begins by developing sport programs specific for Aboriginal people with disabilities. The results of this study demonstrated that opportunities need to be provided for Aboriginal people with disabilities to develop the skills required to excel at sport. Creating disability sport opportunities for the Aboriginal population (e.g., wheelchair basketball) may be beneficial to increase an individual's confidence and self esteem and give him/her an opportunity to interact with others from a similar cultural group.

Another issue that surfaced was the lack of opportunities for sport development in rural Aboriginal communities. In order to increase sport opportunities, I would encourage the school systems and school administrators to take an active role in including people with disabilities into their physical education classes and sports teams. By doing this, the school systems can become a model for community recreational programs. If school systems on First Nations reserves began to build awareness of sport, the students may become educated at an early age as to the abilities of people with

disabilities. Schools could welcome speakers and demonstrations on various adapted sports which would educate students, teachers, and possibly parents.

When I educate others about my research study and the implications behind this study, the message I stress the most is that different ethnic groups have different experiences and perceptions towards disability. Each person within their culture can have a different experience or perception of their disability or someone else's disability. Educators have taught disability studies from the perspective of the Caucasian population but now need to encourage students and researchers to explore the experiences of disability from many different standpoints including people of different ethnicities. I feel that we can no longer make the assumption that people with disabilities from a minority population share similar experiences as those from the majority, Caucasian population.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1. Limitations to the Study

There were several limitations to the research study that I would like to acknowledge. By recognizing the limitations, I am hoping that future researchers will be able to learn from my work. The limitations to this study are as follows:

1. The criteria for inclusion in this study had to be modified and broadened due to the lack of available co-participants. I was unable to gain access and build rapport with many of my contacts because contact was initially made via telephone. There is a level of trust and rapport that can be developed through one-on-one meetings that was not accomplished in this study due to the lack of funding and time.
2. The recruitment strategy appeared to be very scattered and ‘messy.’ The Aboriginal population I was working within had a very intuitive, personal, and flexible concept of time. However, members of the mainstream population expect ‘things’ to be completed in a very systematic, scheduled and sophisticated manner. I have learned that some Aboriginal people will do things when the time is right rather than when things are scheduled. This may have affected peoples’ willingness to return calls and respond to my inquiries. A more personal approach would be recommended for future inquiries.
3. A maximum variation sampling strategy was employed in this exploratory and descriptive study resulting in three very diverse experiences by the co-

participants. Pooh, Pedro and Wheels each had a different disability, were from three different communities, and were involved in sport in three very unique and different ways. This led to a wide array of experiences and stories from which to draw central themes. Because of this wide array of experiences, I was unable to claim that data saturation was reached in this study. This was a significant shortcoming, but none-the-less I feel that significant information was gained and a tremendous amount of learning was gathered about conducting research in Aboriginal communities.

4. The sample size of this study was small which had many benefits but also limitations. Pooh's words dominated the first theme. As well, due to the small sample size there was only one woman in the study. Being a woman with a disability may have led to different experiences within the Aboriginal population.
5. The proposed research study included a talking circle in which the co-participants could gather and share their experiences together. For this study, it was not feasible as the co-participants were from all areas of Saskatchewan. These 'group interviews' generate power among the participants through positive discussion. Talking circles promote healing by sharing with others who have lived through similar experiences and have a similar desire to speak out and be heard (Durst & Bluehardt, 2002). The co-participants in this study may have been more open to discussion and story telling if they were in a group with people who had shared similar experiences.
6. The artefact collection was not as powerful as I intended it to be. In the proposal, I was hoping that the co-participants would be intrigued and motivated to design an art project to help readers visualize their experiences as Aboriginal people

with disabilities. However, each co-participant chose a different artefact to help triangulate the data. Pooh chose pictures in which we took on her reserve, Wheels chose to write a poem to describe his journey into sport, and unfortunately Pedro and I did not have the opportunity to gather pictures. The diverse artefacts could be seen as a strength of the study, as it enhanced the triangulation of the data. However, I would have preferred to have more depth in the volume of artefacts available to support the interview transcripts.

6.2. Future Directions

Although the experiences of sport and disability presented in this thesis can only be related to contexts similar to those portrayed by the three co-participants involved, this study, in a modest way has presented the experiences of disability and the meaning given to sport. Pooh, Pedro, and Wheels are not representative of all Aboriginal people with disabilities, but their stories are worthy of attention. Based on the findings, the developed themes, and the exploratory nature of this study, further insight into the experiences of other Aboriginal people with disabilities is needed. Future considerations for research are as follows:

1. To gain a deeper understanding, further exploration into the experiences of Aboriginal people with disabilities is required in varying contexts. Fricke (1998) stated that First Nations people living on their reserves had the highest percent of disability when compared to those living off their reserve. This is a very significant statistic and future researchers need to further investigate people with disabilities living in rural versus urban communities. Furthermore, people with physical versus intellectual disabilities and people from different age groups

should also be explored. When recruiting co-participants the biggest barrier for me was finding people who were involved in sport, regardless of their location or age. In addition to the experiences of people with physical disabilities, an investigation with the Special Olympics and the success of Aboriginal people with intellectual disabilities in their program offerings would be of significant interest. Special Olympics found that when financial and transportation barriers were removed in their organization, 40% of their athletes were Aboriginal (Durst & Bluehardt, 2001). The present study provided insight into the social and environmental barriers people with physical disabilities were faced with in their communities; however, further insight into the barriers or lack thereof for people with intellectual disabilities is also required.

2. Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) surfaced, from the community partners, as being a very common intellectual disability amongst Aboriginal children in rural and urban communities. The community partners felt it was important to further explore the experiences of people with FAS and their connection to the Aboriginal community and sport.
3. The present study was aimed at people over the age of 18 years because of the collaborative approach the study desired. As mentioned, it has been predicted that half of the children in Saskatchewan will be Aboriginal children by 2016 (Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations, 1997). In the future, I would suggest developing a project with Aboriginal children and youth with disabilities who had the opportunity to take part in physical education programs in their rural schools. Physical education is available within the school systems and children

may have a greater opportunity to experience physical activity and sport in this environment than in the community environment.

4. This study took a collaborative approach that respected the Aboriginal community and their culture. I believe a culturally appropriate approach is necessary to further explore sport and disability from the perspective of Aboriginal people. Future research initiatives should be delivered by individuals who are respectful of the Aboriginal culture and open to working in a cross cultural environment. Co-participants from the community should be involved in research to gain control over their lives, as they are the experts of their culture and lived experiences (Bishop, 1996). In the future, I would like to see one of the three co-participants involved in this study conduct further interviews with Aboriginal people with disabilities and develop recommendations for sport programming to the Aboriginal, disability, and academic communities. The co-participants could develop the method of data collection and the interview questions. The 'researcher' would take the role of a research assistant and help primarily with guidance, ethics, and data analysis. This may give more people the opportunity to develop a disability community and connect with others who share similar experiences.
5. If possible, future researchers should attempt to collaborate with each Aboriginal community and its members. The co-participants chose not to meet with their Elders, however I think it could have been quite beneficial for the Elders and community members to at the very least know the study was underway with members of their community. If members of the community were involved in group interviews with the co-participants, they could have learned first hand of

the barriers and attitudes Aboriginal people with disabilities confront. This may have helped improve the perceptions, attitudes, and barriers towards sport for Aboriginal people with disabilities.

6. Future researchers should attempt to incorporate a talking circle into cross-cultural research with the Aboriginal community. Future co-participants could then gather and share their experiences together. Krueger (1994) states that people will restrict their opinions if they perceive someone in the group to be more knowledgeable, influential, or wealthy. For this reason, I would suggest seeking out an active member of the Aboriginal community to facilitate the talking circle as the moderator. This individual should not be in a position of power, would share the group's ethnicity, and would have an understanding of issues surrounding Aboriginal people in sport.
7. The sharing of stories is essential as some Aboriginal people believe that stories are an expression of the truest form of knowledge (Relland, 1998). To encourage the co-participants to speak of their experiences, it is important, as a researcher, to share your own personality and experiences, as this demonstrates respect for their culture. Because I was open to sharing my life stories with Pooh, Pedro, and Wheels, I found there was a level of respect between us. From my personal experiences in working with Aboriginal people, I discovered that it takes time to fully trust and welcome 'outsiders' into their lives. In order to be successful, future researchers need to develop a friendship outside of the research topic, allowing a trusting relationship to form with their co-participants. This will help the co-participants or community members let researchers into their lives and trust them to incorporate the results and future recommendations into society.

8. When conducting cross cultural research an awareness of each others culture is very important. It was important for me to understand as much as possible about the Aboriginal culture. I attended workshops about the Aboriginal culture and about preferred research protocols in the Aboriginal community. More importantly, I learned to ask questions of clarification if I was unclear of their beliefs and ideas specific to their culture and community. Individuals who have the desire to work within the Aboriginal community also need to have the desire to work as an outsider. I believe it is essential that investigators take the time to attend work-shops, take courses and learn as much as possible about the community in which he or she intends to conduct research with. By doing so, the researchers will appear prepared, interested and passionate about their research as well as the community and its members.
9. An ethnographic research approach may be an effective method to utilize within the Aboriginal community. Ethnographic research is appealing as it can provide a rich detailed picture of human life that focuses on social behaviour within the co-participants natural settings (Creswell, 1998). I would suggest ethnography because it would allow for more prolonged time in the field, further development of rapport, and empathy with the co-participants, community members, Elders, and family members, as the researcher is studying this particular human cultural group.
10. Although the reality of a longitudinal study would be very challenging, I feel it would also be incredibly valuable to the Aboriginal community. There were turning points that 'allowed' the three co-participants to move from isolation into community integration. I believe it would be very interesting to follow and

11. A future study could explore athletic identity of Aboriginal athletes with disabilities as it relates to athletic performance, commitment to sport, positive training experiences and their extended social network (Groff, 2006). According to Groff, commitment to sport rather than individual characteristics influenced a person's sense of athletic identity. The co-participants were committed to sport as athletes and advocates and I think it would be very interesting to reflect on the athletic identity literature as it applies to the three co-participants and other Aboriginal people with disabilities.
12. Comparing and contrasting inclusive versus segregated sport programs for Aboriginal people with disabilities would also be beneficial to this research field. Durst and Bluehardt (2004) mentioned that inclusive programs have not been viewed as a priority amongst Aboriginal people as segregated programs allow individuals to build self confidence before integrating themselves into inclusive programs. If there are successful programs (i.e., segregated or inclusive), we need to explore which strategies are successful and learn how to implement these strategies for Aboriginal people with disabilities. If Saskatchewan is truly interested in sport for Aboriginal people with disabilities, we need to develop culturally relevant programs that all people feel comfortable participating in.
13. An in depth, exploratory study of one First Nations Reserve in Saskatchewan could provide insight into what contributes to both the positive and negative experiences people with disabilities face in their community. Interviews and focus groups should be conducted with family members, community Elders, and

owners of recreational facilities with the underlying purpose being development of strategies for social change.

