Alberta's Future Leaders Program: Long-Term Impacts

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Abstract

Sport for development programs are becoming increasingly popular to address a variety of social issues such as poverty, lack of education, gender equality, and conflict within marginalized communities. Within Canada, many sport for development programs are created for Aboriginal peoples, as they are considered marginalized communities. However, there is a dearth of research on what the actual impacts of sport for development programs are on the recipients of the program, as well as on those who provide the program. My thesis, which is written in the publishable paper format, is comprised of two papers. Using a case study approach in paper one, I explore the impacts that Alberta's Future Leaders Program's (AFL) youth leadership retreat has had on its participants (Aboriginal youth). Similarly, using a case study approach in paper two, I explore if/how working for AFL had lasting impacts on the former employees, known as youth workers and arts mentors. Together, the two papers in this thesis show the need for a deeper look into the actual impacts sport for development programs yield, provide insights into some of the lasting impacts AFL has had on its participants, and address the importance of long-term evaluation for sport for development programs.

Acknowledgements

Sport for development is a movement that uses sport as a tool for social change to enhance health and quality of life that is gaining increasing prominence, especially in international circles (Canadian Heritage, 2008). According to Darnell (2012), sport and physical activity are being used to address an array of social issues, such as poverty, lack of education, gender equality, and conflict amidst marginalized communities. There have been a variety of different programs established that have used sport for development to enter "underdeveloped" communities and attempt to improve the lives of youth, both globally and in Canada (Canadian Heritage, 2008; Nicholls & Giles, 2007). Within Canada, sport for development has become especially popular within Aboriginal communities. Despite the proliferation of sport for development programs, the effectiveness and impacts of these programs have been called into question (Nicholls, Giles, & Sethna, 2010). Sport for development programs are assumed to foster social change, but who exactly reaps the benefits and how? Little is known about the long-term impacts of participation on those who provide and receive sport for development programming.

My thesis examines the long-term impacts of involvement in Alberta's Future Leaders (AFL) Program, an Aboriginal youth development through sport, recreation, and arts program that has been operating in Alberta, Canada since 1996 (AFL, 2011). The Program was created through the support of the Alberta Sport, Recreation, Parks, and Wildlife Foundation (ASRPWF) and the Alberta Foundation for the Arts. It was founded on the principle that "working together we can make a difference" to positively impact the lives of future Aboriginal leaders of Alberta (AFL, 2011). In order for this to occur, the Program cultivates partnerships with Aboriginal communities, private enterprises, non-profit organizations, and government agencies (AFL, 2011). The partnerships are created on the belief that sport, recreation, the arts, and leadership training can facilitate youth development and can be used as a tool for prevention and

intervention to address the needs of Aboriginal youth within Aboriginal communities across

Alberta (AFL, 2011). Each year, interested communities apply to be part of AFL and

approximately 10-14 communities participate in the Program.

The program is offered by two categories of summer employees who work in pairs in

First Nations and Métis communities in Alberta: "youth workers," who represent the majority of

the employees and focus on offering sport and recreation programming, and "arts mentors," a

considerably smaller group of workers who focus on implementing arts programming. Both

youth workers and arts mentors are also tasked with identifying Aboriginal mentees (also known

as future leaders) and acting as role models for these youth, which AFL defines as including

those in age from 15 to 30 (AFL, 2011).

One important component of AFL is the leadership retreat, which occurs during the

program. Aboriginal mentees from each participating community are chosen by the youth

workers and arts mentors to take part in this week-long leadership retreat. The retreat uses

outdoor adventure activities and leadership theory-based sessions to attempt to improve the

mentees' communication, personal habits, authority perceptions, abilities to work with others,

responsibility, and problem-solving skills. (AFL, 2011).

Though AFL has been the focus of several other scholarly investigations (Galipeau,

2012; Rose & Giles, 2007), the program's long-term impacts – if any - on the youth workers, arts

mentors, and mentees have not been examined. As such, for my thesis I employed a postcolonial

theoretical perspective, an exploratory case study methodology, and qualitative methods (i.e.,

archival research and semi-structured interviews) to address these potential impacts.

Literature Review

In this review of literature, I will first provide background information concerning sport

for development and its history, international uses, and domestic uses, with a particular focus on

its uses with Aboriginal youth. Next, I consider the literature concerning the impacts of

participation in youth development programs – limited though it may be - within the

international context.

Sport for Development

Throughout the last decade, there has been a considerable increase in the use of sport as a

tool for social change, such as educating youth about health concerns, discouraging criminal

behaviour, increasing awareness of female inequality, and reconciling communities in conflict

(Levermore & Beacom, 2009). The growth of using sport to induce social change has occurred

due to the failure of conventional development practices in delivering what they set out to do

(Levermore & Beacom, 2009). Thus, new strategies to aid in development have been sought. The

concept of "development" can be traced back to the eighteenth century, where the desire to

improve peoples deemed "Other" originated (Levermore, 2009). Essentially, the goal behind

development was to improve standards of living through industrialization, such as through the

increase in free trade, the expansion of infrastructure, and the adoption of mainstream religion

instead of the peoples' "uncivilized" traditional practices (Levermore, 2009). These ideas were

the backbone of colonial rule and can still be found in development policy-making to this day.

Levermore (2009) stated that that those advocating for sport for development "highlight

the way that sport, sport events and specific sport related projects, increase capacity building,

strengthen empowerment, generate investment and establish a stable political environment for

the economy and market to operate in" (p. 32). There are a number of goals that a variety of

sport for development programs aim to accomplish: creating intercultural understanding,

building sport and community infrastructure, raising awareness through education, increasing

empowerment, improving physical and psychological health and welfare, and alleviating poverty

and improving economic development (Levermore & Beacom, 2009). Some scholars also claim

that sport not only contributes to an individual's self-esteem, but also aids in conflict resolution

and peace (Coalter, 2009). One such claim can be attributed to UN Deputy Secretary General,

Louise Fréchette, at the World Sport's Forum in 2000: "The power of sports is far more than

symbolic. You are engines of economic growth. You are a force for gender equality. You can

bring youth and others in from the margins, strengthening the social fabric. You can promote

communication and help heal the divisions between peoples, communities and entire nations"

(United Nations, 2000, p. 4). With these sorts of claims being made, sport is made out to be an

all-encompassing way to "save the world" (Coalter, 2009), including those in Aboriginal

communities in Canada.

Within Canada, sport is becoming an increasingly popular way to promote health

education and social development (Nicholls & Giles, 2007). Sport for development programming

in Canada is often intended for Aboriginal peoples, largely because of challenges (i.e., high

suicide rates (Public Safety Canada, 2012), diminished health status (Statistics Canada, 2010),

etc.) that many face. These issues produce the "need" for Aboriginal peoples to be assisted by

non-Aboriginal society, despite the well-documented fact that many of the problems experienced

by Aboriginal peoples are a result of other Eurocentric efforts to "help" Aboriginal peoples (e.g.,

residential schools) (Nicholls & Giles, 2007). Sport for development programs created for

Aboriginal peoples can thus be problematic in that they can perpetuate colonial ideas of power.

Sport for Development in Aboriginal Communities

Sport, both in the past and present, has been used as a "colonizing [strategy] to assimilate

young Aboriginal peoples into dominant Euro-Canadian culture" (Robidoux, 2006, p. 267). During the1800's, Aboriginal traditional practices such as dances and beliefs were banned with the intent of assimilating Aboriginal peoples into mainstream society (Nicholls & Giles, 2007). It was believed that assimilation would occur only if Aboriginal culture was completely erased (Nicholls & Giles, 2007). Unfortunately, even within sport for development programming today, Aboriginal cultures and practices are frequently marginalized (Rose & Giles, 2007). Thus, those creating sport for development programs often forget that Aboriginal peoples have their own cultures and physical practices that they participate in and that it would be beneficial and culturally sensitive for those sports to be included.

Saavedra (2009) argued that sport in itself "carries historical and cultural baggage especially from its hegemonic core" (p. 131). This is problematic because sport for development practitioners often produce sport as universal – that it is a language that everyone understands; however, this is not always the case (Darnell & Hayhurst, 2011). Sport for development, and development discourses in general, produce understandings of who is and who is not developed (Darnell & Hayhurst, 2011). Thus, it is always up to the individuals who are initiating a sport for development program to decide which community is in need of assistance, which ultimately creates an unequal power dynamic.

Similarly, sport for development goals are usually created by Eurocentric institutions, thus resulting in the aims, objectives, and chosen sports being heavily influenced by Eurocentric culture (Levermore, 2009). Therefore, the members of the communities where the programs are implemented often do not have meaningful input into the program. Furthermore, the four main sports that are used in sport for development programs are football, volleyball, basketball, and athletics (Levermore, 2009). Maguire (1999) discussed how the sports used in sport for

development programs carry with them Eurocentric ideals of the importance of competition and winning, which could be detrimental instead of aiding. Indeed, sport has the potential to reinforce rulers' hegemony "through helping control the population with the imposition of rules, order and norms of how to behave/submit" (Levermore, 2009, p.42). Despite the widespread nature of sport for development programs, Coalter (2009) stated that there is little to no actual evidence as to sport for development's actual impact.

The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (2006) argued that in order to evaluate the impacts that sport for development may yield, there needs to be evidence that goes beyond anecdotal stories. These types of viewpoints, though, can be problematic in that they reaffirm the idea of mainstream, scientific knowledge as authentic knowledge and other forms of knowledge (e.g., oral stories) as invalid (Smith, 1999).

My thesis research responds to calls for evidence on the impacts of sport for development, while at the same time acknowledging the importance of hearing from Aboriginal youth who are the targets of sport for development programs. Below, I provide an overview of the approach that I took in my examination of the potential impacts of participation in Alberta's Future Leaders Program.

Epistemology

The epistemological approach that was the most appropriate for the research I conducted is constructionism. Constructionists believe that meaning is formulated by people as they take part in the world (Crotty, 1998). They view culture as having a strong hold on people and as shaping the way they view a phenomenon (Crotty, 1998). I investigated how AFL impacts youth workers and one arts worker and how/if the leadership retreat had an impact on the mentees, I needed to understand how different participants construct their understandings of the program. I

also needed to understand that each participant had a different thought process of what counts as

meaningful due to differences in culture, beliefs, and lifestyles – amongst other factors. Overall,

constructionism is a strong fit within my research because I listened to the voices of both youth

workers and arts mentor and Aboriginal mentees in order to understand how they construct the

lasting impacts – if any – of the mentees' experiences with AFL and the leadership retreat.

Theoretical Framework

I used postcolonialism as the overarching theory to guide my proposed research. Both

papers that comprise this thesis are informed by postcolonialism; however, paper two focuses on

a slightly different aspect of this theoretical approach. When investigating the impacts of AFL's

youth leadership retreat on the Aboriginal mentees, I used postcolonialism, whereas I argued for

the utility of a decolonization approach when investigating AFL's impacts on youth workers and

the arts mentor. Decolonization falls under the umbrella of postcolonialism. As such, I will begin

with an overview of key concepts that are taken up within postcolonialism.

Colonialism and Imperialism

Colonialism is directly connected to imperialism in that it is one expression of it.

Imperialism is a policy of increasing a country's power and influence over other countries

(Smith, 1999). Imperialism was the system of control that was used to expand and gain markets;

colonialism helped expansion by ensuring European control through subjugating Indigenous

populations in the area that was colonized (Smith, 1999). Colonialism occurs once a country or

area is claimed and settled by another country (McEwan, 2009). After the country or area is

settled, the imperial centre has control of it, its peoples, and its resources (McEwan, 2009).

Nevertheless, colonialism extends beyond the physical presence of an oppressor (Nicholls &

Giles, 2007).

Aboriginal peoples in Canada faced colonialism and continue to experience its impacts. Initially within Canada, settlers and First Nations peoples coexisted and treaties and doctrines were created in order to keep the peace (Churchill, 2002). Treaties show that there is a relationship between two nations and that each party is deemed an equal and a fully sovereign nation (Churchill, 2002). These treaties ultimately defined First Nations peoples as having their own rights and considered them to be self-governing; thus, no one had the power to have control over them (Churchill, 2002). Doctrines were written that stated that First Nations peoples would not be deprived of their land and possessions, as well as not be enslaved (Churchill, 2002). An abundance of treaties and doctrines were signed and issued on paper; however, they were often not respected and enacted. Loopholes were sought and found to get around these agreements. There was one such loophole called the *Territorium res Nullius*, which provided the notion that uninhabited land (i.e., not cultivated in the sense of how land was used in the imperial centre) was deemed un-owned and thus claimed by whoever was first willing to put it to "proper" use (Churchill, 2002). Also, Aboriginal peoples were viewed as inferior and uncivilized by the colonizers who progressively stopped acknowledging "native status and/or refusing to recognize the existence of entire groups" (Churchill, 2002, p. 54).

The Indian Act (R.S.C., 1985, c. I-5) was created in 1867 to identify who was eligible for Indian status (Furniss, 1999). Government officials were able to remove any non-status Indians from reserves no matter if they had nowhere else to go and had to leave their families behind (Furniss, 1999). Furniss (1999) stated that the Indian Act also took most power away from the band councils by determining the political structure of the councils, deciding who had the power to vote, and being able to remove chiefs. Cultural festivities and practices (e.g., potlatches, sundances) were outlawed and assimilation was the government's new goal (Furniss, 1999).

One specific yet traumatizing form of assimilation was residential schooling, which

occurred from 1880 to 1986 (Whitlock, 2006). Children were forcefully sent to special boarding

schools, away from their family, their friends, their communities, and their cultures (Churchill,

2002; Whitlock, 2006; Furniss, 1999). Here, they were taught basic academic skills, Christian

morals and values, how to be domestic and live Euro-Canadian lifestyles, etc. in order to become

prepared to enter non-Aboriginal society (Furniss, 1999). Once at the schools, Aboriginal

children were forbidden to speak their languages, practice their spiritual beliefs, and were forced

to wear non-Aboriginal clothing (Churchill, 2002). If any rules were broken, the children were

punished severely. Residential schools were used to "kill the Indian within" and to ultimately

"cleanse" Aboriginal children spiritually and culturally (Churchill, 2002; Furniss, 1999).

Although assimilation was heavily pushed and the government held the upper hand, forms of

resistance by Aboriginal peoples occurred (Furniss, 1999). Resistance was shown through

parents hiding children so that they would not get placed in residential schools, practicing

cultural traditions, and protesting land disputes (Furniss, 1999). Despite continued resistance in a

vast number of areas, the colonial legacy continues today.

Postcolonialism

Postcolonial theory is used to explain how colonialism continues to occur around the

world today, including in Canada. Postcolonial theorists typically work towards challenging

colonial structures to prevent further injustices towards marginalized peoples in the world

(Quayson, 2000). Postcolonialism is often expected to mean that colonialism has subsided and

no longer is occurring; however, this is not the case (McEwan, 2009). Instead, colonial acts

continue to occur and colonial legacies continue to be felt. It is therefore is more appropriate to

define postcolonialism as continuous colonial domination and the legacies it created (McEwan,

2009). There are those who resist colonialism and desire a move towards the process of decolonization.

Decolonization

Decolonization is one of possible outcomes towards which postcolonial scholars strive. Some scholars believe that for decolonization to occur, pre-colonial languages and cultures need to be reclaimed (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 1989). Critics of decolonization believe that colonialism belongs in the past and can be fully defeated if the colonized achieve full independence by gaining full power over their culture and achieve political organization (Ashcroft et al., 1989).

Another important aspect of decolonization is to understand alternative histories (i.e., the histories of the colonized the way they see it) and to transform the colonized views of these alternative histories (Smith, 1999). These counter histories are powerful forms of resistance and have been gaining popularity across a variety of Indigenous communities (Smith, 1999). To move towards decolonization, the voices of the Indigenous peoples must be heard and considered in all aspects of sport for development, from program design, to implementation, to evaluation.

