



UNIVERSITY OF
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A HURDLE TO SUCCESS

The Path for Pan Am/Parapan Am Legacy

Discussion Paper

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Introduction

The Pan Am/Parapan Am Games to be held in 2015 (TO2015) will bring thousands of Indigenous and racialized athletes to the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). TO2015 features many Olympic qualifying events and is therefore crucial on the path to athletic excellence. The Games give hope for a future in sport to many young people – including Indigenous and racialized youth who currently have little chance of making it to elite or professional sporting ranks. This is particularly true for Indigenous and racialized athletes with disabilities. This incredible multi-sport mega-event provides a tremendous opportunity to examine the role of sport in the lives of Indigenous and racialized youth.

Many youth discover sport through their educational institutions, and for some, elite sport participation is seen as a means to access scholarships for post-secondary education (PSE), which their families would otherwise be unable to afford. Since educational attainment leads to greater opportunities in the areas of employment and income, and Indigenous and racialized Canadians are among the most economically disadvantaged peoples in the country, it is necessary to examine issues around these student-athletes' access to and retention in PSE. Academic excellence among Indigenous and racialized youth should be of concern to all Canadians, as our future social and economic prosperity depend, in part, on their achievements.

Beyond developing the minds and professional qualifications of student-athletes, universities are sites for cultivating elite athletic competencies. Canadian universities feature many world-class coaches and facilities, offer the best in sports medicine and sports science, and play a central role in developing the nation's high-performance athletes. Therefore, we must work to expand the opportunities for Indigenous and racialized student-athletes to access PSE sport, maintain their student status, graduate, and achieve success in their sport(s).

Given the dearth of empirical evidence, academic theorization, and community input into the race-sport-education nexus, a group of interested stakeholders deemed that a series of three events to promote discussion on the topic was both necessary and timely. The University of Toronto's Anti-Racism & Cultural Diversity Office, Faculty of Kinesiology & Physical Education, First Nations House, Hart House, and the University of Toronto Scarborough worked in conjunction with the Ignite Program of TO2015 to produce *A Hurdle to Success*. This series of three events will explore the experiences of Indigenous and racialized youth who seek educational and professional opportunities through athletic channels. We aim to expose the challenges and opportunities they face in order to create lasting change in athletic and academic institutions.

Though there is much to celebrate in terms of integration, tolerance, and acceptance of difference in Canadian educational institutions, the dominant understanding of multiculturalism, "which helps to frame the ways in which schools accommodate the needs, interests and aspirations of its diverse student population, in part serves to reproduce inequitable educational outcomes for students" (James, 2005a, p. 1-2). Especially where Indigenous and racialized student-athletes are concerned, there are many limits to their full participation in school. Carl James (2005a) notes that the academic and athletic award recipients at racially diverse secondary schools often reveal racial disparities, and further differences in the types of sports in which students participate. Multicultural 'inclusion' rhetoric does

little to dismantle a number of barriers for Indigenous and racialized students (Millington, Vertinsky, Boyle & Wilson, 2008; Van Ingen & Halas, 2006) and student-athletes are among those most affected by longstanding inequalities.

There is a myth that sport, especially in Canada, offers a “level playing field” that is free from discrimination. In both the United States and the United Kingdom, there has been “rigorous exploration of the connections between race, racism, and sport ... [yet] studies of sport in Canada remain largely devoid of conversations about race” (Joseph, Darnell & Nakamura, 2012, p. 2). The absence of these conversations allows an uncritical culture of Whiteness to proliferate in sport. There is a profound lack of racial diversity and awareness of anti-racist principles within post-secondary education (PSE) faculties and departments that focus on Kinesiology, Physical Education, Fitness, Coaching, and Sport (Douglas and Halas, 2013), which produces research, curricula, teaching methods, and ultimately sport professionals that are insensitive to how racialization operates and are ignorant of their privilege. In this country, sport is predominantly run by educators, volunteers, and government officials who have little experience or training in dealing with issues of diversity (Tirone, Livingston, Miller and Smith, 2010), and end up relying on stereotypes pervasive in the mainstream culture. Without redressing these issues, it will continue to be difficult for Indigenous and racialized athletes to feel welcomed, and ultimately succeed on the path to elite and professional sport.

The *Hurdle to Success* events and this discussion paper will cover a wide range of topics and groups related to the race-sport-education nexus in Canada. We have not aimed to be exhaustive, as it would be impossible to include representatives from every marginalized group, professional or amateur sports organization, or PSE institution. It would be equally difficult to review all of the research on racialized Canadian (student-) athletes. Furthermore, we acknowledge that rather than Canada-wide, we feature a GTA focus, due to the locations of TO2015 events. Nevertheless, the events and this discussion paper are meant to be an opening of the dialogue, to gain a general understanding of the current state of affairs with a slate of concrete examples, and make suggestions for questions we might ask in the future, changes we might make to sport and education policies, and people we might invite to future discussions who would be well positioned to answer those questions and/or make tangible transformations that can reduce social inequalities that are played out on sports fields, rinks, courts, and playgrounds, across Canada.

Terms of Reference

The target of the *Hurdle to Success* events is the **student-athlete**. We use this term to refer to youth who are enrolled in a secondary or post-secondary institution and who participate in sport at a club level, or on school, college, or university teams. This is a special population that is expected to balance academic, athletic, career, personal, and community responsibilities, but faces unique challenges. For some, the demands of practice and competition can interrupt academic responsibilities; for others the requirements of their studies take precedent over athletic commitments (Fertman, 2009). Sufficient sleep, healthy eating, and time for socializing can all be diminished. Those who can be successful in every domain are likely to develop leadership skills, integrity, resilience, and discipline that will serve them well in their athletic and non-athletic careers after finishing their educational pursuits. It

is our contention that racialized student-athletes face a host of additional challenges related to access and retention that make their educational success and transition to multi-level elite sport more difficult.