14. I firmly believe that you can not get to know someone over the phone enough to welcome them into your community. I found in the Aboriginal community, personal conversation is much more effective and a way for each individual to get to know me and begin to trust me. However, this was not feasible for the study due to the lack of finances and time. In the future I would suggest researchers attempt to meet each person face to face. I would have spent a month or two traveling through the province, personally introducing myself and the research I was planning to various organizations and recreational directors.

6.3 Exiting the Field

Since the completion of this study a few initiatives within the disability and Aboriginal community have been taken to build awareness. I have met with the Aboriginal Sports Coordinator at the Saskatchewan Sports Association and have submitted a summary of the study to this organization. I also met with two members of The Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations. I submitted a summary and portions of the completed thesis for them to present to the Saskatchewan Aboriginal Network on Disabilities. The Saskatchewan Wheelchair Sports Association (SWSA) and I also collaborated in hopes to bring wheelchair sports presentations to a few of the First Nations communities throughout Saskatchewan. SWSA intends to travel to the co-participants First Nations reserves and if successful will continue building awareness in other Aboriginal communities via wheelchair sports demonstrations. The coordinator of Skiing for the Disabled, in Saskatchewan also expressed an interest in the findings. A

summary was sent to her to build awareness in her organization for Aboriginal people with disabilities. In direct relation to one of the co-participants, Pooh was very proud to tell me that her community has built a gym that is wheelchair accessible. She is continuing to educate her Aboriginal community and has joined the gym with her partner. Pooh hopes that her presence in the gym will be talked about leading to more people in chairs joining the facility.

The co-participants and community members who assisted me with this study will be presented with a copy of the final document and welcomed to my thesis defence. As well, two of the community members who I worked with at the initial stages of the study are very intrigued to discover what can be done within their community and strategies they can implement to make this study practical and realistic for their community members.

6.4 Final Thoughts

When reflecting back upon my research journey and this study, I feel that my experiential knowledge, in part, shaped the design and conceptual work of this thesis. Because of my past friendships and partnerships with members of the Aboriginal and disability communities, I began this study with an interest and a level of respect for both. I wanted to develop a respectful project that focused on friendship and trusting relationships. Upon completion of this study, I can say with all honesty that I did as much as possible, as a Masters student, to develop a culturally appropriate study that helped to reduce the tension between the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal community. However, I also recognize that the tension between the two communities may never fully be resolved from a research perspective. As a White, middle class, able bodied

researcher, I still find myself wanting to utilize the results and implications of the study to ‘help’ build awareness in the Aboriginal community. Because of my interest in ‘helping,’ I am still intruding on the community by not fully passing on the ownership of the results and future implications. I want to continue my relationship with the Aboriginal community as an outside researcher.

I mentioned earlier in the study that I thought the diversity of our skin color was more of an issue at the beginning of this study. In wrapping up this study, I feel that the diversity of our skin color is less of an issue from my perspective, but also feel that it could continue to be more of an issue from the Aboriginal perspective. I am and will continue to be in a position of power because of my privileged position in society. As welcome as I feel within the community at the moment, I do believe that the community partners and co-participants may have preferred for this research agenda to be furthered by an insider from either the disability or Aboriginal community. In saying this, I also believe that the community partners and co-participants were pleasantly surprised by the research methodologies and approaches I used in conducting cross cultural research within their community.

Life’s a Journey...Not a Destination

At this point in my life, I feel this quote holds a plethora of meaning. My research study has been a journey in many ways. If you asked me two years ago if I thought I would finish my Masters degree the answer would have been “maybe.” I am proud of what I have accomplished as a student and reflecting upon this journey brings a smile to my face. My destination was originally to finish my Masters degree, but now I

see it as another stage of my life journey. This journey has enabled me to have a broader understanding of people with disabilities. In the past, I have worked primarily with children and youth with disabilities. Throughout the two years of my graduate program, I became more aware of the different experiences held by Aboriginal adults with disabilities. I found research within the Aboriginal community to be challenging at times, but very rewarding, intriguing, and an area for me to continue with on my life journey. I can not predict what I will be doing in ten years from now, but at this moment I know my place is within the disability and Aboriginal communities. I continue to be heavily involved with children and youth with disabilities in summer activity camps, day programs and within schools. I have also taken on a role as an educator to help prepare young students, teachers, and administrators to work amongst children and youth with disabilities within their classrooms.

When I drove onto my first reserve three summers ago I was a little bit apprehensive. Three years later I am comfortable and excited to continue my journey with members of the Aboriginal community, building awareness of sport for Aboriginal people with disabilities. I think of how much of an impact three people have had on my life, my goals and my personal identity. I learned that people can always learn something new from others. Pooh told me that I have a lot I can offer others, to take what I have learned about the Aboriginal community and welcome my students, friends, parents, and colleagues to learn something new as well. We can not change the world overnight but every bit helps. Pooh told me if one more person learns about her experiences as an Aboriginal person with a disability, I should consider this journey a success.