Methodology

There are many different methodologies that a researcher can use. Depending on the type of study—whether it is qualitative or quantitative—and the research question, the investigator's task is to choose the appropriate methodology. According to Hesse-Biber, Leavy, and Yaiser (2004), "a methodology is a theory and analysis of how research does or should proceed" (p. 15). In other words, it is a strategy, plan, process, or design used to answer a research question (Crotty, 1998). The methodology that I feel best fits my thesis topic is an exploratory case study.

A case study is a research tool or strategy that is used to investigate a specific event or case within a naturally occurring setting (Bloor & Wood, 2006; Stake, 2005). In more specific terms, a case study describes, explains, and predicts a bounded phenomenon over a determined amount of time (Bloor & Wood, 2006; Gerring, 2004). The bounded phenomenon or "case" being studied could be "a community, an institution, a program, an individual, an activity, or an event" (Bloor & Wood, 2006, p. 27). The case or unit of analysis should be chosen based on the research questions with the aim to best answer these questions (Yin, 1994). For my research, Alberta's Future Leaders (AFL) was the case under study. I feel an exploratory case study best fit my topic of research because it created detailed understanding of the chosen phenomenon.

Gagnon (2010) stated that case studies generate in-depth analyses of the context surrounding the case and help in the development of historical outlooks. I will be investigating the lasting impacts, if any, that AFL has had on a) past youth workers and arts mentor and b) past Aboriginal mentees. To understand the case study one must look at the cases historical background.

There are six common sources of evidence that are used when conducting a case study, which will be discussed in greater detail in the methods section. In addition to the variety of methods, there are also many different categories to case studies.

Two notable researchers, Yin and Stake, each identified a variety of different categories of case studies within their works. Yin (1994) presented his as descriptive, explanatory, and exploratory, whereas Stake (2005) presented his as intrinsic, instrumental, and collective. Yin (1994) argued that descriptive, explanatory, exploratory case studies can use single or multiple cases. A single case study is when there is only one case being studied, as opposed to a multiple case study where there can be more than one case that is investigated and compared (Yin, 1994).

Descriptive case studies examine specific events or populations where there has not been much evidence or previous research in order to "discover key phenomena" (Yin, 1994, p. 4). Explanatory case studies, on the other hand, are useful for investigations that are causal in nature (Tellis, 1997). "How" and "why" questions are utilized in explanatory case studies to create explanations for certain events and how they can be applied to other situations (Yin, 1994). Lastly, exploratory case studies use "what" questions with the aim to look more deeply at a situation and to create hypotheses and propositions for future research. For my research, I used an exploratory case study.

When using exploratory case studies, the researcher already has preconceived notions and ideas of the case chosen to study (Gagnon, 2010). I went into my research with preliminary thoughts and conceptions of AFL program and of the groups being analyzed. Exploratory case studies also focus on research that has not yet received a lot or any scholarly attention, like the longer-term impacts the program has had on the youth workers and Aboriginal mentees.

There are several important strengths and weaknesses when it comes to using a case study. A key strength of the case study is that its in-depth nature is useful when the context of the research is too complex for other methodologies, for example surveys and experiments (Bloor & Wood, 2006; Gagnon, 2010). Further, since case studies use multiple methods, they produce a variety of rich, in-depth evidence, which results in a detailed case (Bloor & Wood, 2006). In addition, case studies have the ability to make new discoveries, generate holistic data, and produce innovative theories (Bloor & Wood, 2006). Similar to there being significant strengths, there are also weaknesses to using case studies.

Gagnon (2010) identified case studies as being too time consuming. This complaint may in fact be true depending on the time the different methods for data collection take; however,

there are different strategies taken, for example through the use of telephone interviewing or using the library, etc. to move beyond this problem. Indeed, case studies could actually take a fairly short amount of time (Yin, 1994).

Methods

For my paper 1, I used multiple methods. By using multiple methods, I was able to produce an in-depth investigation that meets the criteria for a case study (Tellis, 1997). When using multiple sources of data, details can be elicited from the different participants or other sources of evidence to create an in-depth investigation of the case (Tellis, 1997). There are six common sources of evidence that are used when conducting a case study: documentation, archival research, interviews, direct observations, participant observations, and physical artifacts (Bloor & Wood, 2006; Yin, 1994). The ones that I employed were archival research and semi-structured interviews. For my second paper, I only used semi-structured interviews. I tried to use photo-elicitation; however, that failed because many interviewees claimed they did not have any photos they could share (as they pre-dated digital photos) or they kept forgetting to send them if they did have them. In the end, I elected to abandon photo-elicitation.

Archival Research

First, archival research was used to help better understand of the phenomenon (i.e., AFL) of my study. Archival materials can be pre-existing documents, statistical documents, maps, letter and autobiographies, reports, agendas, professional publications, pamphlets, brochures, etc. (Caseñas & Kalsbeek, 2006; Van Den Hoonaard, 2012; Yin, 1994). Archival material can be either primary resources or secondary resources. Caseñas & Kalsbeek (2006) defined primary resources as sources that are directly created at the time the event occurred historically are considered direct evidence and first-hand accounts. Secondary resources are usually documents

or sources that explain or summarize primary resources (Caseñas & Kalsbeek, 2006). The

purpose of archival research is to preserve "the context in which records were created,

maintained, and used" (Caseñas & Kalsbeek, 2006, p. 5). Examining archives gave me detailed

background information as well as aided me in gaining better insight into the interviewees'

experiences. I gained access to the end of summer reports by youth workers and arts mentors,

which helped me to gain an understanding of how they felt at the end of the summer during

which they worked for the Program. I hoped to gain access to old letters or e-mails written by the

youth worker, arts mentors, and mentees, as these documents would have provided insight into

the lived experiences of youth (Van Den Hoonaard, 2012); however, only one of the participants

could provide me with them. Those that did not provide me with any old letters or e-mails

mentioned that these items were either not saved on their computers or they only wrote letters,

which proved too challenging to obtain. I was, however, sent official documents about the

Program, such as annual reports and all information on what the program entails, which helped

me understand how AFL represented itself to others (Van Den Hoonaard, 2012).

Semi-Structured Interviews

A semi-structured interview is an interview that is planned yet flexible. Interviewing, in

general, can be traced back in history and has been specifically used within social sciences

during the 20th century. It is said that we live in an "interview society" because of all the talk

shows and celebrity news shows that dominate television today (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

Interviews in this context "serve as a social technique for the public construction of the self"

(Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 12), while interviews within the qualitative research context give

better knowledge and understanding of a specific topic. Interviews may create new knowledge of

the topic, just reiterate common opinions, or offer different interpretations about a certain issue (Gaskell, 2000; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

According to Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) pre-established questions are created before the interview, however, semi-srtucture interviews are flexible in that the questions are subject to change during the interview, as well as adding new ones. In semi-structured interviews, probing is also acceptable to gain more information out of the participants as well new questions can be asked to follow up the answers given for the initial question (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Therefore, semi-structured interviews have a structure and a few set questions; however, there is room for changes and openness.

I used semi-structured interviews to investigate youth workers', arts mentors', and mentees' lived experiences and understand the lasting impacts the AFL program and AFL's youth leadership retreat had on their lives, if any. In total, I interviewed 16 youth workers and 1 arts mentor: seven were Aboriginal and the remainder were non-Aboriginal. There were 12 female youth workers, four male youth workers, and one female arts mentor. For the Aboriginal mentees, though I contacted 30, only five agreed to participate. The participants were from different years (1999-2010), which allowed me to see if impacts differed with time. I conducted two interviews in person, one interview through Skype, and the remainder over the phone.

Table 1

Former Youth Workers/Arts Mentor Characteristics

Adam	Male	Non-Aboriginal	2008	Youth Worker	Assumption/ Chateh
Anonymous	Female	Non-Aboriginal	2008	Youth Worker	Heart Lake
Anonymous		Non-Aboriginal		Youth Worker	Sucker Creek and Eden Valley
Anonymous	Female	Aboriginal	2004, 2005, 2006	Youth Worker	East Prairie Metis Settlement, Swan River Cree

					Nation
Anonymous	Female	Blackfoot: First Nations	2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2012	Youth Worker	Driftpile, Siksika, Eden Valley, Kikano Metis Settlement, Fishing Lake Metis Settlement
Anonymous	Female	Aboriginal	2007, 2010, 2011	Youth Worker	Kikano, Assumption/ Chateh, Boyle Street
Chelsea	Female	Non-Aboriginal	2007, 2008	Youth Worker	Assumption/ Chateh
Darcy	Male	Samson Cree: First Nations	2001, 2002	Youth Worker/ Program Coordinator	Bushe River
Koren	Female	Samson Cree: First Nation	2000	Youth Worker	Edmonton Inner City
Nadine	Female	First Nations	2002	Youth Worker	Tall Cree First Nation
Rachel	Female	Non-Aboriginal	1999, 2000	Youth Worker	Grand Cache
Rachel Rose	Female	Non-Aboriginal	2002, 2003	Youth Worker/ Program Coordinator	Bushe River, Siksika
Ryan	Male	Anishnaabe: First Nations	1999	Youth Worker	Gift Lake
Seth	Male	Non-Aboriginal	2005, 2008	Youth Worker	Assumption/ Chateh, Eden Valley
Stephanie	Female	Non-Aboriginal	2007	Arts Mentor	Beaver First Nation
Tara	Female	Non-Aboriginal	2007	Youth Worker	Conklin
Audrey	Female	Non-Aboriginal	2000	Youth Worker	Wabasca-Desmarais

Table 2

Former Aboriginal Mentees Characteristics

Name	**Gender**	**Age When Mentor**	**Year**	**Community**
Anonymous	Female	16		Tall Cree First Nation

Byron	Male	22	2006	Tall Cree First Nation
Courtney	Female	19	2002	East Prairie
Gerald	Male	22	2010	Driftpile
Holly	Female	16	2007	Assumption/ Chateh

Analysis

To analyze the impacts AFL had on the youth workers/arts mentors and the impacts AFL's youth leadership retreat had on the Aboriginal mentees, I used thematic analysis, which is a popular form of analysis when conducting qualitative research and for researchers who are new to research (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Buetow, 2010). Thematic analysis is, however, rarely adequately defined even though it is used very often (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It should be seen as a "foundational method for qualitative analysis" because it "provides core skills that will be useful for conducting many other forms of qualitative analysis" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 4). Thematic analysis can be defined as a method of analysis that is used to identify, analyze and reports patterns found within data that make up themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It not only describes the data set in detail, but it can also be used to interpret specific facets of the topic chosen for research (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Within thematic analysis, there are a number of decisions that have to be made before one can start the analysis process.

The first is to ask the question "what counts as a theme" (Braun & Clarke, 2006). A theme gives patterned meaning within a data set and gives importance to data pertaining to the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It is up to the researcher to decide what the themes may be and the amount of space each is given in different data sets. Secondly, a decision needs to be made whether the data will be analyzed through an inductive or theoretical thematic approach. An inductive approach can be defined as themes existing when linked to data;

however, in actuality the themes may not relate to the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

In contrast, Braun and Clarke (2006) stated that theoretical thematic analysis, which is what I

used, provides a more detailed analysis of a specific aspect of the data and is analyst driven.

Once these decisions are made, the researcher can then follow the six steps for conducting

thematic analysis.

In the first step, after the data have been collected, the researcher should submerse

himself/herself into his/her own data to become fully comfortable with it (Braun & Clarke,

2006). One way for this to occur is to re-read the collected data all the while searching for

meanings and patterns (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Transcribing verbal accounts is a way for the

researcher to increase his/her familiarization with the data. It is also a good idea for the

researcher to take notes of the patterns he/she see's during transcription to not forget the initial

findings at a later time. Thus, once comfortable with all the data, the next phase of coding can

begin. The second step involves the researcher to create the first round of codes. Essentially, the

data must be organized into specific groups depending on the meaning each code represents

(Braun & Clarke, 2006). After the data has been read and become familiar, the researcher should

have created lists of ideas from the data and what is interesting about those ideas. Those ideas are

put into codes and the researcher starts looking for initial themes, which is the beginning of the

third step. The specific codes are analyzed and combined to form different predominant themes

(Braun & Clarke, 2006). Here begins that initial analyzing of the codes, where the consideration

of placing different codes together to form an overarching theme. Similarly, subthemes within

the larger themes will also be created. The researcher starts to think about the relationship

between themes and subthemes (Braun &Clarke, 2006). The fourth step begins with the choosing

and reviewing of candidate themes. The themes and patterns must be regarded and considered,

followed by a validity check of each individual theme to see if they fit into the entire data set

(Braun & Clarke, 2006). During this step, the researcher may find candidate themes that do not

have enough data to support them and thus cannot be themes or find two themes that are similar

and thus can be combined into one theme (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Each theme that is left over

should fit together in a meaningful way. The fifth stage begins by defining and naming the

chosen themes. The researcher then writes a detailed analysis of each theme and figures out how

they all fit into the overall story (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Once all the themes fit together and

answer the research proposed question, the final stage of producing the report can occur. In this

last phase, the researcher must be able to tell the story using the chosen themes of his/her data

convincingly to validate his/her analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Once all these stages are

finished, the researcher has properly conducted thematic analysis.

The Papers

My thesis is divided into two papers. My first paper explores the impacts that AFL's

youth leadership retreat has had on its participants (Aboriginal mentees). From my findings, I

identified two main themes: 1) the leadership retreat yielded positive long- and short-term

impacts for some of the mentees; 2) the retreat is set up to provide opportunities for Aboriginal

youth who display Eurocentric leadership skills, potentially calling the program's identified goal

of Aboriginal leadership development into question. My second paper explores if/how working

for Alberta's Future Leaders program (AFL) had lasting impacts on the former employees,

known as youth workers and arts mentors. I identified four themes: 1) By being involved in AFL,

Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal youth workers and arts mentor increased their awareness of the

impacts of colonialism on Aboriginal peoples; 2) they learned to challenge stereotypes; and 3)

they gained a strong employment trajectory. As a result, the youth workers and arts mentor 4)

assumed that they gained more of a benefit from AFL than the youth involved in the Program.

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The Lasting Impacts of an Aboriginal Youth Leadership Retreat?: A Case Study of Alberta's

Future Leaders Program

In this paper I use a postcolonial lens to analyze the impacts of Alberta's Future Leaders program's (AFL) youth leadership retreat on its Aboriginal youth participants. Through semi-structured interviews and archival research I found that while the retreat appeared to have positive lasting impacts on many of the participants, it seemed to have the greatest impact on those who already displayed conventional Eurocentric leadership skills; conversely, it had little effect on those did not display these skills prior to retreat participation. By becoming more culturally relevant, I argue that the retreat could have broader impacts on a greater number of Aboriginal youth.

Putdoor education programming to promote youth leadership has become a popular way to try to help youth who are deemed "at-risk" (Cross, 2002). Outdoor education programs are used to increase personal growth and development for those who are thought to be lacking in those areas (Ewert & McAvoy, 2000). Aboriginal youth are frequently considered to be at-risk because of the challenging life circumstances they often face (Public Safety Canada, 2012). Little is actually known about the benefits and impacts outdoor education programs have on Aboriginal youth. Although a great deal of existing literature on outdoor education programs for youth leadership development, in general it has focused on how enjoyable the program was and what it entailed, rather than on which aspects of the program had significant long-term impacts on the participants.

Alberta's Future Leaders (AFL) Program is an Aboriginal youth development through sport, recreation, and arts program that has been operating in Alberta, Canada, since 1996. The program hires and trains youth workers and arts mentors predominantly from urban centres across Canada, though mainly Alberta. Leadership development is an integral component of the AFL's program. Consequently, one of the responsibilities of the youth workers and arts mentors is to select Aboriginal youth as future leaders (or "mentees") who then go on to participate in an outdoor education-based leadership development retreat. The mentees are chosen "based on their high level of maturity, potential leadership abilities, and interested in staying active in their communities" (AFL, 2011, p.13). The week-long retreat has both indoor and outdoor components. Activity-based theory sessions, which are conducted indoors, focus on exploring leadership through completing personality profiles and learning about resolving conflict, group functioning, building people up, etc. The outdoor component consists of a variety of outdoor activities such as spelunking, adventure hiking, rock climbing, caving, canoeing, and a variety of

challenging tasks (i.e., getting everyone over a wall) that focus on working on teamwork, conflict resolution, creating a positive environment, communication, and other leadership skills (AFL, 2011).

