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## STUDENTS' CORNER

### Promoting the 8<sup>th</sup> International Society for Physical Activity and Health Congress: Engaging Indigenous Ways of Understanding

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#### Abstract

**Background:** The International Society for Physical Activity and Health (ISPAH) Congress strives to advance knowledge of the benefits of physical activity for optimal health and well-being across the lifespan. The integration of Indigenous perspectives along with western worldviews promotes inclusive and culturally relevant information that empowers communities across the globe. **Purpose:** This project focused on increasing Indigenous participation for ISPAH 2021 and investigates the methods used and the outcomes of promoting Indigenous participation at the 8<sup>th</sup> ISPAH Congress. **Methods:** Indigenous community leaders in health and physical activity were sent letters of invitation to participate and share their knowledge at ISPAH 2020. 6 video vignettes were created to further enhance the promotion and knowledge of ISPAH 2021 in Indigenous communities. **Results:** The creation of promotional video vignettes, knowledge exchange between western and Indigenous experts, and the promotion of health and wellness initiatives can elicit interest and participation from Indigenous community members. Events that promote the development of health and wellness initiatives can enable greater opportunities for sharing and practicing Indigenous knowledge. **Conclusion:** The inclusion of Indigenous leaders can increase awareness and understanding of Indigenous ways of knowing, facilitating knowledge exchange between Western and Indigenous perspectives in health and physical activity. **Health & Fitness Journal of Canada 2021;14(1):25-30.**

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## Introduction

The International Society for Physical Activity and Health (ISPAH) Congress represents the world's largest forum related to physical activity and public health (ISPAH, n.d.). ISPAH is recognized as the leading global society focusing on promoting physical activity across the lifespan and aims to advance and promote physical activity as a global health priority through excellence in research, education, capacity building, and advocacy (ISPAH,

n.d.). Previous congresses were held in Atlanta, Amsterdam, Toronto, Sydney, Rio de Janeiro, Bangkok, and most recently in London. Historically, these congresses have not had significant attendance from Indigenous populations. Through our advocacy, we strived to integrate Indigenous perspectives on health and wellness in communities, incorporating culturally safe and appropriate aspects such as the medicine wheel to promote wholistic balance and healthy living

(McCormick, 1995). Intergenerational community integration enables increased opportunities for sharing, practicing, and preserving Indigenous knowledge, especially out on the land (Fijal & Beagan, 2019).

While Western medicine is dominated by the biomedical model of health, Indigenous perspectives promote the integration of spiritual, emotional, mental, and physical components of health and wellness (Kant et al., 2013; Auger, Howell, & Gomes, 2016). A Two-Eyed Seeing approach can be implemented to integrate both western and Indigenous worldviews, embody acceptance and inclusion, promote mutual cultural respect, and offer the opportunity to value and prioritise Indigenous ways of knowing in medical education research (McKivett, Hudson, McDermott, & Paul, 2020).

### Purpose

The purpose of this project was to support Indigenous participation and the integration of Indigenous worldviews and perspectives at the 8<sup>th</sup> ISPAH Congress, in order to promote and facilitate knowledge exchange between Indigenous and Western leaders in physical activity and health.

### Methods

Indigenous community leaders in health and physical activity were identified as potential invitees to attend and/or share their knowledge at the 8<sup>th</sup> ISPAH Congress. Three general invitation letters were created and addressed to identified Indigenous leaders such as Chief Ian Campbell of TsSḵwḵwú7mesh (Squamish) Nation, Chief Leah George-Wilson of Sto:lo and səlilwətaʔ/Selilwitulh (Tsleil-Waututh) Nation, and Chief Wayne Sparrow of x<sup>w</sup>məθk<sup>w</sup>əyəm (Musqueam).

Consistent with Indigenous ways of doing, these Indigenous community leaders were approached to ensure that the voices of the communities wherein the Congress will take place were represented. The Congress was set to take place on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the Coast Salish peoples–Sḵwḵwú7mesh (Squamish), Stó:lō and Səlilwətaʔ/Selilwitulh (Tsleil-Waututh) and x<sup>w</sup>məθk<sup>w</sup>əyəm (Musqueam) Nations.

A co-creation approach was followed for the development of a series of video vignettes for the 8<sup>th</sup> ISPAH Congress. These video vignettes were designed to meet the goal of supporting the engagement of Indigenous worldviews at the 8<sup>th</sup> ISPAH Congress and supporting the transfer of knowledge between Indigenous and Western leaders in physical activity and health.

### Results

Six video vignettes were developed in collaboration with Dr. Rosalin Miles and Dr. Darren Warburton as potential promotional videos for the ISPAH Congress. Each of the six video vignettes covered a different topic related to ISPAH: 1) general information, 2) the Pre-Congress satellite meetings, 3) the Congress, 4) predicted outcomes, 5) importance of traditional land acknowledgements, and 6) the idea of developing a Virtual Congress in the face of the COVID-19 global pandemic. Owing to the delay of the Congress in 2020 to 2021, these videos will be rolled out in the new year of 2021 to promote the event.