In this discussion we use the term **racialized** to refer primarily to student-athletes known as 'visible minorities' in Canada and the processes that mark them as 'different' from the White majority. Following Murji and Solomos (2005, p. 1), *racialized* "signal[s] the processes by which ideas about race are constructed, come to be regarded as meaningful, and are acted upon." References to race always indicate much more than biological traits (e.g., brown skin or curly hair), as Joseph et al. (2012, p. 1) note, indeed "to invoke the term *race* can be to include or make reference to ethnicity, skin colour, religion, language, foreign customs, indigeneity and cultural habits." Given this complexity, the term racialized is more useful than race as a means to draw attention to the constructed nature of racial categories and processes involved in race-thinking, including assigning meaning to biological traits and identifying with particular ethnic and cultural groups. We have taken care not to create a catalogue of the experiences of racialized groups such as newcomers, Jamaican-Canadians, Muslim-Canadians, and so on, as each of these groups is too numerous to mention, features internal complexities, and experiences sport differently. What they share, however, is being racialized vis-à-vis the dominant White group. Powerful gatekeepers reinforce inequalities through intersecting social hierarchies such as race, class, gender, and ability.

The powerful gatekeepers of Canadian sport and Canadian PSE are enveloped in what we refer to as a **culture of Whiteness** that normalizes European culture and values, which results in the unequal distribution of power and privilege that keeps Indigenous and racialized Canadians in an inferior position. Whiteness does not refer merely to skin colour. Rather, it is an ideology that places white people in a place of structural advantage because their culture is dominant, unnamed, and unquestioned (Frankenberg, 1993), and therefore does not need to be explained or accommodated. By asking Indigenous and racialized athletes and their parents to change their culture (e.g., take off their turbans, play in mixed-gender spaces), accept stereotypes about them (e.g., tall, black men and women must be excellent athletes), or conform to the practices of the dominant group (e.g., receive information and express themselves in English or French), people with power in sport settings demand assimilation, keep some Canadians on the margins, and maintain their privileged place in a social hierarchy. Canada's culture of Whiteness is unconscious and invisible, which perpetuates a lack of understanding of difference and structural and interpersonal racism among White people. Although more attention should be drawn to the culture of Whiteness in Canadian sport, the majority of research on race and sport in Canada has been on Black and Indigenous male athletes. We therefore pay close attention to what has been documented about the experiences of these groups below.

We refer Canadians of African descent as **Blacks** in this discussion paper. They are descended directly from enslaved Africans who were brought to New France and British North America in the 1600s; Black Loyalists who fought for Britain during the American Revolution and ended up in Atlantic Canada; and Black Maroons who were deported from Trelawney, Jamaica to Halifax, Nova Scotia in the late 1700s. In the GTA, the majority of Blacks descend from Black fugitives who arrived from the United States in the 1700s and 1800s; and hundreds of thousands of Black migrants from the Caribbean, Central and South America, and many nations in Africa from the early 1900s to the present day (Mensah, 2010;

Winks, 1997). Often referred to as African Canadians, the accomplishments of this group have been celebrated each year in February for Black History Month for almost 20 years, yet discrimination against Black Canadians continues. Canadian-born Blacks were just as likely to be university educated as other Canadians in 2001, but more likely to be unemployed, to have lower employment incomes, and to be overrepresented among workers in manufacturing, sales and service jobs, and also among prison inmates (Lindsay, 2001; Milan & Tran, 2004; Sapers, 2013). Though there may be an overrepresentation of Black athletes in popular professional sports such as basketball or football, anecdotal evidence suggests Black student-athletes are excluded from most of Canada's high performance sports and PSE teams. We must continually strive to do better for this marginalized population.

We refer to North America's first inhabitants, including but not limited to First Nations, Inuit, and Métis, as **Indigenous**. We have specified this racialized group to draw attention to the unique needs of an underserved population in Canada. Young people are a greater proportion of Indigenous populations than youth in the rest of the Canadian population, meaning that policies and practices that influence Indigenous youth will have greater ramifications in years to come. The Government of Canada has undertaken a number of steps and commitments to bring "about meaningful and lasting change in the relationship with Aboriginal Peoples and has situated Aboriginal issues in the upper echelon of federal policy and program priorities" (Canadian Heritage, 2005a, p. 1). The aim of the varied commitments in employment, health care, research, etc. is to rectify historical inequalities and the resulting lack of inclusion of Indigenous ways of knowing and underrepresentation of Indigenous peoples in a variety of fields, not least of which are post-secondary education and elite sport. Mills' (1998) report on Sport in Canada identified an Indigenous poverty rate comparable to that found in developing countries, a teen suicide rate five times higher than their non-Indigenous counterparts, inadequate on-reserve infrastructure, and problems with tobacco, alcohol, and drug abuse that contribute to discrimination against Indigenous peoples and their exclusion from full and fair participation in Canadian social life. Sport and physical activities "may play a positive role in strengthening the emotional, mental, physical, and spiritual aspects of Aboriginal life ... [and] counter[ing] alcohol and drug abuse, and other addictions" (Mills, 1998, sec. 6F). We must therefore work to make sport and education opportunities more readily available for Indigenous Canadians.