6. REFERENCES

- Ali, Z., Fazil, Q., Bywaters, P., Wallace, L., & Singh, G. (2001). Disability, ethnicity & childhood: A critical review of research. *Disability and Society, 16*, 949-968.
- Asch, A., & Fine, M. (1998). Introduction: Beyond pedestals. In A. Asch & M. Fine (Eds.), *Women with disabilities: Essays in psychology, culture, and politics* (pp. 1-37). Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
- Battiste, M. (2000). *Reclaiming indigenous voice and vision*. Vancouver, BC: UBC Press.
- Battiste, M., & Henderson, J. (2000). *Protecting indigenous knowledge and heritage*. Saskatoon, SK: Purich Publishing Ltd.
- Berg, B. (1995). *Qualitative research methods for the social sciences* (2nd ed.). Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Bishop, R. (1996). *Whakawhanaungatanga: Collaborative research stories*. Palmerston North, NZ: Dunmore Press.
- Block, P., Balcazar, F., & Keys, C. (2001). From pathology to power: Rethinking race, poverty, and disability. *Journal of Disability Policy Studies, 12*, 18-27.
- Block, P., Balcazar, F., & Keys, C. (2002). Race, poverty and disability: Three strikes and you're out! Or are you? *Social Policy, 34*-38.
- Bogdan R., & Biklen, S. (1998). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theory and methods* (2nd ed.). Toronto, ON: Allyn & Bacon.

- Burden, J., Hodge, S. R., O'Bryant, C. P., & Harrison, L. Jr. (2004). From colorblindness to intercultural sensitivity: Infusing diversity training in PETE programs. *Quest*, 56, 173-189.
- Butler, J. (1994). *Contingent foundations: Feminism and the question of "postmodernism."* In S. Seidman (Ed.), *The postmodern turn* (pp. 153-170). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Canadian Census. (1991). Retrieved January, 2006 from <http://www.tetrad.com/pricing/can/cn91.html/>
- Canadian Census. (2001). Retrieved January, 2006, from <http://www12.statcan.ca/english/census01/home/index.cfm/>
- Canadian Institutes of Health Research (2005). *CIHR guidelines for health research involving Aboriginal peoples: Draft for Consultation*. CIHR Ethics Office.
- Castledon, H. (2002). The silent north: A case study on deafness in a Dene community. *Canadian Journal of Native Education*, 26, 152-168.
- Community Education, Saskatchewan Education (2001). *Aboriginal Elders and community workers in schools: A guide for school divisions and their partners*. Community Education: Saskatchewan Education.
- Creswell, J. W. (1998). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Dawson, D., Karlis, G., & Georgescu, D. (1998). Contemporary issues in recreation and leisure for Aboriginal peoples in Canada. *Journal of Leisurability*, 25, 3-9.
- Department of Culture, Youth and Recreation. (2005). *Participation of Aboriginal children and youth in sport, culture and recreation in Saskatchewan*. Department of Culture, Youth and Recreation.

- Durst, D., & Bluehardt, M. (2001). *Urban Aboriginal persons with disabilities: Triple jeopardy*. Regina, SK: Social Policy Research Units.
- Durst, D., & Bluehardt, M. (2004). Aboriginal people with disabilities: A vacuum in public policy. *Saskatchewan Institute of Public Policy*, 6.
- Fawcett, S. B., White, G. W., Balcazar, F. E., Suarez-Balacazar, Y., Mathews, R. M., Pain-Andrews, et al. (1994). A contextual-behaviour model of empowerment: Case studies involving people with physical disabilities. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 22, 471-497.
- Forsyth, J., & Wamsley, K. (2006). 'Native to Native...We'll recapture our spirits:' The World Indigenous Nations Games and North American Indigenous Games as cultural resistance. *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 23, 294-314.
- Fricke, M. (1998). Self-determination: The panacea for Canadian Aboriginal people with disabilities. *Circumpolar Health*, 57, 719-724.
- Friesen, D. W., & Orr, J. (1998). New paths, old ways: Exploring the places of influences on the role identity. *Canadian Journal of Native Education*, 22, 188-200.
- Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations. (1997). *Saskatchewan and Aboriginal peoples in the 21st century: Social, economic and political changes and challenges*. Regina, SK: PrintWest Publishing Services.
- Foster-Fishman, P. G., Salem, D. A., Chibnall, S., Legler, R., & Yapchai, C., (1998). Empirical support for the critical assumptions of empowerment theory. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 26, 507-536.

- Gill, C. (1997). Four types of integration in disability identity development. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation, 9*, 39-46.
- Gill, C. (1998). Disability studies: Looking at the FAQ's. *Alert, 9*, 1-5.
- Groff, D. (2006). An exploratory study of athletic identity among elite alpine skiers with physical disabilities: Issues of measurement and design. *Journal of Sport Behaviour, 29*, 126-142.
- Guba, E. (1981). Criteria for assessing the trustworthiness of naturalistic inquiries. *Educational Communication and Technology Journal, 29*, 75-91.
- Guba, E., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1982). Epistemological and methodological bases of naturalistic inquiry. *Educational Communication and Technology Journal, 30*, 233-252.
- Hahn, H. (1993). Political implications of disability definitions and data. *Journal of Disability Policy Studies, 4*, 41-52.
- Halas, J., & Hanson, L. (2001). Pathologizing Billy: Enabling and constraining the body of the condemned. *Sociology of Sport Journal, 18*, 115-126.
- Halliday, B. (1993). Completing the circle: Report on Aboriginal people with disabilities. *Royal Commission on Aboriginal peoples, 3*, 148.
- Hill, M. (1994). 'They are not our Brothers:' The disability movement and the black disability movement. In N. Begum, M. Hill, & A. Stevens (Eds.), *Reflections: Views of black disabled people on their lives and community care* (Paper 32.3). Cambridge: Black Bear Press.
- Hodge, S. R., Kozub, F. M., Robinson, L. E., & Hersman, B. L. (2007). Reporting gender, race, ethnicity, and sociometric status: Guidelines for research and professional practice. *Adapted Physical Activity Quarterly, 24*, 21-37.

