

## **Background**

Research indicates the Northwest Territories (NWT) needs to increase support toward developing the overall health of its youth (Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT), 2012). In response to these identified issues, and the uniqueness of the demographical and cultural complexities within the NWT, the Department of Education (GNWT-DE) is leading a large initiative to increase levels of well-being (WB) and overall mental health that are applicable to the entire student population (GNWT, 2012; GNWT-DE, 2015). Any such initiative needs to adopt a whole-child approach (Kreider, 2019), focusing on multiple facets of health. This is especially prudent given the known associations between physical and mental health (Lu & Buchanan, 2014; Bergin & Bergin, 2012). The role that Physical Education (PE) plays in the promotion of student WB has been well documented, and is an essential part of any approach looking to improve levels of observed health (Kreider, 2019; Lewallen, Hunt, Potts-Datema, Zaza, & Giles, 2015; Savina, Garrity, Kenny, & Doerr, 2016; Slade & Griffith, 2013). Currently, there are no studies to assess the present state of PE delivery within the NWT in terms of meeting the goals of improving youth WB or supporting teachers in improving instructional practices.

## **Objectives**

My research objective is to provide the NWT educational community with the data to understand the current state of PE delivery and the teaching supports needed as the system moves forward. The results of the study will (1) clarify the current state of PE within the NWT, (2) identify what aspects are working well for teachers and students, and (3) identify what supports and resources are needed to achieve higher successes. This project fills a gap in the understanding of how PE is currently delivered, so that change can shift approaches where necessary and build on current success stories.

## **Theoretical Approach**

The research will follow an appreciative inquiry (AI) approach. AI changes the focus from critical review and systematic deficiencies to one that highlights positives and productive features identified in a situation (Pill, 2014), and what factors affected these successes through creating understanding in the reasons for achievement, and to guide future planning (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987). AI has been shown to be a methodology able to identify factors that support successful system and organizational operation and deliverance (Shariff, van Gramberg, & Foley, 2010). This focus on emphasizing positive aspects, group interactions, and improving practice is well suited for education research (Pill, 2014).

## **Researcher Positionality**

I have eight years of experience as a PE teacher in the NWT. Due to this relationship, I hope there is a level of professional trust that results in an honest sharing of my participant's experiences. Consultation and feedback opportunities have already begun, with the Aurora Research Institute (who represents the NWT government and the multiple Indigenous groups of the NWT), the nine individual NWT school boards, and the NWT Teacher's Association (NWTTA).

## **Methods and Procedures**

Data will be collected from all consenting teachers in the NWT who teach or have previously taught PE. The mixed-methods online survey will focus on (1) information about their education background regarding PE pedagogy; (2) their beliefs and opinions toward PE; (3) methods and resources they have used in their classrooms; (4) instructional techniques they are/have used to support cultural integration into their PE environment; and, (5) resources, development training, or equipment needed for optimal PE delivery. The NWTTA has agreed to send out the survey invitation, relevant information, consent considerations, along with the formal survey. The research questions will be answered using both quantitative (demographics and Likert scaled questions) and qualitative (short answer, open-ended response) data. Various statistical analyses and thematic coding analyses will be conducted.

## **Significance**

These analyses will provide an enhanced understanding of the current PE delivery practices and resources within the NWT and identify the future steps necessary to enhance that delivery to improve teacher's practice, youth physical activity, and the overall WB of students in their communities.

## References

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