One of the pillars of the Canadian sport and education systems is **Canadian Interuniversity Sport** (CIS). This national sport organization is responsible for governing interuniversity sport, organizing national championships across Canada each year, developing Olympic and professional athletes, and enriching the educational experience of student-athletes through sport programs that foster excellence. Of the "carded" athletes who are financially supported by Sport Canada, 40-50 percent attend Canadian universities (Mills, 1998). Student-athletes who compete at the university level are provided with opportunities to train with Olympic coaches, practice in world class competition facilities, and represent their country in high performance international competitions (University Sport Strategic Plan, n.d.). Despite the commitment to elevate the student-athlete experience and improve Canada's sport system, neither the CIS nor its equivalent in the college system, the Canadian Collegiate Athletic Association (CCAA) – appears to have any specific policies or strategies in place to improve recruitment, satisfaction, and retention of racialized and Indigenous athletes. There is also no mention in its Strategic Plan or

detailed websites of procedures to educate coaches and administrators to understand systemic racism, develop anti-discrimination strategies, or expand cultural diversity awareness. Yet strides taken toward gender equity are celebrated. This may be due to the persistence of Canada's colour-blind multicultural discourse in combination with PSE's philosophy of self-management that assumes students all face the same barriers and can always find the help they need.

In 2003, the federal government modernized its sport legislation with the passing of the Physical Activity and Sport Act. This Act confirmed the Government of Canada's policy regarding the full and fair participation of all persons in sport and mandated the federal Minister responsible for sport to facilitate the participation of under-represented groups in the Canadian sport system. The *Hurdle to Success* events are designed to help the government and its sport and education branches move toward fulfilling this goal. Bannerji (2007) directs us to the role of "experience" as the starting point of critical engagement and the locus of political agency for anti-racist work. It is therefore essential to hear, assess, and analyze the experiences of athletes, coaches, parents and administrators as they pertain to (c) overt interpersonal and systemic racism in Canadian sport and education.

Report Overview

The remainder of this report is separated into four sections. First, a literature review is provided on issues of race and sport, as well as race and education to set the context for understanding what Indigenous and racialized youth experience in Canadian high school and PSE sport. Second, the findings from the first panel discussion that took place on Wednesday, January 22, 2014 are described. The rich discussion of Indigenous and racialized athletes, academics, and coaches raised a number of challenges and opportunities youth face, especially in Ontario, with respect to access and retention in PSE sport. Third, suggestions for the direction of the second event, a symposium to take place on Saturday, September 27, 2014 are outlined. Detailed are recommendations organizations to include as panellists or delegates. The report ends with concluding thoughts and references.

I. Context – Racialization in Canada

There is a dominant understanding of Canada as 'colour-blind' or 'racism-free', especially as Canada is constructed in opposition to the United States. State-sponsored and media promoted national imaginings use discourses of multiculturalism and liberal tolerance to hide the pernicious effects of ongoing discrimination. In reality, Canada's patriarchal, elitist, and Euro-centric histories continue to have ramifications for racialized people in the present day (Thobani, 2007; Bannerji, 2000). At the same time, there is also mainstream support for the concept of sport as a 'level playing field' or a 'fair domain,' where the fastest, strongest, and most talented succeed. Sport is also imagined as 'colour-blind' or 'racism free', but in reality, sport cultures are rife with racialized constructions of athletes and hierarchies. Taken together, "the interlocking workings of power that secure the enduring myth of Canada's benign racial history and contemporary racial equality contribute to a Canadian (sporting) culture in which discussions of race are deemed unnecessary. Yet his stance is problematic amidst Canada's changing social landscape" (Joseph, Darnell, & Nakamura, 2012, p. 17). By 2017, Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal will be comprised of more than 50 percent visible minorities many of whom will be Canadian-born and of mixed-race status (Bélanger & Caron Malenfant, 2005). Even without

accounting for their suburban areas, these three cities alone account for one sixth of the national population (Statistics Canada, 2014). Therefore, there is no time like the present to account for the experiences of Indigenous and racialized Canadian youth.

There are many instances where Indigenous and racialized athletes can rise to elite ranks with ease. We suggest that these examples should not propel us to rest on our laurels, as these athletes typically enjoy other dimensions of privilege, be they high socio-economic status, English language proficiency, or in-depth knowledge of Canadian sport systems, to name a few. Rather, we focus our attention on trying to find solutions to the problem of exclusion of Indigenous and racialized athletes from high school and PSE through to elite and professional sport.

Federal ministries concerned with multiculturalism policy, Aboriginal Affairs, Education, and Sport have yet to resolve inconsistencies between Canada's plans to combat racism (Canadian Heritage, 2005b) and the ongoing privileging of dominant White groups (Thobani, 2007; Bannerji, 2000). Because these relations of power are socially constructed, we hold hope that they can be deconstructed through our efforts to discuss experiences, discover where change is needed, and implement policies and action plans for change. We must turn a critical eye on sport to ensure it promotes respect and dignity for those who engage in it and offers the same opportunities for education and remuneration for all of Canada's youth, including those who are Indigenous and racialized.

Indigenous and Racialized Youth in Canadian Sport

Whether they are Indigenous, immigrants, newcomers, refugees, or from families that have been in Canada for multiple generations, racialized youth in Canada experience a number of barriers to full participation in sport.

One of Canada's largest racialized groups is immigrants. In fact, 65 percent of Canada's visible minorities were born outside the country, and 61 percent of them identify as Black, South Asian, or Chinese (Statistics Canada, 2011, p.4). 1.2 million immigrants arrived between 2006 and 2011, accounting for 3.5 percent of Canada's population (Statistics Canada, 2011, p. 6). Canadian sport-related policy, administration, and coach training have not yet adequately addressed the inclusion of newcomers (Donnelly and Nakamura, 2006; Livingston, Tirone, Smith, & Miller, 2008; Tirone et al., 2010). If sport participation is one way in which immigrants interact with established community residents, with cultural learning by both groups, it behooves us to create opportunities to facilitate these interactions.