- Holstein, J., & Gubrium, J. (2003). *Inside Interviewing: New lenses, new concerns*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Kinsmen Telemiracle (2004). Retrieved November 2, 2006, from <http://www.telemiracle.com>.
- Krueger, R. A. (1994). *Focus groups* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Kvale, S. (1996). *Interviews: An introduction to qualitative research interviewing*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Levins, S., Redenbach, D., & Dyck, I. (2004). Individual and societal influences on Participation in physical activity following spinal cord injury: A qualitative study. *Physical Therapy, 84*, 496.
- Lincoln, Y. S. (1995). Emerging criteria for quality in qualitative and interpretive research. *Qualitative Inquiry, 1*, 275-289.
- Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. B. (1999). *Designing qualitative research* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Menzies, C. (2001). Reflections on research with, for and among indigenous peoples. *Canadian Journal of Native Education, 251*, 19-38.
- Merriam, S. (2002). *Qualitative research in practice: Examples for discussion and analysis*. San Fransisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Miller, A. B., & Keys, C. B. (1996). Awareness, action, and collaboration: How the self-advocacy movement is empowering for persons with developmental disabilities. *Mental Retardation, 34*, 312-319.
- National Aboriginal Health Organization (2003). *Ways of knowing: A framework for health research*. Policy Research Unit, with assistance from the Inuit, Métis and First Nations Centres.

- NAND. (1994). *Little mountain and if they would only listen*. Ottawa, ON: National Aboriginal Network on Disabilities.
- Northern Saskatchewan Health Indicators Report. (2004). *Population health unit*. Regina, SK: Author.
- Osedowski, M. (2001). Risk perceptions and First Nations communities. *International Journal of Circumpolar Health*, 60, 180-183.
- Patton, M. W. (2002). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Pidgeon, M., & Cox, D. (2002). Researching with Aboriginal peoples: Practices and principles. *Canadian Journal of Native Education*, 26, 96-104.
- Reason, P., & Bradbury, H. (2001). *Handbook of action research: Participative inquiry and practice*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Relland, M. (1998). *The teachings of the Bear Clan as told by Saulteaux Elder Danny Musqua*. Unpublished master's thesis, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada.
- Rossmann, G. B., & Rallis, S. F. (1998). *Learning in the field: An introduction to qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996). *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples*. Ottawa, ON: The Commission.
- Sandelowski, M. (1993). Theory unmasked: The uses and guises of theory in qualitative research. *Research in Nursing and Health*, 16, 213-218.
- Schwalbe, M., & Wolkomir, M. (2003). Interviewing men. In J. Holstein & J. Gubrium (Eds.), *Inside interviewing: New lenses, new concerns* (pp. 55-71). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

- Seidman, I. (1998). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences* (2nd ed.). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Sherrill, C., & Yilla, A. (2004). Celebrating differences, planning practical experience, and striving toward inclusion. In C. Sherrill (Ed.), *Adapted physical activity, recreation, and sport: Crossdisciplinary and lifespan* (6th ed., pp. 26-59). New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Schwandt, T. A. (1997). *Qualitative inquiry: A dictionary of terms*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Sibbald, B. (2002). Off reserve Aboriginal people facing daunting health problems: Statistics Canada. *Canadian Medical Association Journal*, 167, 912.
- Smith, L. (1999). *Decolonizing methodologies, research and indigenous peoples*. New York: Zed Books Ltd.
- Statistics Canada. (1994). Retrieved January, 2006, from <http://www.statcan.ca/start.html/>
- Statistics Canada (2001). Retrieved May, 2006, from <http://www12.statcan.ca/english/census01/products/highlight/Aboriginal/Index.cfm?Lang=E>
- van Manen, M. (1997). *Researching lived experience: Human science for an action sensitive pedagogy* (2nd ed.). Toronto, ON: Althouse Press.
- Wolfensberger, W. (1973). The future of residential services for the mentally retarded. *Journal of Clinical Child Psychology*, 2, 19.

