

Re-creation through recreation: Exploring contemporary perspectives of Indigenous leisure

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CONTEXT: What's the issue?

Canada's Indigenous populations have suffered generations of systemic oppression as a result of colonization and assimilation. The country's colonial systems attempted to eradicate cultural practices through imposed Eurocentric ideologies, or the postulation of European superiority over non-European cultures (Hedican, 2014). These systems have resulted in profound effects on the spiritual beliefs, traditional practices, ancestral knowledge, physical and emotional well-being, self-expression and identity of the traditional inhabitants of the land (MacDonald & Steenbeek, 2015; Forsyth & Wamsley, 2006). Academics have identified that the establishment and maintenance of a sense of identity can be an effective protective factor when having faced, or facing, discrimination and marginalization. Leisure literature proposes that variables of identity, such as self-development, occur through the autonomous selection of, and participation in, leisure activities (Iman & Boostani, 2012). Yet, there is relatively little documentation about what constitutes 'leisure' in an Indigenous context. The purpose of this study is to explore the relationship between leisure participation and cultural identity among Coast Salish Indigenous populations.

RESEARCH PURPOSE: What's the question?

What role does leisure play in the development of cultural identity for Coast Salish Indigenous peoples?
(1) Identify and analyze culturally (Coast Salish) embedded perspectives on leisure;
(2) Evaluate Coast Salish Indigenous perceptions and practices of leisure identity.

SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY: What's the point?

The primary significance of this research is to enhance the theoretical position of leisure as a variable in the conceptualization of Indigenous identity. This study has potential to provide documentation of Indigenous leisure definitions and practices, traditionally passed on orally, thus supporting the sustainability of Coast Salish knowledge and promoting preservation of the culture. Further, the timeliness of this study, occurring alongside a modern cultural revitalization movement, will support grassroots service practitioners and cultural leadership to influence the resurgence of Indigenous identity through leisure participation.

This study does not intend to be a pan-Indigenous approach to research, as it must be acknowledged that Indigenous epistemologies vary greatly across the globe, and Canada itself (Lavallee, 2009).

METHODOLOGY: How will I find an answer?

An Indigenous methodology (IM) will be employed to embrace the complexities of categorizing data within a spiritual and cultural framework (Kovach, 2009). IM acknowledges the interconnectedness and iterative processes of creation and is characterized by relationships, responsibility and reciprocity (Burnette & Billiot, 2015). Taking a qualitative approach, this study will employ open-ended questions in semi-structured focus groups, designed around the cultural protocols of a talking circle, or sharing circle (Lavallee, 2009). Discussion will be prompted by key themes: what is leisure, what is leisure in a Coast Salish context, perceived roles of leisure within Coast Salish culture and relationships between leisure and Coast Salish identity. Three sharing circles will be conducted with three to five participants per circle, with a target of 12 total respondents. Dialogue from each talking circle will be audiotaped and anticipated to last approximately 90- 120 minutes. As dominantly accepted coding techniques can cause traditional stories to become fragmented and lose meaning, or collective value, this study will employ Grounded theory to code themes emerging from the discussions.

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