In their study of newcomer experiences, Tirone et al. (2010) note that immigrant athletes and coaches who are not known as elite, but thought their experience and expertise would be instantly recognized in Canada, encountered confusing and complex bureaucracies that prevented them from entering the sport system in ways they would most enjoy. Some wished for a wider range of sports in Halifax that would appeal to immigrants. Ethnic sports clubs were easy to find and provided acceptance, familiarity, and "opportunities to recreate with individuals who shared the same values and traditional cultural practices as well as sport cultures" (Tirone et al., 2010, p. 412); however, these clubs rarely lead directly to elite or PSE participation. Barriers to involving immigrant youth in sports included those that were

perceived to stem from the youth (or their families) and those that stemmed from the sports organization:

- some girls in newcomer families were (perceived as) being prevented from playing sport, or prevented from playing in co-ed environments
- some youth were encouraged to prioritize academic achievement and professional preparation, leaving little time to play sports
- language barriers limited awareness of sport opportunities for immigrants for whom English was a second language
- the Canadian sport system was too complex to transfer appropriate information to newcomers
- based on incorrect assumptions, coaches and officials streamed immigrants into a level of sport that did not match their needs, abilities, or interests.
- leaders (typically White volunteers) of sport organizations at local, provincial, and national levels were uncomfortable dealing with needs associated with religious beliefs they were unfamiliar with (such as traditional clothing, religious observances such as Ramadan, and recognition of the necessity for some women to participate in sports away from the view of men (Tirone et al, 2010)

The authors make a number of recommendations to improve newcomer sporting experience, not least of which is training in diversity awareness for sport administrators. PSE faculties and departments concerned with sport and physical education have an important role to play in this education (Douglas and Halas, 2013).

North American colleges and universities increasingly recruit scholarship athletes from Latin America and the Caribbean; “[t]he major sports where this has occurred are tennis, track and field, soccer and basketball” (Arbena, 1994, p. 105), but there is little to no research on this population that documents their lived experiences on PSE campuses. Anecdotal evidence suggests that they face a number of challenges related to (perceived) language barriers and assumptions about their innate athletic abilities and inadequate preparation for the rigours of a Canadian university.

Dozens of initiatives have developed to ensure greater recognition and support for sport within the Indigenous population of Canada, including the Aboriginal Sport Circle (ASC), Aboriginal Sport Forum, and Policy on Aboriginal Peoples’ Participation in Sport (Thibault & Kikulis, 2010). The ASC, incorporated in 1995, is the national voice for Indigenous sport; it has branches across Canada that co-ordinate youth national high performance events, prioritize athlete and coach development, and recognize athletic excellence (Dene Nation and Métis Nation, 1999). The ASC’s main goal is to use sport to enhance youth lifestyles and address issues such as alcohol and substance abuse, unemployment, spirituality, and leadership. The Aboriginal Sport Forum was a conference held in November 2005 in Ottawa to identify research gaps, priority areas, collaborative opportunities and strategies to advance Aboriginal sport and importantly, adopt an Aboriginal-centred approach to culturally relevant sport (Forsyth & Parashak, 2006).

Via Sport Canada, the federal government launched a Policy on Aboriginal Peoples' Participation in Sport in 2005 to work with Aboriginal Peoples and sport organizations to ensure “that opportunities for the full and active participation in all aspects of sport, from the playground to the podium, are available to all people living in Canada” (Canadian Heritage, 2005a, p. 2). There are two playground to podium trajectories for many Indigenous athletes: traditional and Euro-Canadian sport. Some athletes have found success in traditional sports in the Arctic Winter Games (see Heine, 2013) and North American Indigenous Games (see Forsythe and Wamsley, 2006) which are important venues to maintain language, traditions, and self-empowerment in contemporary times.

There are dozens of examples of Indigenous athletes who have ‘made it’ in elite Euro-Canadian sports, including long distance runner Tom Longboat, the Onondaga runner from Six Nations of the Grand River Reserve in southern Ontario; professional hockey players Ted Nolan of the Garden River First nation in northwestern Ontario, and Fred Saskamoose from Ahtahkakoop First Nation in central Saskatchewan; and Olympians Alywin Morris (kayaking) and Waneek Horn Miller (water polo) from Kahnawake Mohawk Territory in southern Quebec (Forsythe & Giles, 2013). But let us not forget the innumerable talented Indigenous youth who are unable to represent sports teams at the post-secondary, provincial or national level in Canada for a host of reasons including lack of financial resources and racist exclusions.

Access for Indigenous and racialized athletes who are female and/or have a disability is even more limited, due to the masculinised culture of sport, which includes a higher value placed on the able, male body. Discrimination does not have a permanent additive effect (i.e., Asian women are not “doubly oppressed” compared to White women), rather the intersections of race, class, gender and disability leave some people, at some times constituted as “non-citizens and (no)bodies by the very social institutions (legal, educational, and rehabilitational [and sport]) that are designed to protect, nurture, and empower them” (Erevelles & Minear, 2010, p. 129). Male racialized youth experience a number of obstacles to participation in sport. Female gender and impairments do not merely magnify these obstacles, they present a number unique challenges that can be equally pernicious. Though the Parapan Am Games give the illusion of being welcoming and accessible – 1,608 athletes from 28 countries will compete in 15 sports (T02015, n.d.) – we must thoroughly investigate what programs and policies are in place to recruit and train Canada’s racialized athletes with impairments.