8. APPENDICES

Appendix A: Co-Participant Information Form

CO- PARTICIPANT INFORMATION FORM

INDIVIDUAL INFORMATION

1. Name _____
2. Address _____ 3. Postal Code _____
4. Phone Number _____ 5. E-mail Address _____
6. Date of Birth _____
7. Age _____ 8. Sex _____

PROFILE

1. If you use a wheelchair, why?

2. How long have you used a wheelchair?

3. What do you do (i.e., occupation, student)?

4. What was the last grade or level of education you completed?

5. Who do you live with?

6. What First Nation do you identify yourself with?

SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

1. What are your physical activity interests? _____

2. What sports do you compete in? _____

3. How often do you currently participate in physical activity? _____

4. What community organized physical activity opportunities are you involved in? _____

5. When did you become involved in competitive sport? _____

6. Who introduced you to competitive sport? _____

7. What level of competition are you playing at? _____

8. Where did you become involved? _____

9. Where are you currently training? _____

COMMUNITY

1. When did you live in a rural community? _____

2. Which community? _____

3. How many years did you live in your rural community with your disability? _____

4. How many people live in your community? _____

5. How far are you from the closest urban center? _____

Appendix B: Interview Guide

Interview Guide

Purpose: The purpose of the study was to understand the experience of disability from the perspective of Aboriginal adults and the meaning given to their participation in sport.

Interview Questions:

What sport do you participate in?

Tell me about that sport and how you became involved?

How do you feel when you are practicing? Competing?

What attracted you to sport?

What role does sport play in your life?

What would your life be like if you did not have the opportunity to participate in sport?

If you did not have sport in your life, who would you be?

Does sport impact the way others perceive you?

Do you identify yourself as an athlete?

Can you explain that a bit?

Tell me more about what that means to you?

Tell me about your sport experiences as an Aboriginal person with a disability?

If you could tell Aboriginal youth with disabilities one reason why they should participate in sport, what would it be?

How do you describe yourself?

What words do you use?

Do you describe yourself to others as a person or person with a disability?

Do you describe yourself to others as a person with a disability or an Aboriginal person?

Some people would describe you as having a disability. How do you feel about this statement?

What does the word disability mean to you?

Would you use the term 'disability' to describe yourself at all times and in all situations?

What do you think 'outsiders' understand about your experience of disability (and your experience of sport)?

What does your Aboriginal community understand about you?

What does your disability community understand about you?

If you could tell the world three things about yourself, as an athlete, what would they be?

How do you feel you are perceived as a person with a disability in your community?

How does your Aboriginal community view disability?

What do the words 'independence' and 'dependence' mean to you?

What do the words 'independence' and 'dependence' mean to your community?

As it relates to sport, can you tell me times when you experiences these terms?

How did it make you feel?

Describe your community support systems in your community.

What does it mean to be part of an Aboriginal community?

Do you feel you are a part of your community?

Tell me a time when you feel the most linked and the least linked to your Aboriginal community?

Where do you live now and why?

Tell me about your move?

What was the hardest part of moving?

If you could live in one place, where would it be and why?

Appendix C: Ethical Approval



University of Saskatchewan
Behavioural Research Ethics Board (Beh-REB)

24-Oct-2005

Certificate of Approval

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR
Donna Goodwin

DEPARTMENT
Kinesiology

BEH#
05-247

STUDENT RESEARCHER(S)
Melanie Elliott

INSTITUTION(S) WHERE RESEARCH WILL BE CONDUCTED (STUDY SITE)
University of Saskatchewan

SPONSOR
Canadian Centre for Disability Studies

TITLE
The Experience of Sport: The Perspectives of Young Aboriginal Adults with Disabilities

ORIGINAL APPROVAL DATE
24-Oct-2005

CURRENT RENEWAL DATE
01-Oct-2006

CERTIFICATION

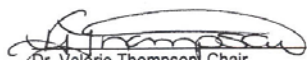
The University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board has reviewed the above-named research project. The proposal was found to be acceptable on ethical grounds. The principal investigator has the responsibility for any other administrative or regulatory approvals that may pertain to this research project, and for ensuring that the authorized research is carried out according to the conditions outlined in the original protocol submitted for ethics review. This Certificate of Approval is valid for the above time period provided there is no change in experimental protocol or consent process or documents.

Any significant changes to your proposed method, or your consent and recruitment procedures should be reported to the Chair for Research Ethics Board consideration in advance of its implementation.

ONGOING REVIEW REQUIREMENTS

The term of this approval is five years. However, the approval must be renewed on an annual basis. In order to receive annual renewal, a status report must be submitted to the REB Chair for Board consideration within one month of the current expiry date each year the study remains open, and upon study completion. Please refer to the following website for further instructions: <http://www.usask.ca/research/ethical.shtml>.

APPROVED.


Dr. Valerie Thompson, Chair
Behavioural Research Ethics Board
University of Saskatchewan

Please send all correspondence to:

Ethics Office
University of Saskatchewan
Room 304 Kirk Hall, 117 Science Place
Saskatoon SK S7N 5C8
Telephone: (306) 966-2084 Fax: (306) 966-2069

Appendix D: Co-Participant Informed Consent Form

UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN Informed Consent Form

You are invited to participate in a study entitled: *The Experience of Sport: The Perspectives of Young Aboriginal Adults with Disabilities*. Please read this form carefully and feel free to ask questions you might have.

Principal Researcher: Melanie Elliott, College of Kinesiology, U of S, 966-1123

Purpose and Procedure: The purpose of this research project is to develop an understanding of the experience of sport for young Aboriginal adults with disabilities in rural settings. More specifically, the objectives are to (a) explore the meaning of disability from the perspective of young Aboriginal adults, (b) understand the experience of disability within a rural context, and (c) describe the role that participation in sport plays in young adult's experiences of disability. The research study will require you to participate in an individual interview, a group interview, and an art project for a total of approximately 5 hours. The interviews will be tape recorded. The audio tape recordings will be written out word for word. You will be asked to provide analysis of the gathered information (i.e., member checks). You will be asked to share your views on the descriptions the researcher has developed, as well as examine, re-interpret, delete, add or change the themes. This will be done together and will take approximately 2 hours. Your total time commitment will not be more than 11 hours.