In this paper I seek to explore the impacts - if any - that AFL's youth leadership retreat has had on its participants. Based on findings from semi-structured interviews and archival research looking at the AFL's Executive Final Reports, I identified two main themes: 1) the leadership retreat yielded positive long- and short-term impacts on some of the mentees; 2) the retreat is set up to provide opportunities for previously identified leaders who display Eurocentric leadership skills, which potentially calls its stated goal of Aboriginal leadership development into question.

Review of Literature

In this review of literature, I will first provide background information concerning Aboriginal peoples in Alberta, with a focus on Aboriginal youth. Second, I will describe outdoor education programming for youth, specifically delving into how such programming can serve as significant life experience and the impact it can have on youth. Finally, I will examine the role of leadership development in outdoor education and the cultural dimensions of it.

Aboriginal Peoples in Alberta

According to the 2011 National Household Survey, there are approximately 220 695 individuals living in Alberta who identified as Aboriginal (First Nation, Inuit, and Métis) peoples (Statistics Canada, 2012). More specifically, there are 116 670 people who identify as First Nation and 96 865 people who identify as Métis in Alberta (Windspeaker Staff, 2013). Approximately 28 675 Aboriginal people reside in Alberta's two largest cities, Calgary and Edmonton, with Edmonton having the second largest population of Aboriginal peoples in

Canada (Statistics Canada, 2009). Those that do not live in urban centres live either on First

Nations reserves, Métis settlements, or live in other urban or rural areas in Alberta (Alberta

Health Services, 2006). There are 44 First Nations that are within the three Treaty areas in

Alberta and are spread across 124 reserves that make-up a population of approximately 69 932.

Those living off reserve make-up a population of 41 759 (Health Canada, 2013). Similarly, there

are eight recognized Métis settlements that have a total population of 4 858 (Municipal Affairs,

2011[1]). The remainder of those who identify as Métis live in urban settings such as Calgary and

Edmonton, as well as in non-registered Métis settlements and rural communities.

The Aboriginal population in Canada is younger than the non-Aboriginal population,

with the median age being 27 in comparison to 40 (Statistics Canada, 2009). Children and youth

make up a large proportion of the Aboriginal population, with 48% being younger than 24

(Statistics Canada, 2009). In Alberta, over half of the First Nations population is under 25

(Statistics Canada, 2012). According to the 2011 National Household Survey, there are

approximately 109 080 First Nations youth under the age of 25 in Alberta living on reserve and

approximately 83 255 living off reserve (Statistics Canada, 2014).

Aboriginal youth in Alberta face numerous challenges, including low rates of education

completion (Public Safety Canada, 2012), high rates of incarceration, (Correctional Service

Canada, 2013), high rates of drug and alcohol abuse (National Aboriginal Health Organization

(NAHO), 2011), exposure to gang warfare, violence, and racism (Alberta Health Services, 2006),

and high suicide rates (Public Safety Canada, 2012). All of these factors coalesce to result in

Aboriginal youth in Alberta often being deemed "at-risk." At-risk is a term that refers to youth

who are brought up in a negative environment (negative household, negative neighborhood, etc.)

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[1] Due to the different methods and times of data collection, organizations cite different figures

and/or are perceived to lack the skills necessary for them to "become responsible members of society" (Cross, 2002, p. 248). There are a variety of social factors that may contribute to Aboriginal youth being deemed as being at risk. For example, due to enduring colonialism and racism, many Aboriginal youth live in a cycle of poverty. As Du Hamel (2003) stated, "the economic imprisonment inflicted on Aboriginal Peoples by federal agencies historically and in the contemporary context, have set in motion a series of risk factors of which Native youth are susceptible" (p. 214). Because of economic hardships, some opportunities, like mountain climbing, spelunking down cliffs, or even just visiting the mountains, are restricted for Aboriginal youth in Canadian society (Du Hamel, 2003). Outdoor education and adventure education programming have become increasingly popular in attempts to increase the well-being of at-risk youth.

Outdoor Education

Outdoor education programs were developed in the 1950s to offer rehabilitation as well as enriching learning experiences for a variety of different groups such as incarcerated youth, emotionally challenged youth, physically challenged youth, and youth deemed 'normal' (Hattie, Marsh, Neill, & Richards, 1997); however, it was not until the 1990s when wilderness activities began to be requested by organizations as therapeutic interventions and personal growth opportunities (Ewert & McAvoy, 2000).

Outdoor education is a holistic term used to describe educational activities with the specific philosophy of "growth through challenge" that are implemented in natural environments (Neill, 2001; Wigglesworth, 2012). Outdoor education includes a wide spectrum of outdoors activities (Ford, 1986). Ford (1986) explained that outdoor education can occur anywhere outside, whether it be in a school yard or remote wilderness setting, and can include such

activities as hiking, swimming, boating, cycling, winter sports, camping, lake or river paddling, as well as challenge-focused adventure activities (ropes courses, groups exercises, etc.). Outdoor education programs usually have a structured curriculum with the aim of delivering participation opportunities to not only develop outdoor skills, knowledge, and experience (Propst & Koesler, 1998), but also to make participants aware of personal positive change, enhance self-concept, improve leadership, and improve social integration (Priest, 1999).

Past research has shown that outdoor education programs can have positive effects, such as increased self-esteem, increased levels of communication, increased self-confidence etc., on a variety of different groups including persons with disabilities, girls and women, therapeutic groups, at-risk youth or youth with problem behaviours, families, etc. (Ewert & McAvoy, 2000). Nevertheless, there is a lack of strong evidence as to whether these programs have any long-term or lasting impacts on those who participate (Allen-Craig & Hartley, 2012; Hattie et al., 1997). Gassner and Russell (2008) noted, however, that the significance of an experience may not be clear at first and participants need time to fully understand the experience in order to see its usefulness. Participants also need time in order to gain an opportunity to be able to use the skills and knowledge gained (Gassner & Russell, 2008) in order to see the potential benefit. Therefore, it is important to examine the long-term impacts of these programs to see if any knowledge or skills were gained and/or used after the program ended.

Significant Life Experiences and Impacts of Outdoor Education Programs

Several scholars have investigated the impacts of outdoor education programs for youth in general, and university students and at-risk youth in particular. Some have found that these programs serve as significant life experiences. Significant life experiences are specific events in one's life that play important roles within one's day-to-day life (Daniel, 2007). Those who

research significant life experiences investigate how events that have occurred in the past influence a person's feelings, attitudes, beliefs, behaviours, and actions to the current day (Daniel, 2007). Significant life experiences can be identified by asking participants to recall past memories or life stories. Daniel (2005) identified numerous characteristics that enable programs to create important life experiences: the program causes mental, spiritual, physical, emotional, or social change; the program is new; the program causes some sort of effect in the participant's future lifestyle; the program has some special meaning to it; or the program is significant to the participant due to its nature, timing, or importance.

Other research has examined the long-term impacts of outdoor education programs, especially the popular program Outward Bound, an outdoor adventure education school. Essentially, the overall goal of Outward Bound is for participants (usually youth age 16-19 or university student) to develop "potential to care for themselves, others, and the world around them through challenging experiences in unfamiliar settings" (as cited in Outward Bound International, 2008). Hattie et al. (1997) and Gass et al. (1999) both conducted studies on Outward Bound and found that positive impacts were still found 17-18 months after the program was finished. Similarly, Whittington (2011) researched the long-term impacts of a female (age 14-18) adventure program (five years post-participation) and found there were four themes that the female participants stated provided them with a lasting impact: technical skill, self-confidence, communication and teamwork, and leadership skills. The girls were interviewed six and eighteen months after the program and provided examples of how the skills learned in the program were carried with them in their daily lives. One girl specifically explained how she was able to gain confidence as a result of the program, and that the opportunity she had as a leader provided her with skills that she could apply to her everyday life (Whittington, 2011).

Comparably, Gassner and Russell (2008) found that the 318 participants drew on their experiences with Outward Bound many years after their participation and 95% percent of study participants felt it had some value in the long-term in terms of specific attitudes, beliefs, self-perceptions, and interpersonal and social skills.

Furthermore, Wigglesworth (2012) found specific long-term impacts more than 20 years after the university students, had participated in an outdoor adventure program. These impacts included the development of interpersonal skills such as trust, leadership skills, building lasting friendships, self-discovery, facing fears, and personal growth. Wigglesworth (2012) also found that not only were the skills from the program transferrable to other areas of the participants' lives, but some participants also transferred the knowledge and skills they learnt to their children, students, or others.

Leadership Development

Within outdoor education programs for youth, leadership development is often identified as an important goal. Youth leadership development is defined as "the provision of experiences, from highly structured to quite informal, that help young people develop [skills] that allow young people to lead others over the long-term" (MacNeil, 2006, p. 30). Leadership development includes decision making skills, communication skills, feedback skills, initiative awareness of the group, and being aware of self (Sibthorp, Paisley, & Gookin, 2006). Sibthorp et al. (2006) found that youth who actively participate in and take on the role of decision-maker and have some kind of responsibility within outdoor education programs had greater overall developmental benefits, particularly leadership development, than those who did not participate in outdoor education programs.

Ritchie, Wabano, Schinke, Young, Battochio and Peltier (2009) stated that youth

leadership preparation through outdoor adventure is a promising form of intervention for

Aboriginal youth to help them not only gain leadership skills, but also aid in addressing mental

health. An example of this type of program for Aboriginal youth is the Wikwemikong Outdoor

Adventure Leadership experience (OALE). OALE is a youth leadership training program for

adolescent (aged 12-18) First Nations youth from Wikwemikong Unceded Indian Reserve that

involves 6 training modules developed with collaboration between Wikwemikong Leaders and

Laurentian University researchers over 3 years (Ritchie, Wabano, & Young, 2010). It is a ten day

long canoe trip in the wilderness, which focuses on three main goals: preparing youth as leaders,

promoting culture and community, and protecting youth through resiliency, and well-being

(Ritchie et al., 2010). To enhance experiential learning and leadership skills, the youth were left

to take ownership of the daily activities and left to make it to the final destination on their own

schedules. Each youth was able to lead the group for a period of time, during which time s/he

had to make decisions, and thus learned leadership skills and how to better work as part of a

team (Ritchie et al., 2010).

An important aspect of leadership is mentoring and the positive relationships formed

through good mentorship. Having successful mentorship is said to increase a person's self-

confidence and self-identity (Propst & Koesler, 2009). Those with increased leadership abilities

gained through specific leadership experiences (e.g., outdoor education programs) may be more

likely to participate in leadership positions in the future and transfer what they learnt onto others

(Allen-Craig & Hartley, 2012; Propst & Koesler, 2009). It is important to note, however, that the

majority of programs that aim to improve leadership abilities (like AFL) focus on those who are

already believed to have leadership skills and have potential to increase these abilities (Hattie,

Marsh, Neill, & Richards, 1997). It is also important to note that many youth development

programs assume that leadership is a universal phenomenon (Galipeau & Giles, in press) and

thus fail to appreciate the cultural differences that can be apparent in approaches to leadership.

Aboriginal versus Non-Aboriginal Leadership

Leadership and what is considered leadership differ from culture to culture. The earliest

research on leadership looked at specific personality traits or characteristics that made a leader

rather than the development of leadership (Julien, Wright, & Zinni, 2010; MacNeil, 2006). These

theories were called "great man theories" and focused on how a person's characteristics

contributed to him/her being an effective leader (Julien et al., 2010; MacNeil, 2006). A working

definition of leadership is "combining ability (knowledge, skills, and talents) with authority

(voice, influence, and decision making power) to positively influence and impact diverse

individuals, organizations, and communities" (MacNeil, 2006, p. 29). This definition, however,

is culturally constrained. General Eurocentric ideas of leadership tend to emphasize an individual

having power over subordinates to gain an objective (Rousell & Giles, 2011), whereas

Aboriginal leaders tend serve those they lead rather than command them (Redpath & Nielsen,

1997). Aboriginal leaders often discuss issues with their associates before making decisions, and

treat them with respect and as equals. Unlike Eurocentric approaches to leadership, Aboriginal

approaches leadership tend to be more egalitarian (Julien, Wright, & Zinni, 2010; RedPath &

Nielson, 1997). Egalitarian leaders focus on creating connections and building relationships on

respect and trust (Rousell & Giles, 2012). They generally do not believe in authoritarian roles,

but instead see themselves as community resources to work alongside others and support them.

There are two other types of leadership found within Eurocentric leadership that have the

potential to overlap with Aboriginal leadership, those being democratic leadership and

transformational leadership.

Democratic leadership can be defined as a type of leadership style where members of a group will all take part in the decision-making process (Cherry, 2014a). The democratic leadership style allows those in the leadership role to facilitate the conversation, encourage people to share their ideas, and then finalize the best decision all together (Cherry, 2014a). Democratic leadership shows similarities to Aboriginal leadership in that both listen to what others say and make decisions as a group. However, democratic leadership is sometimes ineffective when roles are unclear leading to communication failures (Cherry, 2014a). Thus, there still needs to be a designated leader to facilitate and lead. The second leadership style is called transformational leadership. Cherry (2014b) described transformational leadership as being a leadership style that inspires positive changes in those who follow. These types are leaders are energetic, enthusiastic, passionate, and are usually the candidates chosen as workers in development programming. They serve as role models for those following and strive to change their expectations, perceptions, and motivations to work towards a common goal (Cherry, 2014b). Many youth development programs use transformational leadership styles.

There is very little research on outdoor education involving Aboriginal youth in Canada and whether or not the leadership aspects of those programs yield positive and long-term results on participants. The research below addresses this gap by focusing on the voices of Aboriginal mentees and Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal youth workers/arts mentors and what impacts they believed youth participants gained through participation in AFL's youth leadership retreat.

Theoretical Framework

Aboriginal peoples have faced many hardships throughout history and continue to experience the effects of colonialism to this day (Battiste, 1998). Historically, Aboriginal peoples were deemed available for exploitation and colonial control (McEwan, 2009). The Indian Act

(R.S.C., 1985, c. I-5) was put in place to gain control over individuals who qualified as Indian. It was and continues to be used to determine who was/is able to receive/keep Indian status (Furniss, 1999).

The Indian Act (R.S.C., 1985, c. I-5) reflects the idea of "Othering" that occurs in colonial contexts, where those in the colonizing group believe their knowledge, culture, and overall way of living renders them superior to the apparently deficient Other (McEwan, 2009). Imperialism and colonialism were the ways through which the West came to see, know, and name Aboriginal peoples and their communities (Smith, 2008).

Scholarly examinations of the impact of colonialism on the colonized are often conducted through a postcolonial theoretical lens. Postcolonial theory can be defined as a "theoretical construct used to understand society after independence from colonial domination" (McEwan, 2009, p. 59). Those who adopt this theory use it in a number of ways and iterations to explain how colonialism and its historical structures still inform the present. The meaning of postcolonialism is often debated because the "post" could arguably mean the aftermath of colonialism, or more specifically the period after the end of colonialism, which is not the case (Loomba, 2005). In contrast, Frankenberg and Mani (1993) declared the "post" to be an attempt at righting the wrongs of colonialism and can therefore be used to create strategies to finally acknowledge that it happened and that its aftermath continues. Postcolonial scholars analyze experiences of colonialism and its effects on the past and present at local and global levels (Quayson, 2000; Young, 2001). Postcolonial theorists also examine the transformation of the present (e.g., nations entering a new era of taking control and power back for themselves) out of the imperial and colonial past (Young, 2001). Loomba (2005) asserted that one should think of

postcolonialism as "the contestation of colonial domination and the legacies of colonialism" (p.16).