Athletic gender (in)equity in CIS has been well elucidated (see Beaubier, 2004; Williams, 2013). While these studies highlight the failure to allow female athletes to reach their full potential due to fewer opportunities, less funding, and lower levels of respect from sport media than their male counterparts, they fail to take an intersectional approach into account. By splitting the population into male and female halves without taking into account issues of Indigeneity, racialization, or disability, the colonial, Euro-centric stance that makes entry and retention in CIS and CCAA sport so difficult for athletes on the margins is reproduced.

Indigenous and Racialized Youth in Canadian (Post-Secondary) Education

While the majority of racialized Canadians successfully complete high school and some go on to obtain undergraduate and graduate degrees and secure employment, on average, racialized populations

suffer from higher unemployment, lower levels of education, below average incomes and many other indicators of limited socioeconomic circumstances in Canada. These stem, in part, from limits in Canadian education systems to accommodate their needs and offer truly equitable service. Education in Canada, both at the Secondary and Post-Secondary level, has been described ad nauseam as a Euro-centric space (Battiste & Barman, 1995; Dei, Mazzuca, McIsaac, & Zine, 1997; James, 2012a; Millington et al. 2008; Pon, 2000; Van Ingen & Halas, 2006). Racialized students and their parents experience covert, systemic, 'everyday' racism within unofficial or hidden curricula. Emancipatory education, particularly in urban contexts, demands de-centering European, Western, and colonial models of education; teaching anti-racism in theoretical and applied ways; acknowledging and utilizing alternative cultural frameworks; and celebrating difference. Many programs start and end with the latter.

The 'model minority' discourse, which is an American concept by origin, has been imported into Canada and converges with Canadian discourses of multiculturalism that essentialize particular ethnic groups (Pon, 2000). This racist discourse manifests as an expectation of decorous behaviour, individual achievement, upward mobility and academic success, particularly in sciences, technologies, and mathematics for Asian youth (Lee, 2009). The discourse depicting Asians as a 'model minority' constructs them "as a highly successful and well-adjusted population that is characterized by supportive and intact families that promote Confucian cultural values such as respect for education" (Pon, 2000, p. 278). These essentialist notions of Asians in the diaspora can lead educators to encourage these students academically while (inadvertently) discouraging their participation in sport.

The largest group of Asian-Canadians report Chinese origins. Millington et al. (2008), in their study of secondary school physical education in British Columbia, found that the gymnasium is not always a safe space for Chinese students. Physical education "promote[s] hegemonic gender identities as 'normal'" privileging White, middle-class, homophobic, sexist, able-bodied boys (2008, p. 197) over Chinese-Canadians. One result of these stereotypes, exclusions, and lack of opportunity is an under-representation of Chinese-Canadians in CIS and CCAA sports, though their numbers in PSE are higher than the numbers in the overall population. Lindsay (2001b) reports that in 2001, 76 percent of the Chinese community aged 15 to 24 were enrolled in a full-time educational program compared to 57 percent of all Canadians in this age group.

Another under-represented group in CIS and CCAA is Indigenous Canadians. While higher education is known to be *the* way out of low socioeconomic status, studies have shown that low socioeconomic status makes it less likely that higher education will be initiated and also less likely that degrees or diplomas will be obtained (Corak, Lipps, & Zhao, 2003). Indigenous peoples have dismal (post-)secondary graduation rates. For example, Mendelson (2006) explains, an "astonishing 43 percent of Aboriginal people aged 20 through 24 reported in 2001 having less than high school education ... the comparative figure for Canada as a whole is 16 percent" (p. 12); yet, an evolving economy means that "almost any job, even a minimum wage job, already demands or soon will require a higher level of numeracy and literacy than today. ... failing to get through high school makes a lifetime of poverty increasingly probable" (p. 24).

With the exception of trades and college completion rates, which are similar for Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations, for many dimensions of Aboriginal education, the bleak picture is getting worse, not better, and university completion rates lag behind those of the non-Indigenous population (Statistics Canada, 2013). A gap of as much as 47 percent remains between First Nations people living off reserve,

Inuit and Métis aged 18 to 44 and the general population (Bougie, Kelly-Scott, & Arriagada, 2013). Barriers to completion of PSE for Indigenous peoples may include lack of academic preparation, the need to relocate (often from remote to urban areas), lack of financial resources, family responsibilities, and loss of support systems (Malatest et al, 2004), which also negatively impact school sport participation. For example, Van Ingen and Halas (2006) demonstrate that Aboriginal students in Manitoba often opt out of physical education classes or sports because “White-controlled school landscapes are structured in ways that maintain, rather than challenge, racial hierarchies” (p. 392). Students explain that Whiteness is the norm to which all schooling practices, including physical education and sports, defer. Given all of these factors, it is no surprise that Indigenous athletes are woefully underrepresented in CIS and CCAA.

For Black Canadian youth the figures on educational success are also disappointing. Black Canadian males have stark rates of underachievement, drop-out and push-out in comparison to their White and Asian peers. Many black boys disengage from school due to a lack of ethnic minority teachers, an absence of their culture in the curriculum, low teacher expectations, racism, discrimination, and streaming into basic or behavioural programs (Codjoe, 2001; Dei, 1993, 2008; Dei et al., 1997). Many scholars have noted ongoing calls for education reform to stem the tide of black male school disengagement. In 1996, Calliste wrote that for over three decades “Black parents’ associations have been organized in metropolitan Toronto and other African Canadian communities to pressure their school boards and provinces for educational equity” (Calliste, 1996, p. 100). Part of the suggestions for reforms include an insistence on making students aware of, and realistic about, their opportunities for post-secondary education and success in professional sport careers (James, 2005a; 2005b).