### Discussion

The 8<sup>th</sup> ISPAH Congress (2020-21) was organized in collaboration with Indigenous scholars and leaders in health and physical activity. The involvement of Indigenous

scholars and community leaders facilitates collaboration and reciprocity between Indigenous leaders and Western health professionals, promoting strength-based, culturally relevant and culturally appropriate health and wellness programs for Indigenous communities (Foulds et al., 2013; Iwama et al., 2009; Mosby & Galloway, 2017; Salloum et al., 2019). This collaborative planning process reflects a “Two-Eyed Seeing” approach, which involves a respectful integration of Western and Indigenous ways of knowing (Iwama et al., 2009). Health and wellness initiatives for Indigenous communities need to be culturally-based and integrate mental, physical, spiritual, and social components in order to improve wholistic health in Indigenous communities (Murdoch-Flowers, 2017).

This development of mutually respectful partnerships was facilitated by adhering to the teachings of the 4R’s: respect, reciprocity, relevance, and responsibility (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991). “Respect” was reflected by the 8<sup>th</sup> ISPAH Congress’ primary objective that emphasized the importance of including Indigenous health and wellness leaders to share their knowledge, beliefs, values, and traditional practices with the attendees (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991). The 8<sup>th</sup> ISPAH Congress also highlights the importance of knowledge exchange and “reciprocal” relationships, in which both parties are able to both share their perspectives and gain new knowledge through active communication (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991). The 8<sup>th</sup> ISPAH Congress also encourages Indigenous community leaders to have an active role in discussing health and wellness initiatives, which ensures that topics and outcomes are “relevant” to Indigenous communities and further empowers them to take “responsibility”

over initiatives that benefit their communities (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991).

As a healthy relationship to the land is of vital importance to Indigenous communities, we are excited of the potential that the virtual format of the 8<sup>th</sup> ISPAH Congress holds. It is anticipated that the virtual nature of the Congress in 2021 will reduce the environmental impacts often caused by in-person events (Robbins & Dewar, 2011). Furthermore, it was found that online engagement during NIPAW 2019 was beneficial for members who were not able to attend in person (Salloum et al., 2019). Indigenous digital storytelling allows for greater collaboration with global scholars while ensuring that the information being shared is culturally safe, relevant, and appropriate (Iseke & Moore, 2011; Cunsolo-Wilcox et al., 2012). In addition, since the tools needed for online events tend to be more accessible, they have the ability to be much more inclusive reaching Indigenous peoples throughout the world (Moutafidou & Bratitsis, 2018).

With the increase of global accessibility, the importance of culturally safe and sensitive events is also greater (Peake, Jackson, Lea, & Usher, 2019). Including Indigenous leaders when developing the online platform can help provide a safer environment for everyone and ensures individuals understand the overarching aspects that need to be addressed when working with Indigenous communities (Peake et al., 2019; Salloum et al., 2019). Virtual congresses provide various benefits, such as cost-effectiveness, time flexibility, travel-free, environmentally friendly, inclusive, and global connectivity (Anderson & Christiansen, 2004; Brateit et al., 2019; McDermott-Levy, 2008; Moutafidou & Bratitsis, 2018; Pearlman & Gates, 2010).

In fact, Salloum et al. (2019) found that using mass media was an effective method of reaching greater audiences. As the video vignettes were in a digital format, they also have the potential to reach greater online audiences and facilitate interaction with the event (Salloum et al., 2019). Promoting knowledge exchange between Western and Indigenous experts at the Pre-Congress using a “Two-Eyed Seeing” approach may also elicit interest in participation (Iwama, Marshall, Marshall, & Bartlett, 2009), as Indigenous communities aspire to incorporate traditional health and wellbeing knowledge into mainstream healthcare systems (Howell, Auger, Gomes, Brown, & Young, 2016). Furthermore, findings from Salloum et al. (2019) suggest that events promoting the development of health and wellness initiatives in Indigenous communities elicit interest and participation from community members, possibly as involvement from Indigenous Elders and youth can enable greater opportunities for sharing and practicing Indigenous knowledge within the community and in other healthcare systems (Fijal & Beagan, 2019; Martin, 2012; Salloum et al., 2019).

### Conclusions

The 8<sup>th</sup> ISPAH Congress has the potential to effectively engage Indigenous Elders, youth and other community members. The inclusion of Indigenous leaders can increase awareness and understanding of Indigenous ways of knowing. The Congress can also facilitate knowledge exchange between Western and Indigenous leaders in health and physical activity to promote a better understanding of the significance of land-based, community-based and wholistic activities. The digital promotions created in this project were conducted in a manner that ensured cultural safety and

relevance by involving Indigenous scholars in the co-creation process. Involving Indigenous scholars and health experts is essential for projects concerning the health and wellbeing of Indigenous communities. The inclusion of Indigenous leaders can support increased awareness and understanding of Indigenous ways of knowing, facilitating knowledge exchange between Western and Indigenous perspectives in health and physical activity.

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### Authors' Qualifications

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