Today, colonialism can still be seen in issues of authenticity and legitimacy (Huggan, 2001). For example, there is a struggle over what constitutes "legitimate" knowledge within the academic world (Smith, 2008). As a result, postcolonial scholars often adopt one of three main strategies: (1) challenging the dominant discourses of imperialism that reflect the Western world, (2) challenging the way of speaking and writing that homogenizes those who have been colonized, and (3) recovering the voices of those who have been marginalized and dominated (McEwan, 2009). Within my paper, the third strategy is adopted where in order to recover the voices of the marginalized, the mentees who participated in the program were interviewed in order for them to express for themselves how they felt about the youth leadership retreat and the impacts it had –if any.

Methodology

A case study is a research tool or strategy that is used to investigate a specific event or case within a naturally occurring setting (Bloor & Wood, 2006; Stake, 2005). For my research, AFL program was the case under study. A notable researcher, Yin, identified a variety of different categories of case studies within their works. Yin (1994) presented his as descriptive, explanatory, and exploratory. Yin (1994) argued that descriptive, explanatory, exploratory case studies can use single or multiple case studies. In my study, I employed an exploratory case study. Gagnon (2010) stated that an exploratory case study "deals with a subject that is clearly important but has previously been neglected for various reasons" (p. 15). The long-term impacts, if any, that a leadership retreat can have on Aboriginal youth has not yet received scholarly

attention. As such, the exploratory case study methodology was most fitting for me to identify the impacts the youth retreat has had on past participants.

Methods

For my research, I used multiple qualitative research methods. By using multiple methods, I was able to produce an in-depth investigation that met the criteria for a case study (Tellis, 1997). The methods that I employed were archival research and semi-structured interviews.

Conducting archival research provided me with detailed background information and aided me in gaining better insight into the interviewees' experiences. I gained access to the end of summer reports by youth workers and arts mentors from the years 2001 to 2011, which enabled me to achieve a better understanding of AFL and the youth retreat. Nevertheless, these reports were produced for the organization and thus are most likely edited versions that omit important details. Along with the end of summer reports, AFL staff members also provided me with the official AFL annual reports from 2001 to 2011.

In addition to archival research, I used semi-structured interviews. A semi-structured interview is the combination of a planned and flexible interview that collects description of life experiences in order to interpret meanings of the described phenomenon (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Semi-structured interviews consist of some pre-established questions, but they are open to sequence changes as the questions are flexible and involve probing (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). I had a great deal of difficulty in identifying past mentees who were willing to be interviewed. I attempted to contact 30 former mentees; however, only five replied, all of whom agreed to be interviewed. I also had to broaden the time limit of when the mentees participated because of my difficulty in contacting mentees who participated prior to 2008. As a result of the small number

of participants, and because I was interviewing past youth workers and arts mentors for another

paper that comprises this thesis, I also decided to ask past youth workers and arts mentors about

their views of the impacts that the retreat had on the mentees' lives. The youth workers/arts

mentors were a mixture of non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal peoples from all across Canada who

worked in the program between the years 1999-2008. There were seven participants who were

Aboriginal and nine non-Aboriginal. Four out of the sixteen were male. The former mentees

were all Aboriginal and came from a variety of communities across Alberta. There were three

females and two male Aboriginal interviewees who participated in the retreat between the years

2002-2010.

As a result, there were two separate interview guides: One specifically for the former

youth workers/arts mentors and the other for the mentees who went to the youth retreat. The

interview guide for the mentees who went to the retreat included questions such as, "Why do you

think you were chosen over someone else from your community?", "What did you gain from you

experience within AFL (any life lessons, changes in points of view, new inspirations)", and "Did

your experience being part of AFL set any sort of life path that you wanted to follow in the

future or inspire any job that your are in now?" The interview guide for the youth workers/arts

mentors included questions such as, "How were the youth who went to the retreat chosen and by

whom?", "What were some characteristics you looked for when choosing the youth?", and "Do

you know what they are up to now or what they did after attending the retreat?"

Once the research subjects agreed to participate, I received their contact information and

sent e-mails that included the consent form and additional information on the interview process. I

conducted 21 interviews, two of which were in person and the rest over the phone because the

majority was scattered across Canada. Out of the 21 interviews, 16 were conducted with former

youth workers/arts mentors and five were with Aboriginal youth who had been selected to go to the youth retreat.

The interviews were digitally recorded and were transcribed verbatim. The participants were provided with a copy of their transcripts. Each participant had a deadline of two weeks during which s/he was asked to send back the transcripts with any changes or feedback. Only four interviewees sent their transcripts back, all with minor changes. Names appear with the participants' permission. I used snowball sampling to locate research participants. Snowball sampling is useful when conducting research with marginalized peoples (Cohen & Arieli, 2011). This technique is equivalent to the rolling of a snowball because the research subjects continue to grow, as a snowball will continue to grow when rolled (Cohen & Arieli, 2011). More specifically, one research subject contacts other potential research subjects and has them contact the researcher.

Initially, I had hoped to conduct interviews with a minimum of 10 former mentees who had participated in the youth leadership retreat prior to 2008 to understand the impacts the youth retreat had on their lives. Gassner and Russell (2008) believe that participants "need the time and opportunity to apply skills or knowledge that may or may not have been gained and to realize through reflection where the skill and knowledge that they have applied came from" (p.134). Therefore, there needs to be a significant amount of time to make meaning of the experiences the mentees gained from the leadership retreat.

Analysis

I used thematic analysis to analyze the transcripts from the semi-structured interviews and the documents sent to me by AFL for my archival research. Thematic analysis is widely used within qualitative research (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Buetow, 2010). Braun and Clarke (2006)

defined thematic analysis as a "method for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within data" (p. 79). It can be used not only to describe data sets in detail, but also to interpret specific facets of the topic chosen for research (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I chose to use Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step approach to conduct my thematic analysis. These steps are as follows: becoming accustomed with the data, generating the primary codes, searching for different themes, going over the themes, defining and naming the themes, and creating the report.

In the first phase, once the data have been collected, it is important for the researcher to immerse himself/herself in the data in order to become familiar and comfortable with it (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I did this by transcribing the semi-structured interviews myself and reading the data multiple times, which helped me to increase my familiarity with it. The second phase involves producing the initial codes; that is, organizing data into different groups with specific meanings (Braun & Clarke, 2006). To identify initial codes, I went through my interviews while highlighting emerging patterns and coming up with headings that fit the initial patterns. I then copied and pasted all the quotes that fit under each heading in a separate document. A few of the initial codes I identified included "short-term impacts," "long-term impacts," "negative impacts," and "reasons for being chosen." Once the collected data were put into codes, I began to look for themes, thus beginning the third phase.

Within the third phase, I analyzed and combined the specific codes to form two main themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006): 1) the leadership retreat had some positive long-term and short-term impact on the mentees; 2) the retreat is set up to provide opportunities for those who are already identified as leaders, and thus might be questionable in terms of meeting its stated goal of developing leaders.

Similarly, I also identified subthemes within the larger themes such as "building personal networks," "positive behaviour change and changes in self-esteem," "encouraged youth to go on to 'bigger things,'" "positive role models," "resilience and making an effort," "potentially benefit community afterwards," "ideal candidates unavailable" and "limited impacts." The fourth phase occurred when my themes had been identified and needed to be reviewed. I looked over my potential themes and patterns and reviewed the validity of each individual theme by assessing if it fit the entire data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I also modified the themes that were similar by merging them into a larger theme. In the fifth stage I finalized the major themes, which I identify below.

Results

From my analysis, I identified two themes that were related to my research objective of identifying what long-term and short-term impacts, if any, the youth retreat has had on the former youth chosen to participate: 1) the leadership retreat had a positive long-term and short-term impact on the mentees; 2) the retreat is set up to provide opportunities for those who are already identified as those with Eurocentric leadership skills, and thus it might be questionable if AFL is meeting its stated goal of developing Aboriginal leaders.

Positive Short-Term and Long-Term Impacts on Mentees

I found that the mentees all felt that the leadership retreat had positive impacts on them. This finding was echoed by the youth workers/arts mentors, who also felt that leadership retreat was of benefit to many of the mentees. The benefits that were identified included building personal networks, facilitating positive behaviour change, and encouraging the youth to go on to "bigger" things.

Building personal networks. Many of the mentees believed that the leadership retreat was important in the creation of personal networks. The mentees reported that they were able to meet other Aboriginal youth around their age that were facing similar situations and hardships. Gerald, a former Aboriginal mentee from Driftpile First Nation who participated in 2010, stated that the leadership retreat helped to

> build a network of socialization…So they [mentees] get to meet all these other youth just like them from small communities. From First Nation, Aboriginal communities and they get to build a network…So it definitely helps building that networking and support system from people their own age and people that are going through what they're going through at that exact same moment (personal communication, February 20, 2014).

Similarly, within the Executive Final Reports there were a number of quotes that illustrated the importance the leadership retreat played in terms of developing friendships. One youth stated, "I am grateful to have all that love, courage, trust and kindness and all those thoughtful new friends who helped me get through everything and anything that I thought I couldn't get through on my own, physically and mentally" (AFL, 2001, p. 18).

At the leadership retreat, the mentees were often able to meet up with old friends and re-establish past networks. A mentee from East Prairie who participated in 2002, Courtney, affirmed,

> it was a great opportunity to meet with other AFL leaders because one of the leaders that I met was an old friend from my elementary years. She had moved away from East Prairie and she ended up being a leader in her community. So it was good to reconnect with her and see her again and talk to her (personal communication, February 12, 2014).

Whether it was reconnecting with former friends or making new ones, the mentees identified the positive impact that the retreat had on making these connections. A former youth worker who worked for AFL for four summers explained that some youth also end up developing romantic relationships with other youth. She stated, "the youth that I brought, I expected them just to participate, be open, and be participating in all the activities. What they ended up doing is, I think some people tend to hook up a lot" (anonymous, personal communication, January 20, 2014).

These networks were not only short-term in nature. Gerald reported that he has kept in touch with some of the youth workers, arts workers, and fellow mentees he met through the retreat. He felt that the relationships that he made had the greatest impact on him:

What stands out most for me…would be just relationships I have with all of them. Like one of the mentors, for example, in the earlier years is now one of my closest friends. We talk every day, we go on vacations together, a whole bunch of fun stuff. So I guess the biggest thing would be I guess the relationships that I got to develop from this (personal communication, February 20, 2014).

Teamwork and increased self-esteem. The leadership retreat had an impact on some of the mentees' behaviours and self-confidence/self esteem. Byron, a mentee from Tall Cree First Nation who participated in 2006, believed that his participation in the retreat allowed him to be able to open up and not be shy: "I was in such a small place for such a long time that I'd just never talk to strangers… I didn't initiate conversations, but when I was there, it was like, okay. It kind of freed me" (personal communication, March 6, 2014). Gerald noted that his participation in the retreat led to long-term impacts that enabled him to let others lead and become better at being part of a team. He stated,

it gave me a new outlook on life. The biggest challenge I think I faced there was I'm kind

of a control person. I like things done and I like them done efficiently. It really helped me

let go and challenge myself in that way with trusting other people…[in] running

programs and taking the lead. So it really helped my team building skills as a leader, but

also as a team member (personal communication, February 20, 2014)

Likewise, another youth quoted in the Executive Final Report from 2001 noted that the retreat

helped him realize that teamwork is the best way to get through tough situations. He said, "I have

learned to push myself to get certain things done. Working as a team is the best thing when large

obstacle[s] are in the way. Help my teammates in case they think they can't do it" (AFL, 2001, p.

17).

      Another benefit that the participants identified was that the opportunity to participate in

new activities increased their levels of self-confidence. Darcy, a former youth worker and former

coordinator of AFL who participated as a youth worker in 2001 and 2002, believed that the

activities had positive impacts on the mentees: "It's incredible…especially for people who aren't

fit and don't think they can do this and they get pushed up that mountain by the whole group and

then they achieve it and I think it's something they'll always remember" (personal

communication, February 1, 2014). Such was the case for Courtney, who remembered being

nervous climbing over a tall wall during an activity:

I remember we had to get everyone up and over this wall and I felt that I wouldn't be able

to get up and over because I'm heavier and bigger then everyone but they managed to

pull me up anyways. So that helped with my self-esteem that even though someone might

be bigger and heavier than someone else, other people still help them (personal

communication, February 12, 2014).

Another youth cited in an Executive Final Report noted increased confidence: "I did things that I didn't think I was capable of doing. That is why I think it was one of the finest and most helpful experiences that I have ever participated in" (AFL, 2005, p. 15).

Gerald was able to use the positive encouragement and support from others to overcome his fears and gain confidence:

We went mountain climbing or rock climbing up in the mountains and I'm definitely afraid of heights. I did the first one, the easy run. I was like oh sure I got this. So then I was like, "I'm going to handle the hard one," and I went up and I hit my wall. I hit a block and I couldn't do it and with all the support and encouragement from everyone else, I ended up climbing the hardest one. It all flows down to mentally, physically, and emotionally - I made these changes in my life (personal communication, February 20, 2014)

Courtney felt that the activities at the retreat were "an inspiration - things might seem difficult at first, but with the right direction and leadership you can overcome any obstacle" (personal communication, February 12, 2014). She stated that she carries this view today.

Encouraged youth to go on to "bigger" things. Another important positive impact of the leadership retreat that the participants cited was that it inspired the mentees to either attend school, leave the community, or to develop a career focus. Nadine, a former youth worker who worked in Tall Cree First Nation in 2002, stated, "most of them [the mentees] have graduated. The ones that I selected, they've all…gone on to some form of other education or got a job. They're all doing well…They're still giving back to their community" (personal communication, February 27, 2014). The retreat also increased some mentees' interests in leadership type roles. When asked if her experience at the retreat set any sort of job direction that she is in now,

Courtney stated that it led to her working with youth in another program, "I think it actually did and it didn't occur to me until now…I worked with that program [Aboriginal Junior Forest Ranger Program] for three seasons [after AFL]" (personal communication, February 12, 2014).

In Holly's case who participated in 2007, the retreat inspired this mentee from Assumption-Chateh to want to work with youth in the future. She explained,

I guess it made me want to work with youth. I don't know how to explain it, like it opened up an opportunity there for me to become involved with youth. I'm involved with children. It's kind of the same thing. I want to work with children and youth. So that's kind of like a stepping-stone for me (personal communication, February 20, 2014).

Chelsea, a former youth worker who worked in Assumption-Chateh in 2007 and 2008, stayed in touch with the mentees she chose and knew what types of jobs they went into after the retreat. She mentioned,

Holly became a social worker. Michelle's got three kids now. She runs a daycare in the community, so maybe not leadership, but working with youth. I think she gets a subsidy somehow from the government. I can't remember how it works but she goes into homes of kids whose parents are drinking at night and she knows that and she'll take them and look after them. So I think that's pretty cool (personal communication, November 15, 2013).

Rachel Rose, a former youth worker who worked in Bushe River First Nation in 2002 and Siksika First Nation in 2003 and who was also a former program coordinator for AFL, mentioned how one of the mentees she chose for the retreat decided to leave her home community to get a better education.

We came back from the leadership retreat and I wanted to go check up on her a couple of

days later. I remember I went to check in with her and I was like, "where is she?" And

they were like, "she's gone. She moved to Edmonton." She went to Edmonton to go

finish her high school year with her aunt that lives there because there's a better school

(personal communication, December 17, 2013)

There were many success stories with the youth who attended the retreat; however, that may be a

reflection of the type of person who was typically selected to attend it.

Youth Who are Already Leaders Chosen to Attend

To select mentees, the former youth workers/arts mentors reported that they asked

community members for input and would also use their own experiences with the youth to make

the decision. There were specific characteristics and attitudes that youth workers/arts mentors

looked for when deciding whom to choose: Positive role models, well connected youth, resilient

youth, youth making an effort, and youth that could potentially serve the community afterwards.