The ways that diversity or multiculturalism discourses are realized in schools can result in Black students being encouraged to play sports while other students are encouraged to participate in Languages or Sciences (Codjoe, 2001). Educators may believe they are helping students to achieve their dreams, without taking into account a) their own (subconscious) racist assumptions about innate talents (in certain sports) linked to particular ethnic groups; b) the effect of their ‘good intentions’ on reinforcing the racialization and marginalization of the youth from the academic domain; or c) the realistic potential for success in professional sports vs. careers founded on languages or sciences.

The majority of students involved in James’ (2005a, 2005b) study described racist teachers, coaches, and administrators in schools who reinforce stereotypes of the natural black athlete and the incapable black academic. Students face teachers’ low expectations on one hand and increased cultural capital from athletic successes on the other. James (2005a, p. 2) notes that they construct group cultures and individual identities that are anti-academic as “responses to how they are constructed and treated in their schools... [and as an] attempt to differentiate themselves from the middle-class, Eurocentric cultural structures of the school, and at the same time function within it”. Physical activity has become so sutured to black masculinity and group identification that many young men feel they have no choice but to train to perform a flashy Black male athleticism to be valued by their school (James, 2012b).

Many Black student-athletes come to view high school as the primary means to gain opportunities to obtain sports scholarships in American universities and are funnelled into sport by teachers, coaches and recruiters with dreams of professional success and athletic scholarships to US colleges and universities. The troubling reality is, however, that there are very few NCAA positions, even fewer

scholarships, and a very small proportion of those go to Canadian youth or to Black youth. As Wells (2012) puts it, “the number of poor, racialized, sports-minded youth far exceeds the opportunities available through the NCAA scholarship system” (p. 266). Sport scholarships rely on both race- and class-based social inequalities for their intelligibility *and* solidify inequalities by obscuring the need to attend to the structural social and institutional processes that perpetuate marginalization in the education process (Eitle & Eitle, 2002). Some of the questions James (2005a) asked remain relevant today: Why do these young men think of ‘going south’ rather than seeking opportunities in Canada? Is ‘going south’ the best chance for social mobility for these students? We might also ask, why do some athletes choose to stay in Canada? How are they treated by PSE institutions? Are they used in international branding? What are their graduation rates?

II. A Hurdle to Success Part 1 – Learnings

The first Hurdle to Success panel focussed on two main issues: 1) access and recruitment, and 2) retention in the Canadian PSE context.¹ We recognized the dream of accessing education through sports is one fulfilled by a select few, and for some the experience on campus is a bad dream when racist encounters are taken into account. True to the traditions of Critical Race Theory, we created space for panellists to tell their (counter-)narratives of the race-sport-education nexus. The panellists included:

- Jason Sealy, Assistant Basketball Coach at Ryerson University, and Professor of advanced leadership and organizational behaviour at Humber College;
- Michael Auksi, an Ojibway-Estonian hockey player now playing in Estonia after graduating from the University of Toronto Transitional Year Program and a Masters of Social work from Ryerson University;
- Nathaniel Virgo, a University of Toronto Varsity Volleyball player and 3rd year Kinesiology and Physical Education student;
- Greg Gary, University of Toronto Head Football Coach and former player in the National Football League and Canadian Football League; and
- Janice Forsyth, Director of the International Centre for Olympic Studies at The University of Western Ontario and Assistant Professor in the School of Kinesiology, Faculty of Health Sciences.

The insights they provided into the athletic experience from student, academic, administrator, and coach perspectives were illuminating. The major findings, bolstered by the post-panel discussion questions and comments, are outlined below.

Access Issues

Ineligibility

The inadequacy of access to post-secondary student-athlete opportunities begins well before the student is graduating and deciding where and what to study after high school. Some students and their

¹ The path(s) to multi-level/Professional sport was an original third objective of this panel but ultimately was not a major part of the discussion.

parents are uninformed about what it takes to get into college or university in terms of grade requirements and prerequisite courses. The most marginalized youth and their families do not see PSE as a possibility because it is not part of their culture. They “have never been any place like this” PSE campus, and no-one in their immediate circles is pursuing a diploma, degree or certificate. They are more concerned with employment to resolve immediate financial hardships than investing in the delayed return that PSE brings. This has also been found by James (2005) who noted that students believed Canadian financial aid would have to be ‘paid back’, leaving students from an already precarious financial background saddled with future debt. For these reasons, they do not seek out information about Canadian PSE requirements, or do so late in their high-school careers. If they decide to switch to an “advanced track” to take PSE pre-requisites, they may have to take additional courses and/or upgrade their marks. In some schools the quality of education received will be prohibitive, essentially disabling students from meeting the rigorous demands of PSE.

This problem may be compounded by some elementary and secondary school guidance counsellors who are unable to properly advise athletically gifted youth. They do not know enough about the CIS, CCAA, or the NCAA, and cannot account for the complexities of student-athletes, who may be kinaesthetic learners, but are sometimes diagnosed with behavioural problems and sent to applied programs.

The Transitional Year Program at the University of Toronto has been instrumental in helping students succeed academically and socially. It builds confidence and the academic skills necessary for success. Also, camps and other programs that bring elementary and high-school athletes to the campus help to expose youth to a PSE setting and imbue them with the idea that the campus is not intimidating and that PSE is a possibility for *their* future. As early as elementary school, the eligibility requirements for PSE should be discussed.

Lack of club sport experience

Many youth athletes and their families are unaware that in many sports, participation at the club level is essential for skill development and exposure to scouts in order to play sport at the PSE or national level. The most significant determinants of entry into club sport, beyond talent, are financial resources and proximity to a club team. Those students who were successful in gaining access to a sports team in a PSE likely had full financial support to play in the club level, pay for coaching clinics, and attend tournaments where scouts are present. Youth of low socio-economic status, including many Indigenous and racialised youth, do not enter the club sport system purely for financial reasons. It is more common for them to access PSE sport through walk-on tryouts.

