

UNDERSTANDING ABORIGINAL YOUTH DEVELOPMENT THROUGH SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY: THEIR VOICES, THEIR STORIES, AND THEIR EXPERIENCES

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BACKGROUND

- ❖ Research has highlighted the cognitive, physical, emotional, and spiritual benefits of sport and physical activity participation for Aboriginal youth.^{1,2}
- ❖ Indigenous sport and physical activity have been used to teach personal and social values such as honesty, respect, personal excellence and gratitude toward parents, elders, and communities as youth move toward adulthood.^{3,4}
- ❖ Despite the importance of participation by Aboriginal peoples the meaning of youth development in this context is not well understood.

PURPOSE

- ❖ To understand Aboriginal youth development through sport and physical activity through the voices, stories and experiences of Aboriginal youth.

METHODS

Participants

- ❖ 99 Aboriginal youth (52 males and 48 females) between the ages of 15 and 25 years who took part in one of 13 talking circles held across Canada.

Procedures

- ❖ Each of the 13 talking circles was facilitated by an Aboriginal youth with guidance from a traditional person.
- ❖ Consent to proceed with talking circles was obtained by youth choosing either to sign a consent form or receive a tobacco bundle.
- ❖ Elder or spiritual advisor said opening prayer, and youth/facilitator took part in a smudge (voluntarily).
- ❖ Participants (youth and facilitator) introduced themselves and shared where they were from.
- ❖ An Eagle feather or tobacco bundle was frequently passed around among the youth as they spoke.
- ❖ The questions were posed to the youth to share their thoughts/experiences.
- ❖ Elder/spiritual advisor said a closing prayer.

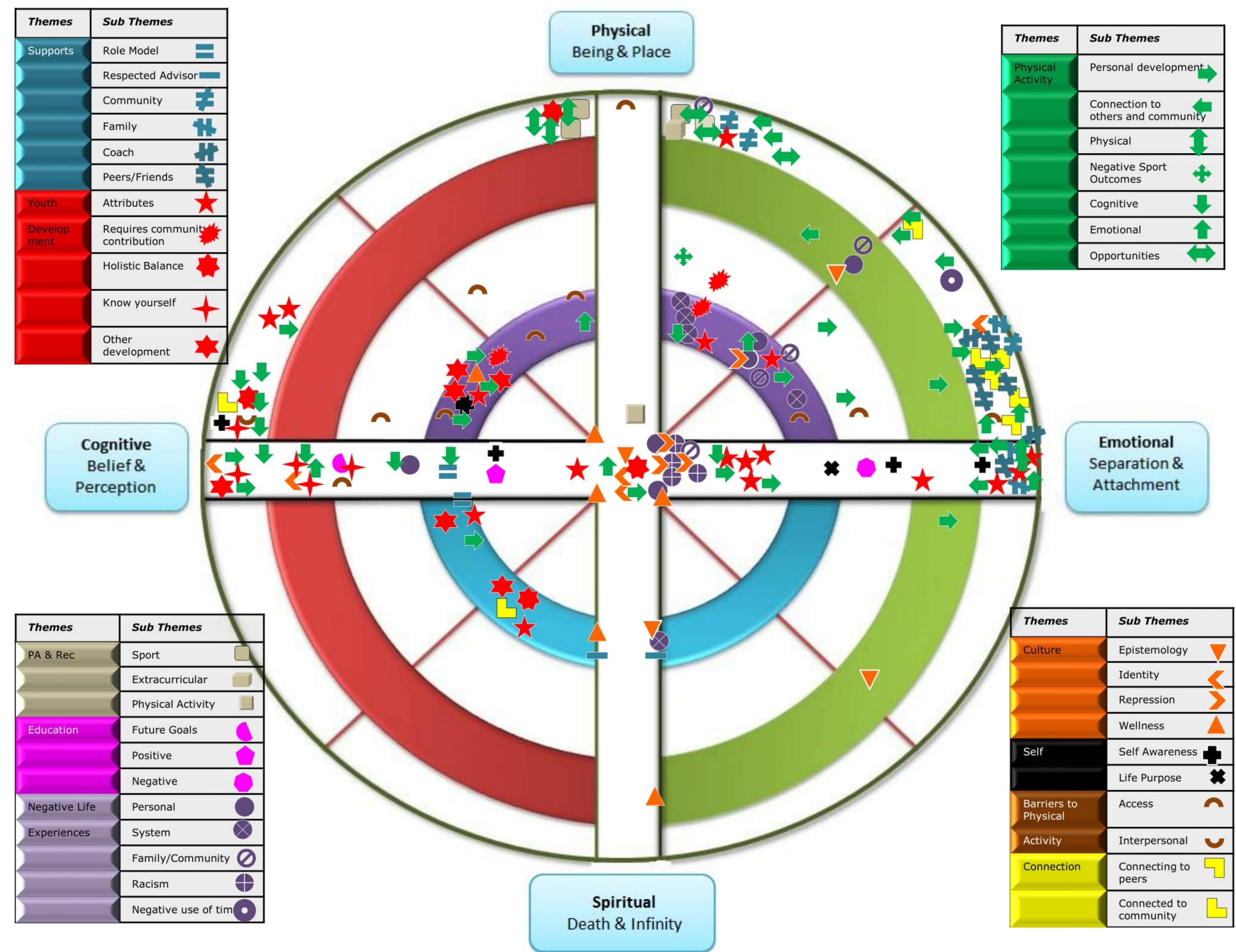
Data Analysis

- ❖ A Two-Eyed Seeing approach⁵ was used to analyze the talking circle discussions.
- ❖ This analytical process involved an initial inductive content analysis of the transcripts followed by an Indigenous symbolic visual analysis of the themes using a Medicine Circle.



RESULTS

- ❖ Findings revealed that involvement in sport and physical activity impacted Aboriginal youth physically, cognitively and emotionally. The spiritual impact was not as explicitly evident.



DISCUSSION

- ❖ Consistent with a recent review of the literature⁶ both positive (e.g., personal development, enhanced connections with community) and negative experiences (e.g., racism) were reported by youth.
- ❖ Aboriginal youth discussed how involvement in sport and physical activity influenced each of the four quadrants of the medicine circle including cognitive, emotional, physical, and spiritual.
- ❖ The lower reporting of the spiritual impact of sport and physical activity may be attributed to (1) lack of specific questions targeting the role of sport and physical activity on spirit and culture; (2) adolescent Aboriginal youth focusing on the other three quadrants and not yet seeing the links between sport and physical activity and spirit.

Future Directions

- ❖ Results from the study will inform the development of an online Application (App) evaluating Aboriginal youth development in sport and physical activity.



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