Positive role models. A key characteristic that was sought was youth who were positive

role models. Indeed, many of the youth who were selected already had jobs or were well

connected to their community. Julie, a youth worker who worked in Heart Lake First Nation in

2008, felt that the two she chose were excellent choices. She stated, "we took our time and then

finally we settled on these two guys. One [was] the guy who was teaching phys. ed. cause the

kids just looked up to him so much and we thought it was really great that he was one of the only

youth in the community" (personal communication, October 29, 2013). Likewise, Tara, a youth

worker who worked in Conklin, Alberta in 2007, explained that she selected someone who "was

a very positive role model in that community to some extent. He had a job, he worked on the rig,

and he was making money" (personal communication, December 5, 2013). In both instances, the

mentees chosen were deemed to be good role models because they were employed.

Resilience and making an effort. There were also a variety of other characteristics that

were deemed important in finding mentees to attend the retreat. Resilient youth and those

making an effort to help with or attend programming were other important characteristics. One

youth worker explained, I think resilient youth, and that's definitely a characteristic of the ones

that went to Sucker Creek (anonymous, personal communication, January 31, 2014). Chelsea

"went with the kids that were coming out to the program and were helping me on a regular basis.

So those who I saw as leaders in the community and who I felt would really benefit from the

training" (personal communication, November 15, 2013).

Potentially benefit community afterwards. Another reason why many of the mentees

were chosen was because they were seen to have the potential to serve their community after the

retreat. Stephanie, a youth worker who worked in Beaver First Nation in 2007, felt that it was

important to choose youth who were

> really interested in building up their leadership skills and taking part in their community
>
> in the leadership role. Hopefully someday those mentors or mentees will be [band]
>
> councilors in their community and…being mentees will really be beneficial for them in
>
> those roles (personal communication, October 22, 2014).

Similarly, Nadine explained that she chose her mentees because they were "willing to continue

on with the skills that they had gained to bring back to the community" (personal

communication, February 27, 2014). Within the Executive Final Reports, a number of youth

provided statements of what they were going to bring back to their communities after

participating in the program. One youth mentioned that he/she would like to "try and be involved

with the younger youth and help them be involved" (AFL, 2002, p. 15). Another stated, "I know

that I can be a great role model to the little kids and to my little sister" (AFL, 2003, p. 15).

Ideal Candidates Unavailable

In some cases it was too early in the program to establish relationships with many youth,

which forced the youth workers/arts mentors to choose anyone who was available to attend the

retreat. In Darcy's first year as a youth worker he faced this dilemma:

When I was in Bushe, it was like, "oh ya go ahead. Go find them," and it was really

overwhelming my first summer because I just didn't know anybody yet and it was pretty

quick. So a lot of times, not the majority of the time, but sometimes you end up with

people who you barely know going on the retreat. So it's just like I think the practically of

it kind of cuts down on the idealism of what they want to see with future leaders who

make it to the retreat (personal communication, February 1, 2014).

Former youth worker Seth, who worked in Assumption/Chateh and Eden Valley in 2005 and

2008, had a similar experience in choosing mentees. He explained, "it's a little tricky because

depending on which weeks you went - it could be pretty early in the summer. So it's pretty much

a crap shoot, where you're like, 'oh this guy seems good and we'll take him'" (personal

communication, November 18, 2013). In Tara's case, she found it difficult to find youth to bring

to the retreat. She stated, "we really didn't have large selections and we brought all males, which

is obviously not ideal. That's all we had available." (personal communication, December 5,

2013).

Limited Impacts For Some Youth

The goal of the retreat is that it is intended to present "an opportunity to affect positively

the lives of the Aboriginal youth who have attended…while having fun" (AFL, 2001, p. 13). The

overall purpose of the retreat is to "develop the whole person (i.e., values, attitudes, and personal

skills), ensure willful, conscious, and positive change in the mentees participating, and begin to

build tool for the mentees to be able to apply and transfer the knowledge, skills, and information

learned at the retreat" (AFL, 2011, p. 13). While, certainly, some of the mentees credited the

leadership retreat as having a positive impact on their life, there were others that the retreat did

not reach. Just as the success stories seem to be related to the characteristics of the individuals

invited to attend, the limited impacts also seem to be related to characteristics of some of the

attendees. Rachel Rose, stated,

> there was this notion that they [mentees] should be this squeaky clean leader from the
>
> community that is ready to be the new youth worker and ready to do that sort of thing.
>
> That was difficult to find and the way that that leadership retreat was built and designed
>
> was for that type of leader. It was for these people that are coming in with all these
>
> tremendous capacities and just need that extra little push to become the new lovely youth
>
> worker. But who was actually showing up sometimes were kids from gangs. We had lots
>
> of conversations like, "should we be letting these people in?" Sometimes we would bring
>
> them to the training and we were like, "this training is not suited for them." …So the
>
> intended reality…is that these are people that you identify in the community and then they
>
> do this training and…then you support them to become leaders in their community. The
>
> reality of it is that it's difficult to find appropriate people for this program (personal
>
> communication, December 17, 2013).

Other youth workers questioned the retreat's and program's effectiveness:

> Unfortunately, the other guy [mentee] ended up passing away a few years ago in a car
>
> accident. Really tough when you look at, okay, what was the effect of what we did? Like

it can really go either way, right? Ya so [another mentee] I would say is successful and

this other guy came to this horrible end that was untimely (Julie, personal

communication, October 29, 2013)

Similarly, Tara felt that although most of the mentees she did bring on the retreat were great,

there was one with which she had a specific problem:

Some of the kids that I ended up going to the camp with were fantastic and really enjoyed

themselves. However, one of them slept in and never attended anything. It was a fight

every day to get him out. I was exhausted working with him (personal communication,

December 5, 2013).

Many of the youth workers and arts mentors did not stay in touch or know what happened to the

mentees after the retreat. In one former youth worker's case, she did find out what happened to

one who she felt had potential:

I hope that some of the youth that we worked with throughout AFL specifically went on

to succeed in whatever they wanted to do. Unfortunately, I do have a sad story about one

of the youth. One of my first youth that we brought [to the leadership retreat] is in jail

(anonymous, personal communication, January 20, 2014)

Likewise, another youth worker found out that one of the mentees died, but she was not sure

what happened to the others and if they continued in anything related to leadership. She stated,

They were folks I actually didn't necessarily stay connected with after the fact. So I

don't know is my honest answer. I know one of them…from Swan River actually died in

a car crash a few years ago. His brother who also went is now a dad. I'm not sure how his

lifestyle is (anonymous, personal communication, January 30, 2014).

The only mentees who participated in this research were those who felt that the program had a positive impact on them. The limited number of mentees that I was able to contact could be indicative of a number of things, including the program's lack of impact on their lives.

Discussion

The results illustrate that AFL's youth leadership retreat appeared to have some positive impacts on the Aboriginal mentees chosen to participate in the program; nevertheless, despite these benefits, I argue that the retreat can be seen as reaffirming colonialism in that it adheres to Eurocanadian ideals of leadership and structure. As a result, it fails to meet its potential. I thus offer some recommendations on how the retreat can be made culturally relevant for Aboriginal youth, which may enhance the likelihood of its success with a broader range of participants.

Positive Impacts on Mentees

As shown in the results, the youth retreat had a number of benefits for the Aboriginal mentees who took part. The benefits outdoor education programs can yield for youth are important because they can facilitate positive personal changes such as increasing a person's mental, spiritual, physical, emotional, and/or social beliefs or perspectives (Priest, 1999; Daniel, 2003). Outdoor education programs may be especially important for Aboriginal peoples, as they are often more connected to the land and wilderness (Ritchie, Wabano, & Young, 2010). Stories of origin and how the world came to be in Aboriginal teachings involve deep connections with the earth and provide Aboriginal peoples with consciousness of their own existence and anchor them to a geo-graphical location (Chartrand, 2012). These stories and teachings provide a sense of place and create stronger foundations in one's culture (Chartrand, 2012). Traditional teachings are important for Aboriginal youth to help youth engage with and become acquainted with their own specific cultures and to orient them to connect with their family and community. The youth

retreat was not run by Aboriginal peoples and did not involve traditional teachings. Despite this shortcoming, the youth who felt a connection with the program did in fact gain long-term impacts from it.

Five to seven years after participating in the leadership retreat, the mentees described long-term impacts from the retreat that were consistent with it meeting Daniel's (2005) criteria of a significant life event. The youth retreat provided the mentees with new experiences and was reported as being meaningful because the participants described it as having either emotional, social, mental, or physical impacts that extended well beyond the week-long retreat. In addition, many reported taking on subsequent leadership roles within their communities.

While AFL's youth leadership retreat served as significant life event for the mentees we interviewed, many of who later went into leadership roles, a potential confounding issue is that many of those who were chosen to attend the leadership retreat could already be described as being leaders within their community or leaders amongst their friends. Further, the activities that were put in place to build or strengthen the skills that were identified as demonstrating the mentees' leadership skills were mostly Eurocanadian in nature, which has the potential to marginalize those who demonstrate Aboriginal leadership skills and could thus reaffirm colonialism.

Reaffirming Colonialism

The AFL youth leadership retreat can be seen as promoting Eurocanadian ideals of leadership by bringing in non-Aboriginal peoples to lead the program, by representing the notion of Eurocanadian knowledge as the most legitimate knowledge, by using personality profiles that are not validated withAboriginal peoples, and through the structure of the program (i.e., youth are lectured to in the morning by a college professor who is non-Aboriginal). . This has the

potential to reiterate Euorocanadian superiority and reproduce colonial discourses through failing

to use Aboriginal teachings such as respecting elders, respecting nature, respecting others,

having love for children, providing for family, having knowledge of language and wisdom, and

honouring spirituality (Barnhardt, 2008). In Aboriginal traditional education, "the individual is

viewed as a whole person with intellectual, spiritual, emotional, and physical dimensions;" with

each facet being addressed (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996, p. 415). In order to

be a leader in Aboriginal cultures these teachings are important in that those in the leadership

role must respect everyone equally and be able to serve everyone equally rather than take control

over them (Redpath & Nielsen, 1997). Although some of the youth found the retreat to be fun

and impactful, it seemed to cater to those with specific types of skill sets, whereas in contrast,

those without those skill sets did not gain serious benefit it. As Rachel Rose noted, the youth

leadership retreat was seemingly built and designed for those already in what they deemed as

leadership roles within their communities and when mentees who did not meet this role attended

the training, they did not have as strong an experience. The lack of mentee participation in my

interviews also likely reaffirms the disconnect that the program had on many of them. If the

program had had a significant impact on them, it is possible that they would be more likely to

talk about that experience. One reason why this occurs is the tendency of people more likely to

respond to questions in a "socially acceptable direction," which is an example of social

desirability bias (Lewis-Beck, Bryman, & Lioa, 2004). It may not be intentional or it may be

done in order to appear socially acceptable or seen in a positively light (Lewis-Beck, Bryman, &

Lioa, 2004). This may have been connected with the lack of connection and rapport they had

with youth workers/art mentors. The majority of youth workers/arts mentors who are in charge

of selecting the mentees for the retreat are non-Aboriginal, which is problematic in that they may

be prioritizing those with mainstream leadership skills. Thus, they may not have selected youth

who have the qualities of what is deemed Aboriginal leadership, such as egalitarian ways of

thinking and working alongside peers rather than authoritarian ways. This is problematic because

a program developed for Aboriginal youth should cater to Aboriginal views and ideals as

opposed to non- Aboriginal. When trying to create more leaders amongst Aboriginal youth, it

would be beneficial to promote what Aboriginal peoples deem as leadership instead of a

mainstream approach to leadership. Rose and Giles (2007) stated that the values that are inferred

by the mainstream are not the same as Aboriginal peoples values and in order to create culturally

sensitive programming and that this needs to be taken in consideration when creating and

implementing youth leadership programs.

For the retreat to be able to move towards instilling Aboriginal teachings and leadership,

there needs to be increased involvement of Aboriginal personnel, especially Elders.

Traditionally, Aboriginal cultures in Alberta have deep respect for their Elders would rely on

them for guidance and what is appropriate in certain situations (Chansonneuve, 2005; Council on

Aboriginal Initiatives, 2012). In the retreat, there is a lack in Elder involvement. Aboriginal

youth would benefit from having an Aboriginal Elder involved to look up to who has a deep

connection to their culture (Crooks et al., 2010).

Recommendations

I propose four recommendations for AFL's leadership retreat based on what the youth

workers and arts mentor suggested throughout the interviews that will hopefully strengthen the

program for the future. The first recommendation is that AFL should make a stronger effort to

hire more Aboriginal youth workers and arts mentors in order to provide more of a focus on

Aboriginal culture. The second recommendation is for the Elders to become more involved in

AFL's leadership retreat and mentorship structure. Such involvement would reflect a culturally sensitive approach to leadership development. Elders should ideally be the individuals who offer "in-class" components of the leadership training, whereby they could draw on their own traditional teachings and what it means to be a leader within their communities. A third recommendation is that youth workers and arts mentors should be made aware of Aboriginal forms of leadership and how they differ from Eurocentric forms of leadership. Such awareness could enable the identification and development of culturally competent youth leaders. Lastly, a fourth recommendation is to have longer retreats and to have follow up and having gatherings throughout the year. Sibthorp, Paisley, and Gookin (2007) noted that the duration of programs or how long the program runs is important to how well participants learn and grow. Programs with a longer duration, at least 9 month specifically, are perceived to have stronger impacts on the youth than shorter ones (Sibthorp, Paisley, & Gookin, 2007). One cannot participate in a weeklong leadership retreat and expect to become a perfect leader who will then go on to lead in their community. These recommendations will not only strengthen the leadership retreat, but potentially creating long-term impacts for all mentees who participate, not just the few who fit the mold and also move away from colonial tendencies that arise in so many of these developmental programs.

Conclusion

AFL's youth leadership retreat had a lasting impact on certain Aboriginal mentees who attended the retreat, though predominantly those who already displayed Eurocentric leadership skills, such asusing authority and personal skills to influence peers around them, and who already displayed both internal (e.g. teamwork, confidence) and external (e.g. positive experiences in the school and community) developmental assets. These likely made the youth

more likely to benefit from what was taught at the retreat. The retreat organizers need to determine the retreat's main goal: to develop those who do not currently display leadership skills into potential leaders or to further develop the leadership skills of those who already display such skills. The retreat organizers may also need to reassess if they might garner greater long-term success by privileging or at least having some emphasis on Aboriginal leadership styles and skills.

The findings from this article are important in they create awareness of how programming created for Aboriginal youth can reaffirm Eurocanadian cultural domination – which has been found to have negative impacts on Aboriginal peoples (Rose & Giles, 2007) - even in programs that are meant to help Aboriginal youth. Certainly, given the dominance of Eurocanadian cultural practices throughout Canada, having Aboriginal youth learn Eurocentric leadership skills may serve a strategic purpose in helping them to more successfully navigate setting that are steeped in colonial relations of power (e.g., education, health care, government). Nevertheless, such an approach does little to challenge the existing status quo and serves to reinforce existing colonial relations of power that marginalize Aboriginal culture. By engaging in an approach that privileges and celebrates Aboriginal forms of leadership, there might be a better opportunity for AFL to develop future leaders who are better able to represent and lead their communities out of colonial relations of power.

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A Case Study of the Lasting Impacts of Employment in a Development through Sport,

Recreation, and Arts Program for Aboriginal Youth

Abstract

Currently, there is a call to address the question of who benefits from the impacts that sport for development programs may yield. In this paper, I explore if/how working for Alberta's Future Leaders Program (AFL) had a lasting impact on former employees, known as youth workers and arts mentors. Based on interviews with 15 youth workers and one arts mentor, I found the following:1) By being involved in AFL, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal youth workers and the arts mentor increased their awareness of racism's and colonialism's impacts on Aboriginal peoples; 2) they learned to challenge stereotypes; and 3) they gained a strong employment trajectory. As a result, the youth workers and arts mentor 4) believed that they reaped more benefits from AFL than the program's intended beneficiaries. While these findings are troubling in that relatively privileged people (i.e., the program staff) may be the program's main beneficiaries, which serves to reaffirm and reinforce their privilege, they also show that domestic sport for development programs have the potential to sensitize both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal employees to issues pertaining to racism and colonialism and also to yield similar outcomes to international sport for development programs.