Indigenous youth who live in northern, rural or reserve communities may not be proximal to high level coaches, elite facilities, well-trained athletic therapists/doctors, or any club teams, and are thereby unable to access this pre-PSE sport environment. Moreover, club sport can be exclusionary and racist, unsafe spaces for Indigenous and racialized youth and their parents. Some Indigenous youth would rather showcase their talents at events such as the North American Indigenous Games where they can be closer to their communities.

Lack of encouragement of disabled athletes and female athletes

There is a lack of encouragement of non-able-bodied athletes at all levels of sport. Due to limited numbers of participants, resources, and specialized coaching, mainstream school systems are unable to offer highly competitive parasports. There are no CIS or CCAA parasport offerings. Because these activities are offered through club systems, again it is athletes with more financial resources who are exposed to high level competition, and enabled to develop the skills necessary to become eligible for the Parapan American Games. This is directly linked to the devaluing of the disabled body in the broader society.

Within Indigenous cultures and communities, there is a lack of encouragement of women and girls' sports for historical and contemporary reasons. There are fewer opportunities for female athletes, even if they are able to overcome financial and race-based barriers. Within the CIS and CCAA, women are not pushed to pursue sport as much as men. Beaubier (2004) and Williams, (2013) also documented that there remain fewer female than male athletes, teams, coaches and administrators within university sport.

Retention Issues

Ongoing Racism

There is ongoing institutional, interpersonal, covert and overt racism against Indigenous and racialized athletes/coaches today. On the university campus, there is an expectation that tall black men are basketball players, inadvertently sending a message that they don't belong in an institution of higher learning for their academic skills. This can cause social isolation and psychological stress for black student-athletes. When a hockey player is called "Eskimo" and told that he "doesn't feel pain" by one of his own teammates and the varsity coach does not intervene, it is clear that anti-racist education is not a priority in the CIS and CCAA systems.

There are a number of stereotypes of racialized people, some of which (athletic ability, wearing baggy clothing) Indigenous and racialized student-athletes reinforce, and others of which (not being violent, being well spoken) they do not. Racialized student-athletes operate with what DuBois (1903/2003) calls "double consciousness," which forces the reconciliation of a non-White culture and heritage with a predominantly White society and education. To not miss out on opportunities, student-athletes recognize that in some ways they must conform to the dominant culture, but their upbringing has taught them they also must remain true to themselves. They are ambassadors for their ethnic group and see it as their duty to help change negative perceptions. This is added psychological pressure with which White student-athletes do not have to contend.

Financial Hardship

Finances continue to be a major barrier/issue for racialized athletes to stay in Canadian PSE. There are limits in Canada on the financial assistance that athletes can receive. Scholarships that cover tuition and compulsory fees to a maximum of \$4000 in Ontario (Ontario University Athletics, 2013) leave them with many other costs. Student-athletes become burdened by part-time employment, which makes it even more difficult to balance an already demanding slate of responsibilities (academic performance in the

classroom/lab, and on group projects, assignments, and exams; athletic skill execution as an individual and as part of a team; volunteer work in a university club or community organization; commitment to family etc.).

There is funding for some Indigenous groups, but the formula differs for First Nations, Metis and Inuit communities living on and off reserve. Not all reserves can provide funding for PSE and not all students are aware of how their status influences their funding opportunities.

III. A Hurdle to Success Part 2 – Suggestions

We believe, following Tirone et al. (2010, p. 418) that “new, well-developed policy initiatives that prioritize the involvement of underrepresented groups, including immigrants [and other racialized groups], in the planning of sport policies and programs will benefit the multiple stakeholders who enjoy sport in Canada.” For this reason we have planned a second *Hurdle to Success* event, a symposium that will help us to elicit the experiences of a broader range of stakeholders and move us toward making policy recommendations with concrete action steps to be carried out by government, PSE, and sports organizations Canada-wide. The importance of including a diverse range of panellists, especially those from all levels of sport, is also supported by Thibault and Kikulis (2010, p. 270), who outline the multiple levels of sport in Canada (see Table 1).

The Physical Activity and Sport Act outlines the importance of physical activity and sport to “health, social cohesion, linguistic duality, economic activity, cultural diversity and quality of life” and the government’s commitment to “promoting physical activity and sport ... [It also] wishes to encourage and assist Canadians in increasing their level of physical activity and their participation in sport” (Canada Department of Justice, 2009, p. 1). The implementation of the Act is being achieved by two separate federal government units – Sport Canada and the Healthy Living Unit. It would therefore be prudent to include, as panelists or delegates, representatives from these levels of government at the symposium to investigate their strategies to “encourage and assist” Indigenous and racialized youth.

Government of Canada

Canadian Heritage: Sport Canada

Public Health Agency of
Canada: Healthy Living Unit

National Single
Sport
Organizations

(e.g., Skate Canada, Canadian
Canoe Ass., Canada Basketball)

National Multi-
Sport Service
Organizations

(e.g., Aboriginal Sport Circle,
Canadian Paralympic Comm.)