At the end of the individual interviews, I will hand out art supplies and ask you to bring the completed art project, which represents you as an athlete, to the group interview. Be aware that observations will be made during the interviews that will be written down. These notes will help remember the events of the interview when the data is analyzed.

Potential Risks: Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You can refuse to answer any question that is asked during the group or individual interview. You can also request the tape recorder be turned off during the interviews. Should you like to discuss issues raised in the interview with others, you will be supported to contact the counseling services by your local Band Office. There are no known risks involved in this research study.

Potential Benefits: The voice of young Aboriginal adults with disabilities will be heard in this project and although the impact of these messages cannot be guaranteed, your participation in this study will contribute to a better understanding of sport and what it means to be a young Aboriginal adult with a disability in a rural community. In addition, you will be delivering your stories to the research community, and through the distribution of the findings. A summary of the study will be prepared for potential distribution to FSIN, SaskSport, In Motion, The Aboriginal Sports Circle, Saskatchewan Wheelchair Sports Association, and your rural community.

At the end of the research study, you will be presented with an honorarium for your time and knowledge throughout the study. One hundred and forty dollars will be

given to you for the 7 hours of time spent on the design and analysis of the project. One hundred dollars will be provided for the 4 hours of interview time. You will receive a total honorarium of \$240.00.

Storage of Data: Dr. Donna Goodwin, the student's supervisor, will be responsible for data storage. All data is considered confidential material and will be held in a locked file cabinet at the College of Kinesiology, University of Saskatchewan for a minimum of five years following the end of the study. The audiotapes and transcripts (i.e. written out interviews) will be stored separately from the master sheet identifying co-participant names, the fake names, and code numbers.

Confidentiality: The following steps will be taken to protect the confidentiality of the interview transcripts (a) names or other identifying information will not be discussed or made public outside of the research team (researcher, supervisor), (b) fake names will be substituted for all names that appear on the written out interviews and material for publication, and (c) the audio tapes will be identified by code number only, (d) the gathered information will not be viewed beyond the research team, and (e) the code sheet linking the data with the co-participants will be destroyed upon completion of the data collection. The audiotapes and written out interviews will be stored separately from the master sheet identifying names, fake names, and code numbers.

The information gathered will be used in the writing of my final paper and may be presented as themes that emerge from the transcripts and artifacts. Quotes will be used to illustrate the themes, however your confidentiality will be ensured at all times. Every effort will be made to protect your identity. All names, locations, team identifiers, community organizations, or team standing information will be removed from the written out interviews.

The researcher will attempt to protect the confidentiality of the group interview, but cannot guarantee that other members of the group will do so. Please respect the confidentiality of the other members of the group by not uncovering the contents of this discussion outside the group, and be aware that others may not respect your confidentiality. The group interview will be conducted by an Aboriginal moderator who will also agree to keep the conversation confidential.

Because the co-participants for this research study have been selected from a small group of people, all of whom may be known to each other; it is possible that you may be known to other people on the basis of what you have said. After your interviews, and prior to the data being included in the final report, you will be given the opportunity to review your written out interview, and to add, alter, or delete information from the transcripts as you see fit.

With permission the artwork will be scanned, returned and stored with the taped interviews. At no time will these images be used for financial gain, or go beyond educational purposes.

Right to Withdraw: Your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study for any reason, at any time, without penalty of any sport, including current or future participation in sport programs. If you withdraw from the study at any time, any data that you have contributed will be destroyed. If you decide to withdraw prior to the

completion of the study, you will be provided with part of the honorarium, according to the portions of the study you have completed.

Questions: If you have any questions concerning the study, please feel free to ask at any point; you are also free to contact the researcher at the number provided above if you have any questions at a later time. This research project was approved on ethical ground by the University of Saskatchewan Behavioral Sciences Research Ethics Board on October 24, 2005. Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to that committee through the Office of Research Services (966-2084). Out of town participants may call collect.

At the time when we interpret the findings (i.e., member checks) a copy of the unpublished study can also be requested.

Consent to Participate: I have read and understood the description provided above; I have been provided with an opportunity to ask questions and my answers have been answered satisfactorily. I consent to participate in the study described above, understanding that I may withdraw this consent at any time. A copy of this consent form has been given to me for my records.

Co-participant's Name

Address

City Postal Code

Phone Number

Co-participant's Signature

Researcher's Signature

Appendix E: Summary of CIHR Guidelines

CIHR Aboriginal Research Ethics Guidelines – Draft - 28

3.2 Protocol and Research Process

Elements for Researcher Consideration for Research Involving Aboriginal Individuals, Families, or Communities

3.2.1 Protocol

Background

- Provides the context of the project
 - o Underlines the burden of disease, need, priority, interest, especially in reference to the Aboriginal population to be included
 - o Should provide as much information specific to Aboriginals as available
 - o Should explain any relevant work that has been completed, including findings or initiatives

Significance

- Explains the importance of the proposed work for Aboriginal populations
- Explains how this approach may be new or different
- Explains any potential benefits, risks, harms for Aboriginal populations

Methods

Approval

- Should explain....
 - o How Aboriginal group approval will be obtained
 - Band/Tribal/Community Council health director, health board, band/tribal/community council
 - Resolution
 - o How funding agency approval will be obtained
 - Letter of support
 - o How Research Ethics Board (REB) approval will be obtained

Sampling

Should explain....