Recently, sport for development has become increasingly popular. Internationally, it has been identified as a tool for social change to improve the quality of life and health of those deemed in need of development in Third World countries (Canadian Heritage, 2008); nevertheless, the sport for development movement can also be seen within Aboriginal communities across Canada. There is, however, little information available pertaining to who actually benefits from these programs. Further, these programs' effectiveness has been called to question (Darnell, 2011). While there has been some scholarly attention given to how interns of international volunteer/work abroad programs often perceive themselves as experiencing more significant impacts on their lives than the intended beneficiaries of such programs (Darnell, 2011; Tiessen, 2007), similar research has not been conducted on the impacts of working for a sport for development program for Aboriginal peoples in Canada. As a result, in this study, I explore if/how working for Alberta's Future Leaders program (AFL) had lasting impacts on the former employees, known as youth workers and arts mentors.

AFL was created in 1996 in Alberta, Canada, and "is based on the belief that "working together" we can positively impact the future leaders of Alberta" (AFL, 2002). It is a development through sport, recreation, and arts program designed for Aboriginal youth in mostly rural communities across Alberta. It was originally designed to address two main concerns: 1) the high percentage of Aboriginal youth who were in difficulty with the law; and 2) the lack of Aboriginal athletes being represented at different levels of sport competitions (AFL, 2002). As a result, the program was created in order to use sport, recreation, the arts, and leadership development as a prevention and intervention initiative to address these needs (AFL, 2002). Each year, youth workers and art mentors who are typically post-secondary students are hired from mainly urban centres across Canada. For four months (May – August), they work in pairs in

selected rural and remote Aboriginal communities in Alberta to offer summer sport and recreation programs for youth (the youth workers), to deliver a summer arts camp program (the arts mentors), and offer leadership and life skills training for Aboriginal youth (all employees) (AFL, 2002). To date, no long-term evaluations have been conducted on the impact of working for this program.

I conducted 15 semi-structured interviews with youth workers and one semi-structured interview with an arts mentor, all of whom worked for the program at various points from 1999 – 2008. Based on the findings from the interviews, I identified four themes: 1) By being involved in AFL, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal youth workers and the arts mentor increased their awareness of colonialism's impacts on Aboriginal peoples; 2) they learned to challenge stereotypes; and 3) they gained a strong employment trajectory. As a result, the youth workers and arts mentor 4) believed that they reaped more benefits from AFL than the program's intended beneficiaries. These findings offer important insights into the long-term impacts of short-term employment within a development through sport, recreation, and arts program.

Review of Literature

In this literature review, I will first give a general overview of sport for development and what it entails, which will then be followed by a review of how sport for development is used in Canada. I will then provide information on development-type programming and how these programs tend to have larger impacts on those delivering the programs than the programs' intended recipients. Lastly, I will provide a synopsis of how sport for development programs enable program staff to be able to move towards becoming allies with the communities and intended beneficiaries of such programs.

Sport for Development

Attempts to "develop" those deemed less fortunate by those in dominant positions of power can be traced back to the eighteenth century, a period known as the Western Enlightenment era (Levermore, 2009). The Enlightenment era encouraged industrialization, participation in free trade, building a "civilized" society with "proper" infrastructure, and promoting organized religious practices instead of local people's "barbaric" traditional practices (Levermore, 2009). For this to be achieved, the creation and governance of colonies was enacted and has been the dominating force of international development ever since.

Developed nations, such as the United States of America and most countries in Western Europe, have typically utilized an approach to development founded on the idea that what worked with developing their own countries, such as Western sport and physical activity, will also work in other localities (Levermore, 2009). While the use of sport as a means for development has a long history (Levermore, 2009; Levermore & Beacom, 2009), the use of sport for development has developed into new movement that rose to prominence in 2005, which was the year the United Nations declared the International Year of Sport and Physical Education (Levermore & Beacom, 2009; Nicholls & Giles, 2007).

Sport for development is used as a means to overcome social divides that may be the cause of many challenges that marginalized communities face. It is intended to be a way to empower youth by teaching them healthy habits and facilitating new attitudes towards life (Darnell, 2012), to educate youth about health, encourage respect between the youth, and to discourage anti-social and criminal behaviour (Levermore & Beacom, 2009). For the purposes of this paper, I take the term "sport for development" to include recreation. Regardless of the sparse research on such programs' success rates, sport for development programs receive large amounts of corporate funding (Darnell, 2012). Large corporations fund these programs to develop

credibility and build positive reputations. While these programs are created with good intentions, they often adhere to colonial ideals; the desire to "transform backwards" communities is an idea that, as noted above, has been around since the beginning of colonization (Levermore, 2009). Moreover, sport for development programs can divert attention from larger problems that communities face such as high rates of unemployment, poor living conditions, and diminished health status (Darnell, 2012; Levermore, 2009).

Though sport for development programs are used widely internationally, they are now becoming more popular at the national and local level. Within Canada, there is a federal policy mandate to use sport "for social development and health education in Canada, therefore laying the political foundation for the beginning of a domestic strategy" (Nicholls & Giles, 2007, p. 53). Sport for development programs within Canada (e.g., programs like AFL or Right To Play) are often targeted towards Aboriginal peoples.

Unfortunately, many sport for development programs for Aboriginal peoples in Canada are Eurocentric and rely on mainstream sports and systems (Rose & Giles, 2007). Euro-Canadian values are different than those of Aboriginal peoples' and thus Euro-centric programs can marginalize Aboriginal values and promote Euro-Canadian ones. Many sport for development program organizers will add a little bit of Aboriginal culture to their programs and state they are being culturally inclusive; however, the programs are still Euro-Canadian dominated (e.g., they focus on mainstream sports) (Rose & Giles, 2007). Cultural traditions are extremely important to Aboriginal peoples and programs that do not involve these traditions and cultures can reaffirm colonial goals of assimilation (Nicholls & Giles, 2007). One way to potentially avoid this problem is to involve Aboriginal peoples in all aspects of program creation and implementation and for them to lead these programs instead of non-Aboriginal Canadians (Nicholls & Giles,

2007). Sport for development programmers should also consider who benefits from these programs and to what degree. The academic community currently does not have a strong understanding of the long-term impacts that sport, recreation, and arts development programs.

Impacts of Participation for Participants

There is a current call for the creation of stronger foundations of knowledge about the impacts of sport for development on those who are the intended beneficiaries of such programs. The majority of oral accounts and written reports about sport for development programs' impacts are primarily from Western workers (Nicholls, Giles, & Sethna, 2010). Indeed, the voices of participants are often missing. Moreover, these investigations typically do not shed light the programs' impacts on participants, but more so on how participants enjoy the programs and what the programs entail, which - while still a contribution - does not delve deeper into long-term impacts (Coakley, 2011). For example, many low-income youth or those from marginalized communities will enjoy the program if they feel safe and have good relationships with the leaders or adults involved in the program (Lee, Borden, Serido, & Perkins, 2009). Many other studies are similar in that they focus more on what the program participants liked and disliked about the program, rather than if it had any impact on the participant. Similarly, there also is little to no research on Aboriginal youth, programs catered to them, and their perceptions of the programs. Nicholls et al. (2010) have pointed out that this is particularly troubling because it reiterates hegemonic assumptions that the knowledges of the "Other" are not worthwhile. In contrast, there has been research that provides reason to believe the workers involved in these programs experience larger impacts than intended program beneficiaries.

Impacts of Participation on Sport for Development Workers

Volunteers and/or paid workers within development programs may go into the programs with the best of intentions, yet re-affirm colonialism through racialized, preconceived notions of the need to "develop" Others (Darnell, 2007; Millington, 2010). Darnell's (2007) use of testimonials from Right To Play volunteers and Millington's (2010) narratives of those leading Basketball Without Borders aptly displayed the (re)construction of dominant discourses of racial privilege and the possibility of those within leadership roles gaining more from participation in sport for development programs than the intended recipients.

Existing literature has suggested that sport for development volunteers/workers feel as though they truly experienced the hardships that those in "underdeveloped countries" endure and that such experiences change their lives; however, they still return to their privileged lives back home with only a heightened sense of awareness and the belief that their brief program made a lasting difference (Darnell, 2007; Millington, 2010). Throughout the testimonials provided by Darnell (2007) and Millington (2010), there are three specific categories of responses that they identified as reinforcing dominant discourses of racial privilege: power of expertise, subjects of benevolence and gratitude, and encountering race. Power of expertise is exhibited by the volunteers'/workers' assumed authority and knowledge that is commonly exerted upon the underprivileged (Darnell, 2007). The volunteers/workers continue to exercise dominance over those considered underprivileged with the belief that their way will ultimately "develop" them (Darnell, 2007). Next, the volunteers/workers tended to speak for those they were trying to help, thus taking away local peoples' voices, as well as reaffirming the stereotyped image of the grateful native, which serves to illustrate the benevolence of the volunteers and gratitude of the participants (Darnell, 2007; Millington, 2010). Finally, by encountering race, Darnell (2007) referred to the fact that if African children lack the cultural capital to recognize northern or

American athletes who are frequently "ambassadors" for sport for development programs, then the encounter would seem to hold more significance for the athletes than the children. The volunteer "claims a sense of psychic cleanliness for him/herself and his/her colleagues, a function of the western sympathetic gaze and the nearly banal recognition of marginalized children" (Darnell, 2007, p. 573). Although having workers/volunteers who are of a different racial/ethnic/socio-cultural background could be viewed as negative and colonial, it could lead to both workers and the people from the communities they are in moving towards becoming allies.

Becoming Allies

Bishop (2002) argued that Canada's "national reputation glows with innocence despite the inequalities. Its international reputation continues to shine in spite of the terrible things we did to nations and peoples less powerful than ourselves [i.e., Aboriginal people]" (p. 55). Root (2010) explained that when a person is only surrounded by Euro-Canadian views, these views become the norm and those who share these views are unable to recognize their privilege (Root, 2010). To move towards Euro-Canadians and Aboriginal peoples becoming allies, Euro-Canadians must acknowledge their privilege, a process which can often begin by building connections. Bishop (2002) defined an ally as "a member of an oppressor group who works to end a form of oppression which gives her or him privilege" (p. 152).

One way to begin building connections to move towards becoming an ally is through the establishment of friendships (Bishop, 2002). Further, increasing one's knowledge about the marginalized groups (in this case Aboriginal peoples) allows Euro-Canadians to gain an understanding of Aboriginal culture and to be able to break down stereotypes, as well as recognize and accept Aboriginal knowledge as legitimate knowledge and equal to Euro-Canadian views (Root, 2010). For Aboriginal peoples and non-Aboriginal people to become

allies, both need to have the courage to name the problem and deal with it (Bishop, 2002). There are some, however, who critique the idea of "allies" and becoming allies. Becoming an ally becomes problematic when people claim to be allies, but do not actually do the work that is required to actually disrupt their privilege, but instead just seek credit of being viewed as a good person (Smith, 2013). The idea of becoming an ally may turn into a self-serving act at the expense of marginalized peoples, which reinforces colonial relations of power (Smith, 2013).

Furthermore, attempting to become an ally can be problematic if the potential ally is seeking to impose his/her own agenda by setting the terms of engagement and dictating what struggles get amplified instead of working alongside Aboriginal peoples and learning about their self-identified needs (Indigenous Action Media, 2014). Again, this could reaffirm colonialism through the belief that mainstream knowledge is legitimate and that the "helpless natives" are lesser and in need of assistance (Indigenous Action Media, 2014) – that they are dependent on colonizers. Lastly, allyship becomes tarnished by the "self proclaimed ally," who wears the ally title as a badge And view helping Aboriginal peoples as an extra curricular activity and make personal projects out of others' oppression (Indigenous Action Media, 2014). Research has not yet explored if one of the long-term impacts of working for a sport for development program in an Aboriginal community includes the development of allies.

Theoretical Framework

For this paper, I engage with postcolonial theory, specifically decolonization. Colonialism can be defined as old European powers having political rule over subjugated peoples (Young, 2001) and can be traced back in time to when there was a physical presence of an oppressor over an oppressed (Nicholls & Giles, 2007). The dominant group imposes its values and will upon the dominated group, which is thus left with little choice but to comply with it

(Forsyth, 2007); this power relation was prevalent throughout history and continues to be found today. In the Canadian context, the domination of Aboriginal peoples has occurred from the first time Europeans landed in North America and claimed the land their own.

Settlers can be defined as, "most peoples who occupy lands previously stolen or in the process of being taken from their Indigenous inhabitants or who are otherwise members of the 'settler society', which is founded on co-opted lands and resources" (Barker, 2009, p. 328). Through forced assimilation, Aboriginal peoples were expected to adopt settlers' values, standards, morals, norms, etc. (Nicholls & Giles, 2007). As Forsyth (2007) noted, starting in the year 1600, Christian missionaries from Europe came to Canada to impose upon Aboriginal peoples their religious practices with the aim of assimilating them into Christianity. They felt that Aboriginal spiritual practices were uncivilized and heretical. There was collaboration between the state and the church in the 1800s to deal with the "Indian problem" by prohibiting Aboriginal peoples from participating in their own cultural practices and rituals (Forsyth & Wamsley, 2006). An attempt to deal with this "problem" was the creation of the Indian Act (R.S.C., 1985, c. I-5), which controlled all aspects of First Nations peoples' lives and defined which cultural practices were "appropriate" (Forsyth, 2007; Paraschak, 1998).

Many Aboriginal peoples' physical practices such as traditional ceremonies and games, etc. were banned because they did not fit within Euro-Canadian values (Paraschak, 1998). Euro-Canadian sports were viewed as civilized and were naturalized as the proper form of sport in which all Canadians should partake (Paraschak, 1998). The establishment of residential schools in 1880 to 1986 (Coombes, 2006) was the way to inculcate Euro-Canadian practices and contributed to the assimilation process (Forsyth & Wamsley, 2006). Within these institutions, Aboriginal sports were replaced with structured Euro-Canadian sports in order to discipline

Aboriginal youth and teach them obedience (Forsyth, 2007; Forsyth & Wamsley, 2006).

Although many Aboriginal youth were able to resist domination by adopting the sports and using

them to foster pride instead of subordination, residential schools still had devastating impacts on

many Aboriginal families and communities (Forsyth, 2007). The legacy of colonialism continues

today and is reflected in Aboriginal peoples' low educational attainment (Public Safety Canada,

2012), "diminished self-determination and lack of influence in policies that directly relate to

Aboriginal individuals and communities" (Loppie Reading & Wien, 2009, p. 2), high rates of

unemployment (Public Safety Canada, 2012), diminished health status (Statistics Canada, 2010),

poor living conditions (Statistics Canada, 2006), and high suicide rates (Public Safety Canada,

2012). These issues cause Aboriginal peoples as a group, but especially Aboriginal youth, to be

discursively produced as being in need of being helped by settler society – through, for example,

sport for development programs.

One of the strategies to address colonialism and its ongoing effects is decolonization,

which "involves resistance and survival, cultural renaissance, self determination, empowerment,

healing, revitalization, and reclamation of voice" (Graveline, 1998, p. 41). In Smith's (1999)

view, in order for decolonization to occur, Aboriginal cultures and traditions need to undergo

recovery and reform, and there needs to be renewed "strategic relations and alliances with non-

indigenous groups" (p. 110). Some authors, like Morgan (2012), have critiqued the idea of

decolonization by stating that in order for there to be true decolonization, there would literally

have to be the removal of all settlers from occupied Aboriginal territories. Nevertheless, Smith

(1999) stated that decolonization should not be understood as total rejection of all that is

colonial, such as theory, research, and Western knowledge. Within the academy, she argued that

it is about understanding theory and research from the perspectives of marginalized peoples and understanding their stories.