National Physical
Activity/Fitness/Recreation
Organizations

(e.g., ParticipAction, Canadian Association for
Community Care, Assembly of First Nations)

Provincial/Territorial Governments

Provincial/Territorial Single Sport
Organizations

(e.g., Alberta Bicycle Association, Ontario Amateur
Wrestling Association, Federation de Patinage de Vitesse
du Quebec)

Provincial/Territorial Multi-
Sport/Service Organizations

(e.g., Coaches Association of British Columbia, Sport Nova
Scotia, Manitoba Aboriginal Sport and Recreation Council)

Local Governments Programs and Facilities

Local Sport Organizations

(e.g., Delta Gymnastics, Halifax Rowing Club, Winnipeg
wave Swim Club)

Local Multi-Sport/Service
Organizations

(e.g., Toronto Sports Council, Saskatoon Sports Tourism,
Sport Kingston)

School Boards and Schools

(e.g., Physical Education, Extracurricular Activities and
Facilities, Post-secondary)

Table 1: Adapted from Thibault & Kikulis (2010, p. 170).

We recommended to include representatives from other sport and government stakeholder organizations (similar to) the following:

National multi-sport service organizations

- **North American Indigenous Games** – to give perspective on Indigenous-specific sport issues, experiences of successful Indigenous athletes, paths to elite sport other than the Euro-Canadian model;
- **Athletics Canada** – to speak to the process of transition to elite sport
- **Canadian Interuniversity Sport** – to highlight the recruitment process, qualities necessary for success in/process for transition to elite sport, opportunities for scholarships, anti-racism and cultural diversity awareness training

National single sports organizations

- **Basketball Canada** – to give perspective on the recruitment process and qualities necessary for success in/process for transition to elite basketball
- **Canadian Wheelchair Sports Association** – to give perspective on the recruitment process and qualities necessary for success in/process for transition to elite wheelchair rugby

Local multi-sport/Service organizations

- **Toronto Parks and Recreation** –to describe what opportunities are available at a grass-roots level and what information is given to youth about the PSE sport opportunities available/the path to club, professional, and national elite sport
- **St-Alban's Boys and Girls Clubs** –to describe what opportunities are available at a grass-roots level and what information is given to youth about the PSE sport opportunities available/the path to club, professional, and national elite sport

School Boards and Schools

- **Post-Secondary Institutions**
 - **Athletics Directors/Varsity Coaches** – to discuss the need for cultural diversity training, anti-racism interventions they have implemented, development of anti-racism policies, outreach programs they have created to include marginalized athletes, recruitment processes, and how PSE could better support and cater to those students who have serious financial needs
 - **Academics** to describe the current sociological understanding of the intersections of “race,” Indigeneity, sport, and education; describe the role of Indigenous and racialized athletes in the branding of the university; and deconstruct on-going White privilege.
- **Elementary and Secondary Schools**
 - **Premier Elite Athletic College** – to describe their advice for Indigenous and racialized students to become top-level performers in their sport, life-long learners and career-oriented, respectful individuals who are prepared for PSE
 - **Shoreham Public School Sports & Wellness Academy** – to describe the advantages of a sports-focussed school and how they prepare their predominantly Vietnamese, Somali, Caribbean and West African students for athletic success at the secondary and post-secondary level (other Toronto ‘sports’ Schools include **James S. Bell** and **Carlton Village**)

- **Toronto District School Board Aboriginal Centre** to demonstrate strategies for promoting sport among Indigenous youth

IV. Concluding Thoughts

It has been repeatedly shown that participation in extracurricular activity enhances high school completion (Bougie et al, 2013), and in particular, males involved in sports are less likely to drop out of school (Rumberger, 2011). But it remains to be investigated how high school sport participation enables access and retention in PSE sport for males and females, and also how those who are marginalized can break into the centre of elite sport.

Tirone et al. (2010) noted that “newcomers and minority groups understand that multiculturalism ensures their inclusion, but it provides them with no direction for how they may claim a place in the sport system” (p. 418). If a large majority of some segments of society are excluded from normal economic and social participation, there will be a significant, ongoing, negative impact on social cohesion, one of Canada’s measurements of overall health (Rafael, 2009). Furthermore, if PSE institutions offer training facilities and coaches for Canada’s top athletes, and access is denied to many Indigenous and racialized athletes for a host of complex reasons, we are destined to send national teams to events such as the Pan Am/Parapan Am Games that do not feature Canada’s best athletic talent. We hereby extend a call for the study of Indigenous and racialized athletes in the race-sport-education nexus.

The *Hurdle to Success* symposium will address three thematic areas: (1) access and recruitment, (2) retention, and (3) transitions to professional/high performance sport. It is our aim that those who attend this symposium, both parents and athletes, will be able to take away concrete knowledge about how to navigate school and sport systems. Furthermore, policy makers in government and in PSE will be able to inform their practice based on the shared stories of successes of, and challenges faced by, Indigenous and racialized student-athletes. Academics will have their attention drawn to areas for future research. Panelists and delegates should arrive at the symposium prepared to discuss the following:

Access and recruitment

- What are the barriers that prevent high-school athletes from entering PSE sports?
- How can teachers/counsellors/parents assist elementary and high-school athletes?
- What training do recruiters need to enhance recruitment of racialized athletes?
- How can club sport be made more accessible?

Retention

- How do students reconcile sports with their athletic endeavours?
- Once they have entered PSE, what challenges and opportunities to Indigenous and racialized athletes face?

- What resources can student-athletes access for assistance with their training and their academics?
- How do CIS and CCAA facilitate academic success?

Transition to Professional/High Performance Sport

- What are the barriers Indigenous and racialized student-athletes face in terms of becoming an amateur or professional athlete?
- What are the paths to become involved in other sport professions including literary, technical, and creative positions of sport media; sport governing positions; coaches; event hosting, administration, marketing and business aspects of sport management; and other dimensions of the sport-media-event management complex?

The symposium will engage athletes, parents, community members, academics, and other stakeholders in critical conversations about these themes to identify a number of recommendations for systemic and structural changes that can improve Indigenous and racialized young athletes' experiences navigating the race-sport-education nexus. We look forward to seeing you!

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