- Who will be included (should include Power calculations), for example,
 - o Males and/or females, and why
 - o Adults and/or children, and why
 - o Random or pre-selected, and why
- How long the involvement will last
 - o Project will last for 6 months
 - o Individual surveys will take 30 minutes
- Technical assistance should be provided to Aboriginal groups so they understand the calculations proposed for sampling

Recruitment

Should explain how participants will be recruited to the study

- Advertisement in local health newsletter, Aboriginal organization newsletter, etc.

- Clinic based, participants will be recruited by diagnostic status
- Convenience sample, people convening at a certain location
- Personalized letters, e.g., Chief writing a letter encouraging participation
- Inclusion of Aboriginal group members for assisting with recruitment should be clearly explained
- Inclusion of Aboriginal group members for recruitment is encouraged

Consent Process

- In understandable terms, describes the project so that people know what they are being asked to participate in.
- The who, what, where, when, why, how of the project needs to be explained at 8th grade level; translators should be made available as necessary for understanding of informed consent and protocol
- There are required components of consent (based on TCPS)
- A clear statement that the study is "research"
- All the research purposes [i.e., research objectives] clearly stated
- How and why prospective volunteers are selected
- Expected duration of the volunteer's involvement
- Procedure(s) or treatment(s) to be done
- Reasonably expected benefits to volunteer and others
- Reasonably foreseeable discomfort & risks--including all in protocol
- Especially for experiments, a statement that the treatment(s) or procedure(s) "may involve risks that are currently unforeseeable" [Applicable most often in clinical trials of drugs or procedures]
- Which procedures-treatments are experimental--say "experimental" [Applicable only to experimental research, not observational]
- The alternatives to the research's diagnostic method or treatment [Applicable primarily to research of diagnosis or treatment]
- Procedure for the orderly termination of a volunteer's participation [Applicable primarily to clinical trials, sometimes to compensation--if early termination will decrease compensation]
 - o Consequences of a volunteer's withdrawal from the research
 - o When may the researcher terminate a volunteer's participation without the volunteer's consent
- Plans to inform volunteers of significant research findings during or after the study relevant to their continued participation or treatment [Applicable primarily either to clinical trials, or to "deception" research in which debriefing at the end is a standard procedure]
- If more than minimal risk: "In case of injury or severe adverse affect..."
 - o Will medical care for adverse affects be given? By whom? Where?
 - o Is compensation for adverse affects available? How?
 - o Who should a volunteer contact with injury or adverse affect?
- Who will answer questions about the research itself? [Usually the PI, with telephone number--collect call or toll-free number if long distance]
- How confidentiality or anonymity is maintained?

- Who will answer other concerns, complaints, or grievances? [Regulations call this "subject rights"; usually the REB, with telephone number--collect call or toll-free number if long distance]
- Financial factors (extra costs of, or compensation for, participation)
- Other elements a reasonable person would want to know
- Non-coercion disclaimer.

Data Collection

- Explains what information is going to be collected, e.g., Aboriginal group name, participant name, age, height, tobacco use
- Explains the way the information is going to be...
 - o Identified, e.g., numbered, coded
 - o Stored, e.g., software, locked, password protected
 - o Accessed, e.g., staff members only
- Explains how long the information is going to be kept, where, by whom
- Explains data ownership; to whom does the data belong?

Appendix E: Sample of Data Interpretation with Co-Participants



what is the significance of this statement?

its the way people are brought up too

on the roads come summer time and nobody stops or drives by or is staring at her. **It is just a normal thing!!**

While Pooh is attempting to get people with disabilities out of their homes, Jon is striving to build opportunities for people with disabilities:

Just recently, I learnt that Canada has a National team for amputee hockey players. Not the sledge hockey, the standing. **And, I didn't know about this, nobody told me about this.** I don't know how this lady heard that I played hockey. And she e-mailed me just the week before the tryouts in Toronto and there was no way I could go.... so that's what I'm working on now. I'm trying to get there to make awareness that there are people, Aboriginal people with disabilities with that opportunity.

how do you feel? mad-disappointed b/c he feels could have made it nobody knew anything about it

Pooh's community in Northern Saskatchewan is beginning to change very slowly which gives her a deep hope:

Like my daughter when she graduated there was a student there that was in a wheelchair. And he had a learning disability, but he was able to graduate that year. Like it took him a lot longer and the kids, like the student's in Mel's grade, they just thought that was just so awesome. Ya know because here is this guy with a, he wasn't just, he didn't just have a disability, like he had multiple disabilities and here he was graduating you know. So that's one thing I have noticed here is that the kids aren't put in another school separate. They are all together, and I think that opens up a lot of kids eyes earlier. So things are slowly, slowly changing. Like even in Northern Saskatchewan things are changing so there is hope.

The co-participants agreed that **each community is different** *how?* and have separate goals for people with disabilities. Progress has been made but according to Pooh, "we have a long ways to go yet....we're getting there....there's awareness out there now though....there is way more out there than when I was first in a chair."

- 1) *How does this theme help us understand d/a from your perspective?*
 - 2) *would your experience of sport lose its meaning without the theme 'getting out first'?*
- No*