Regan (2010) stated that in order for decolonization to occur, non-Aboriginal peoples "must struggle to confront their own colonial mentality, moral indifference, and historical ignorance as part of a massive truth telling about Canada's past and present relationship with the original inhabitants of the land" (p. x). She further argued that the willingness to embrace the fear and vulnerability, as well as to learn from mistakes, is an important part of the decolonization process (Regan, 2010). Regan (2010) also explained that in order for the decolonization process to occur, non-Aboriginal peoples or settlers are required to "risk revealing [themselves] as vulnerable 'not-knowers' who are willing to examine [their] dual positions as colonizer-perpetrators and colonizer-allies" (p. 28). This approach to decolonization is particularly useful for the research at hand, which involved both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples working together in a sport for development program.

Methodology

A case study is a methodological framework that is used in research to answer "what," "why", and "how" questions about the chosen topic, whether it be an activity, social phenomenon, or program (Yin, 1994). Orum and Feagan (1991) defined a case study as "an in-depth, multifaceted investigation, using qualitative research methods, of a single social phenomenon" (p. 2). AFL was the case under study for my research and I employed an exploratory case study. Exploratory case studies are specifically used when the case under study has little to no previous research on it or the research found has been overlooked in the past for different reasons (Yin, 1994). The long-term effects that working for AFL had on youth workers

and arts mentors has not yet received any scholarly attention; thus, an exploratory case study is fitting.

Methods

For my methods, I decided to use semi-structured interviews in order to gain the best understanding of if/how AFL had a lasting impact on past youth workers and arts mentor. In semi-structured interviews, researchers ask both structured and open-ended questions in a conversational manner (Gagnon, 2010). The questions are generated prior to the interview, but are open to change as the interview progresses (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Also, there is room for probing to ensure that the question is being answered to its full potential.

While I employed only one interview guide used for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal youth workers and arts mentor, one question was altered or omitted depending on which individual I was interviewing. The interview guide included questions such as, "What did you gain from your experience working with AFL? Any life lessons, changes in points of view?", "Did your experience working with AFL set any sort of life path or job direction that you're in now?", "Has it had part in shaping any other aspects of life? Family life, lifestyle?", "Looking back do you believe that the program creates change over all?", and "Are you still in contact with anyone else from AFL?". An additional question that I asked the non-Aboriginal youth workers/arts mentors was, "How did you feel as a non-Aboriginal person working with Aboriginal peoples in an Aboriginal community?" I asked the Aboriginal youth workers if they felt that the non-Aboriginal youth workers and arts mentor would have gained the same impact working in the community as they did.

In order to locate participants for my research, I used snowball sampling. According to Cohen and Arieli (2011), snowball sampling is when a participant is contacted and then you have

him/her contact other potential participants to be interviewed as well. It works like rolling a

snowball; just as the snowball grows when rolled, so too does the pool of research subjects

(Cohen & Arieli, 2011). When a research participant agreed to take part in the interview, I

obtained his/her e-mail and provided him/her with consent forms to fill out prior to the interview.

I conducted 16 interviews with former youth workers and an arts mentor who worked for AFL

from between 1999 and 2008. These dates were chosen in order to see if the impacts were long-

term in nature. Leberman and Martin (2004) stated that in order for there to be a long term

impact, six months have to elapse. This provides an adequate amount of time for reflection to

occur and for the workers to be able to create meaning from their experience (Leberman &

Martin, 2004).

Out of the 16 interviews, seven were conducted with Aboriginal youth workers, while the

rest were with non-Aboriginal youth workers and one arts mentor from across Canada. More

specifically, I interviewed four male youth workers, 11 female youth workers, and one female

arts mentor. I conducted one interview over Skype, two in person, and the remainder over the

phone. With the consent of each participant, each interview was recorded with a digital recording

device and transcribed verbatim. Once the interviews were transcribed, the participants were sent

their transcripts electronically and given two weeks to review and make any changes. Four

interviewees sent their transcripts back with minor changes.

Analysis

I employed thematic analysis to analyze the finalized transcripts from the semi-structured

interviews. Thematic analysis is a popular method of analysis for those new to qualitative

research (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Braun and Clarke (2006) stated that thematic analysis is used

to unearth patterns and themes that reoccur within data. Those patterns and themes are then

interpreted and reported. I chose to use Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step approach to thematic analysis: Familiarizing oneself with data, generating initial codes, searching for themes within those codes, going over those themes in detail, defining and naming the themes, and producing the report (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The process begins when the researcher starts looking "for patterns of meaning and issues of potential interest in the data" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 86). The process ends with the final report on the content and meaning of the patterns or themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In the first phase, it is important for the researcher to become acquainted with his/her data in order to easily find patterns, which was done through reading over interviews and jotting down notes about potential patterns found within them (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Next, I went through each interview and created headings for as many reoccurring patterns found then copied and pasted quotes under each heading in a separate Word document in order to generate my initial codes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The initial codes I found were "positive impacts", "impact future path", "created awareness", "greater impact on youth workers/arts mentors", "lasting friendships", "more Aboriginal involvement", "colonial tendencies", "need to create relationships", and "cross-cultural relationships created." Following this, I started to combine specific codes to form themes and I gathered all data pertaining to each potential themes and placed them under each heading (Braun & Clarkes, 2006). I identified four themes. Lastly, once I finalized all themes and sub-themes, I engaged in the final step: writing up and analyzing the results.

Results

Through conducting thematic analysis, I identified four themes that link back to the research objective of identifying what long-term impacts, if any, involvement in AFL had on the former youth workers and arts mentor. Those themes are 1) through involvement in in AFL,

Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal youth workers and arts mentor became more aware of the increased awareness of impacts of colonialism on Aboriginal peoples, 2) learned to challenge stereotypes; and 3) gained a strong employment trajectory. As a result, the youth workers and arts mentor 4) believed that they gained more of a benefit from AFL than the intended beneficiaries.

Awareness of Colonialism's Impacts

One commonality between all the participants was that the program allowed them to gain awareness of the effects that colonialism continues to have on Aboriginal peoples. Chelsea, a non-Aboriginal former youth worker who worked in Assumption-Chateh in 2007 and 2008, noted,

> I learned more than anything that you see in such remote communities the effects of colonization… I learned more than anything just how shitty of a job we're doing at really making a difference in Aboriginal communities. And how the lack of understanding is the biggest problem there. (personal communications, November 15, 2013)

Similarly, Adam, a non-Aboriginal youth worker who worked in Assumption/Chateh in 2008, felt that he learned a great deal about colonialism and how he needed to adjust his approach to working with Aboriginal communities:

> it allowed me to see how to approach communities and how to in some way not be overbearing…[My experiences] shaped how I approach communities, how I interact with them, and to just sort of being aware of your place and of the other dynamics that are going on in the community. (personal communication, December 17, 2013)

Related to their new sensitivity to colonialism, a number of youth workers also became aware of their whiteness and privilege. One non-Aboriginal youth worker stated,

I think I gained what a lot of Caucasian people experienced when they first get exposed

to kind of the depths of truths of the relationships between Indigenous and non-

Indigenous people. So I was quite guilt-ridden…I think it's an important part of the

process, but it's important not to stay there. Yeah, I just learned about my own privilege.

(anonymous, personal communication, January 31, 2014)

Stephanie, a non-Aboriginal arts mentor who worked in Beaver First Nation in 2007, also

conveyed feelings of guilt and doubt of her role when entering the community and learning the

effects of outsiders coming in. She revealed,

I was very conscious of my whiteness or my lack of awareness of things that were going

on for Indigenous populations in Canada. I went through this phase of feeling very guilty

for what my population represented and then started to question, well do I have a role in

this? Is this oppressive that I'm part of this situation? So I was nervous but I was really

fortunate that I was placed with a really awesome other youth worker who was

Indigenous and he really helped me kind of work out some of those feelings and had

conversations around that kind of stuff. (personal communication, October 22, 2013)

She was able to learn from her Aboriginal co-worker who helped her through her issues around

being an outsider and potentially representing a colonial role.

Challenging Stereotypes

Many of the youth workers and the arts mentor mentioned that their experiences enabled

them to challenge stereotypes about both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples. Julie, a non-

Aboriginal youth worker who worked in Heart Lake First Nation in 2008, originally was told

negative stories about what she should expect when she arrived at the to the community in which

she was placed. She articulated how

it kind of actually gave me more drive to go because I was like, "I need to go see it for

myself and not just take people's word for what they think it is." So of course I was more

than happy to learn that there was a lot of good things about the community. I mean of

course there are some negatives, I mean, I wasn't blinded to that fact, but it was a really

good experience to try to see the beauty in the community and see the families and that

parents care about their kids… So just not judging a book by its cover essentially and not

judging the reserve by what you've heard in the media and by going there and actually

getting to know the community and see that there's a lot of cohesion there and there's a

lot of good things. (personal communication, October 29, 2013)

Darcy, an Aboriginal youth worker in Bushe River from 2001-2002 and former coordinator of

AFL, remembered,

It's not what you see in the news; it's not what you hear people talk about. They're just

small communities with a lot of heart and there are a lot of challenges in communities but

at the same time just like understanding where those barriers come from and what

perpetuates them and those sorts of things was pretty valuable. (personal communication,

February 1, 2014)

Stephanie's experiences also challenged the stereotypes about Aboriginal peoples to

which she had been exposed. She stated,

I definitely took away the understanding that what you hear in the media and those

stereotypes that we hear about Indigenous peoples are very untrue. Yes, there are some

people that those stereotypes could fit, but there's so much more that goes into it and

there's so much more history behind it that I think a lot of people just are not aware of. I

definitely was not aware of it prior to my experience in AFL. (personal communication,

October 22, 2013)

The Aboriginal youth workers and arts mentor also challenged stereotypes they had of

non-Aboriginal peoples. One former Aboriginal youth worker explained, "[I] have a lot of the

positive people that I've met who have been non-Aboriginal. I'm so grateful that I've been given

the opportunity to meet these people [through AFL] because they had an impact on my life.

(anonymous, personal communication, January 29, 2014).

Another Aboriginal former youth worker who was raised by grandparents who were

residential school survivors and very suspicious of non-Aboriginal peoples stated,

> I'm…first generation, if you want to be technical, out of residential schools. So when I
>
> see somebody who's non-Native and wants to do something like this [work] with AFL…,
>
> those are the kinds of people that I think we need and I commend them. (personal
>
> communication, January 20, 2014).

She felt that non-Aboriginal youth workers and arts mentors who work in Aboriginal

communities allow Aboriginal peoples to see non-Aboriginal people who care about and are

interested in Aboriginal culture.

Another Aboriginal youth worker reported that she harbored a lot of anger towards non-

Aboriginal peoples before working for AFL, but that her views changed due to the program:

> I was really angry and resentful towards especially white people and so that was a huge
>
> changing point for me. I started learning that white people and [other] non-Aboriginal
>
> wanted to understand more about colonization and the effects that we have to live
>
> through. That started softening my heart and started opening my mind. Now I'm a lot
>
> more tolerant and a lot of my friends are white, which is a change for me because I never

had white friends before and the reason that they are my friends, and I never thought I'd

be saying this, but is because they are stronger advocates for Indigenous rights and issues

and education about colonization than I am. To me that's inspiring. (anonymous, personal

communication, January 29, 2014)

As a result of not having experienced life as an Aboriginal person, many of the

Aboriginal youth workers felt as though the non-Aboriginal youth workers and arts mentor

experienced different impacts than the Aboriginal workers. One Aboriginal former youth worker

explained, "I think it will have a different impact...it would create more of an awareness for

them" (anonymous, personal communication, November 25, 2013). Similarly, Ryan another

Aboriginal former youth worker who worked in Gift Lake also believed that their was potential

for it to have a different impact on the non-Aboriginal youth workers. He stated, "So you have

all these problems [in Aboriginal communities] and maybe someone will learn from that. So

maybe it would put them in a different framework and put them in a different mind and maybe

they can help. Maybe there are people who can help. Maybe our people need allies. So that's

what it boils down to. Maybe it could be an eye awakening experience for people who come

from privilege" (personal communication, October 22, 2013).

Employment Trajectory

The youth workers and arts mentor felt that their work with AFL influenced their career

paths in very direct ways one the program ended. Julie noted, "I'm interested in working in that

area [Aboriginal issues] or at least somehow linking it into my work…I'm in law school and I'm

really interested in Aboriginal issues" (personal communication, October 29, 2013). Stephanie

stated, "Now I'm a social worker and from doing social work, I have worked with Aboriginal

communities ever since that time [I worked for AFL], so that was really my introduction into

Indigenous populations and their culture" (personal communication, October 22, 2013).

Likewise, Nadine, an Aboriginal youth worker who worked in Tall Cree First Nation in 2002,

explained how the program has "kind of been a basis for how I started my career. I'm working

on my master's… in public health and it's on First Nations health promotion. So ya it really was

a great kick-starter" (personal communication, February 27, 2014). Seth, a non-Aboriginal youth

worker who worked in Assumption/Chateh and Eden Valley in 2005 and 2008 respectively,

continued to work in a community for which he originally worked for AFL:

> I stayed in Eden Valley for like two and a half years after [AFL]. I worked in some
>
> community programs and a bit of youth work. So it definitely stirred that, and now in my
>
> current job we're doing some work with some Métis settlements and it's kind of nice to
>
> be able to reconnect in certain ways. (personal communication, November 18, 2013)

More Significant Impact on Staff than Intended Beneficiaries

The youth workers and arts mentor all believed that the program had a more significant

impact on their lives than on the program's intended beneficiaries. Adam stated,

"I definitely think that the impacts were greater for myself than they were for the community. I

mean, I loved the opportunity. I loved the chance to go out and do that over the long-term. It

definitely benefitted me more than I think the community got out of it" (personal

communication, December 17, 2013).

Similarly, another former youth worker explained that "the substantial positive impact is

what happens with youth leaders. I think that's enough, you know? I don't think that they're

missing the mark by having more of an impact on the lives of youth workers rather than the

community itself" (anonymous, personal communication, January 31, 2014). Lastly, Darcy also

expressed similar views: "That's not to say that it's not valuable or a worthwhile experience for a

community, because it is. But I think the youth workers gain the most out of it" (personal

communication, February 1, 2014).

Discussion

By sensitizing them to the effects of colonialism, enabling them to challenge racial

stereotypes, and by providing them with a career trajectory, working for AFL had long-term

impacts on the youth workers and arts mentor that I interviewed. Nevertheless, it is interesting

that, as reported in research on international sport for development work (Darnell, 2011; Tiessen,

2007), the workers believed that they gained more from the experience than the program's youth

participants. These findings are particularly interesting for two reasons: i) they show that sport

for development programs have the potential to sensitize both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal

employees to issues pertaining to racism and colonialism, and helped to move them closer to

becoming allies, and ii) they bring into question the need for international work/volunteer abroad

programs, as similar benefits can be accrued by working in a domestic experience.

Sensitization to Race and Privilege through AFL

Research has shown that youth who volunteer/work in youth development programs find

these experiences to be valuable learning opportunities, with many of the participants deeming

the experience to be life-changing and rewarding (Tiessen, 2007). Darnell (2011) found that

those involved as workers or volunteers in an international sport for development program in

Africa experienced "understandings of privilege and power leading to Northern self reflection

and critical engagement with international development or development in general" (p. 976). My

results support these authors' findings. All the youth workers and the arts mentor reported that

they gained insight into issues of race and/or privilege. The non-Aboriginal youth workers/arts

mentors stated that AFL made them more aware of Aboriginal cultures in general. Their work

also specifically created awareness of the effects of colonialism and how it still influences

Aboriginal communities today. Many of the Aboriginal youth workers who worked for AFL

grew-up and lived in urban cities; through their work with AFL, youth workers like Darcy also

learned more about Métis and First Nation cultures and life on a small, rural reserves, which

contrasted a great deal to what he had heard it would be like.

The youth workers and arts mentor, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, expressed that

building relationships with each other allowed them to breakdown stereotypes and be able to

gain trust. The non-Aboriginal youth workers and arts mentor showed the communities and

Aboriginal AFL workers that there are non-Aboriginal peoples who want to become allies, learn

about their culture, and work alongside them. The Aboriginal employees at AFL and the

community members, on the other hand, were able to challenge some stereotypes they had about

settlers through their interactions - and in many cases subsequent friendships – with non-

Aboriginal peoples. These findings are novel in that they show that through a sport for

development program, Aboriginal peoples can become more accepting of forming alliances with

non-Aboriginal peoples. Because the term "allies" is most often used to classify the oppressor

group attempting to end his/her privilege over the oppressed, those that are part of the oppressed

group are often overlooked in this regard (Bishop, 2002). Through my results we see that the

Aboriginal youth workers' stereotypes and beliefs about non-Aboriginal peoples changed and

they too became more accepting of working alongside non-Aboriginal peoples and creating

lasting connections with them. These changes in perspective enabled the Aboriginal and non-

Aboriginal AFL youth workers and arts mentor to be able to act as allies.

According to Regan (2010), to move towards becoming allies, non-Aboriginal peoples

must "choose to resist their privilege and racism through critical reflection and social action" and

- act with humility and vulnerability. Importantly, in this study, I found that Aboriginal peoples, too, had to be vulnerable, in that they had to be willing to engage with non-Aboriginal peoples, a group that has a long history of behaving in damaging ways towards Aboriginal peoples. In short, I argue that the alliances between the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal youth workers and arts mentor occurred because not only were the non-Aboriginal workers willing to be vulnerable, uncomfortable though it may have been, but also because certain Aboriginal peoples allowed themselves to become vulnerable and challenge some of their beliefs about non-Aboriginal peoples.

Within AFL, the non-Aboriginal youth workers and arts mentor showed that they learned first-hand about Aboriginal ways of living and culture and recognized their own ignorance about Aboriginal peoples. Once they recognized their own ignorance and that there was the potential for them to reaffirm colonialism through their positions within a sport, recreation, and arts development program for Aboriginal peoples, some, like Stephanie, began to feel guilt and anxiety; however, one of the anonymous youth workers pointed out that she felt it was important to not "get stuck there." After recognizing their position as "colonizer-perpetrator," the non-Aboriginal former AFL employees I interviewed attempted to move towards "colonizer-allies" (Regan, 2010). As Regan (2010) argued, they had to be willing to "examine [their] dual positions as colonizer- perpetrators and colonizer-allies" (p. 28). Importantly, however, such a positioning would have been impossible without the involvement of Aboriginal peoples – both AFL employees and community members - who were willing to develop relationships with the non-Aboriginal youth workers and arts mentor. Despite these apparent successes, however, the former AFL staff members – Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal alike - questioned if the intended beneficiaries also experienced benefits from program participation.

Belief that Program Disproportionately Benefits the Staff

Tiessen (2007) explained that government and NGO programs for volunteer/work abroad "market their programs in a way that suggests young Canadians will experience adventure, cross-cultural understanding, and help other, less fortunate, people" (p. 81). As a result, the workers/volunteers have high expectations of what they are going to do while running these programs and how they are going to "help" those participating (Tiessen, 2007). Once these workers/volunteers arrive home when the program is finished, they usually express concern at the understanding that they most likely did not make a lasting difference in the lives of the participants in the short amount of time of four to six months (Tiessen, 2007). Such was the case for our participants. While they were clearly able to identify the impact that the program had on their lives, they felt very uncertain about the extent to which the program benefitted the intended beneficiaries (which is the focus of the first paper in this thesis). Given the similarity in impacts that I found on AFL employees and those who worked/volunteered abroad in sport for development, the necessity of international travel to obtain these impacts is questionable.

While the short- and long-term impacts on the intended beneficiaries remain unclear, what is clear is that my research demonstrates that like international sport for development volunteers/workers, domestic sport for development workers for AFL *believed* they benefitted more than the targeted Aboriginal youth. Whether or not this was in fact the case would require interviewing youth who participated in all aspects of AFL programming – not only the mentees, but also the children who participated in day-to-day activities, which was beyond the scope of my research. Nevertheless, given that many young Canadians engage in overseas volunteerism in sport for development, engagement instead with domestic programs may be a viable option for those seeking to reap the rewards of such experiences.

Though some might judge the findings that the interviewees believed that the program was of more benefit to them than the Aboriginal youth with whom they worked as a major shortcoming of AFL, employment in AFL enabled the beginning of the development of cross-cultural allies, which is an important finding. While they may not have been the intended benefits and while they were accrued by those who were not the intended beneficiaries, these findings should not be ignored and should be acknowledged as program successes. It should also be noted that one program may not change a youth's life right away, but may instill confidence that may lead into something greater, thus starting a positive cycle of development. Therefore, there should be further efforts to evaluate development through sport, recreation, and the arts programming as it is apparent that sometimes the pre-established goals are not met; this is problematic in that the intended beneficiaries are not receiving the experiences/services they are supposed to. Instead, relatively privileged people (i.e., program staff) may be reaping the Program's rewards and thus reaffirming their privilege.

Conclusion

Overall, AFL did have significant long-term impacts on the former youth workers and art mentor that I interviewed. Although the intended goal of AFL is to change the lives of the youth involved in the program, having an arguably more significant impact on the youth workers and arts mentors who work for the program is not necessarily a negative outcome. It allowed the youth workers and arts mentor to gain a better understanding of Aboriginal communities, cultures, and the effects of colonialism. It also provides a way to dismantle some stereotypes about both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples. AFL provided an entry point where the non-Aboriginal youth workers and arts mentor were able to learn more about Aboriginal peoples and recognize their own privilege and the effects of colonialism, while the Aboriginal workers were

able to recognize that at least some non-Aboriginal peoples are able to engage with Aboriginal

peoples and their communities in respectful ways and want to become allies.

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Chapter Four: Conclusions

Within this conclusion I provide an overview of both the articles that comprise my thesis. Following this review, I put the two papers into conversation with each other to show the contribution that my thesis makes when taken as a whole. Lastly, I end with a number of recommendations for future research concerning the impacts of sport for development programs and I also provide additional recommendations that may strengthen AFL as a program.

Through my thesis research, I investigated the long-term impacts of involvement with Alberta's Future Leaders Program (AFL), a development through sport, recreation, and the arts program for Aboriginal youth, from two points of view: those who participated in the program as "mentees" – the future leaders that the program attempted to develop, from those who were employed by AFL.

For the first paper, I was able to interview five Aboriginal youths who were mentees within AFL and who took part in AFL's youth leadership retreat. I asked them what they thought about the program, specifically the leadership retreat component, and if it had had any lasting impacts on them. Because I was only able to find five mentees who were willing to speak about the program, I had to turn to my interviews with the former Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal youth workers and arts mentor to gather more information about how they thought the mentees felt about the retreat and its impacts.

My findings suggest that the former mentees who took part in my study were deemed to be leaders by the youth workers who selected them to undergo leadership training. Thus, the extent to which the program itself was able to develop mainly leadership, and Aboriginal leadership qualities in particular, is questionable. It can be argued, however, that some skills gained such as increased self-confidence, teamwork, and increased communication are important in broader Eurocanadian leadership as well as Aboriginal leadership,. However, since AFL is for

Aboriginal youth, I argued that it should cater to Aboriginal views and ideals and thus should do more to prioritize the promotion of leadership approaches that reflect Aboriginal culture, or at least focus a lot more on aspects relatable to both Aboriginal and Eurocanadian leadership styles (e.g., democratic leadership). Findings from the first paper displayed a number of mentees who felt like they benefitted from participating in the youth leadership retreat. The impacts that the youth leadership retreat had on the mentees included the opportunity to build personal networks and friendships, the facilitation of positive behaviour changes, and the encouragement them to go on to "greater" things. Thus, AFL should focus on these impacts and view them as important goals that the retreat could potentially work towards, rather than purely leadership. The youth did not refer to improving leadership skills, showing that it might be best for the retreat to move away from said goals and focus more on being a fun week that focuses on building networks, increasing self-confidence, and providing information about options after high school.

The findings from paper two yield similar results in that the youth workers and arts mentor also gained a number of impacts from the program, though they were quite different in nature. They included gaining awareness of colonialism's impacts, gaining the ability to challenge stereotypes, and having their employment trajectory influenced. These findings are important in that they provide evidence about who benefits such of programs (Darnell, 2011). Currently, there is lack of understanding of long-term impacts that sport for development programs have on the intended beneficiaries of the program (Allen-Craig & Hartley, 2012; Hattie et al., 1997), in this case the mentees. My research makes a contribution towards addressing this gap in the literature and shows that AFL – and likely other programs - can yield positive long-term impacts for participants.

I believe that my research also supports research by Darnell (2007, 2011), Millington (2010), and Tiessen (2014) by showing that sport for development programs may have the tendency to benefit those working or volunteering in them more than those for which the program is intended. In paper two, I stated this finding not necessarily be viewed as a failure on AFL's part, as the benefits experienced by the employees were important, such as the development of cross-cultural allies Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples.

The fact that I could not interview many Aboriginal mentees potentially implies that the youth workers and arts mentors may not have had an enormous impression on the mentees nor formed long-term mentoring relationships. Indeed, the youth workers and arts mentor stated that they did not remain in touch with the vast majority of the mentees. The same was the case with other former youth workers and arts workers who were contacted but did not participate in the interviews. Of course, the difficulties in contacting the mentees may also be indicative of simply difficulty in tracing individuals after several years have elapsed.

AFL's stated goals are to use sport, recreation, the arts, and leadership development to increase Aboriginal representation in competitive level sports, to provide fun options for youth to prevent them from getting in trouble with the law, and to create future leaders in the process (AFL, 2002). What appears to have come out of the program differs from its stated goals of providing leadership and skill development opportunities to strengthen and empower participants. While the program has had some benefit for youth mentees, it seems to have had strong impacts on the youth workers and arts mentor that we interviewed – and the youth works and arts mentor argued that these impacts were greater for them than for the youth in the communities in which they worked. The program's impacts on youth workers and arts mentors should be recognized by AFL as a program goal or the program needs to be re-designed so that it

is no longer (I argue) one of the program's most significant outcomes. If the primary goal of the

AFL program is to develop Aboriginal youth into strong leaders in sports, recreation, and the

arts, and thus have large impacts on Aboriginal communities, its current approach to

programming likely requires a change of focus and content.

The mentees I interviewed stated that participating in the youth retreat had some impact

on what they wanted to do in the future, whether that be running programs of their own, working

as a youth workers themselves and working with youth, or going back to school, which does

point to evidence of leadership; however ,again, these were the youth who already possessed

such skills. Similarly, the youth workers and arts mentor also felt as though the program affected

their future plans. Many went on to work in a field involving Aboriginal peoples, stayed on in

the communities they were working in, or went back to school to pursue education that related to

Aboriginal peoples. Of course, most of the employees already had an initial interest in working

with Aboriginal peoples or they most likely would not have applied for the job with AFL in the

first place. Smith (2013) stated that attempting to become allies or chasing to work/help those

deemed underprivileged becomes problematic when people do so to further their own privilege,

which reinforces colonial relations of power. Certainly, working with disadvantaged Aboriginal

youth can look very good on resumes for applications to teacher's college, medical school, law

school, etc. Though my findings show that former employees did often pursue further education

for which work with AFL likely would have made a strong contribution to their resume, I argue

that the fact that many of the youth workers and arts mentors continued to work with Aboriginal

peoples and communities shows that their AFL experience appears to have served as more than

just a self-serving act to get themselves ahead in the working world and instead shows that such

programs have the potential to create cross-cultural ties through both parties working alongside each other and become allies .

Future Research Recommendations

There is a dearth of information on the actual impacts of the intended beneficiaries of sport of development programs or development programs in general, especially programs intended for Aboriginal youth. I originally intended to interview community members such as parents, siblings, teachers, etc., who would have noticed lasting impacts AFL had on mentees in order to hear their voices and have their thoughts on the program, rather than what was said by the youth workers/arts mentors in the executive reports created each year or in interviews with me. Indeed, most of the time, oral accounts and written reports on the impacts of the program are written by those who work for a sport for development program as opposed to the actual program participants (Nicholls, Giles, & Sethna, 2010); however, such an endeavour would require a considerable cost and time to travel from community to community, as I also would have required permission from each community to conduct the research. Further, the AFL leadership felt that it would be more beneficial to focus on past employees and mentees; as a result, that is what I did. It would, however, be interesting and likely beneficial for AFL if community members were interviewed about the impacts (if any) they noticed were experienced by the youth involved in AFL and the broader community.

Another recommendation for future research would be to potentially look into interviewing funders and sponsors to gain an understanding of how they view the program and why they provide funding. It would provide the insight into what sort of programs are deemed desirable to receive funding and what sort of benefits the company hopes to accrue through program sponsorship and what sort of outcomes they would like to see as a result of the program.

In accordance to future research recommendations, there are also a number of practical recommendations that I have for AFL.

Additional Recommendations

As discussed mainly in paper 1, there are a few recommendations that could potentially strengthen AFL. One major recommendation that many of the former youth workers and the arts mentor suggested was having more Aboriginal involvement in all aspects of the program. More specifically, they argued that more Aboriginal youth workers and arts mentors should be hired and that at least one of the two program coordinators should be Aboriginal. This would allow there to be more of a focus on knowledge of Aboriginal culture and traditions in addition to sports, recreation, and the arts. I believe this focus would be especially beneficial during the week-long training session for the youth workers and arts mentors that occurs in the beginning of each summer prior to programming starting in each community because many of the non-Aboriginal youth workers/arts mentors are entering the program with little prior knowledge about Aboriginal peoples.

Importantly, these recommendations came from those who worked for AFL quite a few years ago. In reviewing my thesis findings with AFL's current staff, it has come to my attention that in the past few years the AFL program directors have made a significant effort to hire and attract more Aboriginal peoples for youth worker arts mentor positions. In fact, during the summer of 2014, AFL employed 12 Aboriginal youth workers. This was accomplished by ensuring job postings were sent to and placed in many Aboriginal communities and Métis settlements, as well posted at universities and colleges, especially to all Aboriginal studies departments.

Another main recommendation that emerged from those who were interviewed for paper was the need for more Elder involvement to help instill more Aboriginal leadership teachings with the AFL for both the employees and the mentees. This has also recently been addressed by integrating Elders into the leadership retreat component of AFL. According to the current program coordinators, in the summers of 2013 and 2014, Elders attended the leadership retreat to discuss Aboriginal leadership in communities and how to be play a motivational role for youth in the community. The Elders also had general discussions with the mentees on what it means to be a leader and shared personal stories about the factors/events that contributed to them becoming strong role models.

Another recommendation that was highlighted within paper one was for longer retreats and more gatherings throughout the year for the mentees. In discussing this recommendation with AFL program staff, I was told that, unfortunately, within the current program, there is insufficient funding to allow this to happen. As such, for now, a week-long leadership program appears to be the most the program is able to offer the mentees unless other funding sources are made available.

Final Thoughts

Overall, my thesis demonstrates the need for a deeper look into the actual impacts sport for development programs yield. With my research, I hope that I was able to provide insights into some of the lasting impacts AFL has had on its participants. I also hope I addressed the importance of long-term evaluation for sport for development programs.

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Contributions

Sophie Gartner-Manzon developed, designed, and undertook this thesis, its theorization, analysis, and writing. Dr. Audrey Giles supported all aspects of the dissertation's development, theorization and analysis, and provided assistance and input into writing and reviewing the final product. Both papers will be published with Gartner-Manzon as first author and Giles as second.

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