

Etuaptmumk (Two-Eyed Seeing) in *Nature's Way-Our Way*: braiding physical literacy and risky play through Indigenous games, activities, cultural connections, and traditional teachings

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Abstract

Growing philosophical and empirical evidence shows that physical literacy and risky play enriches movement opportunities, while also fostering increased physical activity, wholistic health, and wellness across the lifespan. However, physical literacy and risky play have typically been theorized and practiced from a western worldview. In response, *Nature's Way-Our Way* is an initiative designed to ground physical literacy and risky play in Indigenous games, activities, cultural connections, and traditional teachings, as enacted in Early Childhood Education Centres across Saskatchewan, Canada. This article explores *Nature's Way-Our Way's* theoretical underpinnings of Etuaptmumk (Two-Eyed Seeing), adopted to braid together the strengths of Indigenous Knowledges with western knowledge through practices of Indigenous métissage (land and story-based approaches to curriculum informed by relationality). Providing examples of culturally rooted resources, this article shows how the *Nature's Way-Our Way* initiative supports Indigenous self-determination and sovereignty to foster increased physical activity, wholistic health, and wellness across the lifespan.

Keywords

affirmative movement experiences, cultural connectedness, cultural renewal, Indigenous knowledges, métissage, risk-taking

Introducing *Nature's Way-Our Way*

The purpose of this article is to explore the guiding principles of Etuaptmumk (Two-Eyed Seeing) that underpins an initiative that is focused on physical literacy and risky play, called *Nature's Way-Our Way*. *Nature's Way-Our Way* is a culturally rooted, interdisciplinary, and community-based initiative designed to enhance, implement, and evaluate physical literacy and land-based learning resources in nine Indigenous including First Nations and Métis (distinctive peoples encompassing Indigenous and European heritage) and non-Indigenous early childhood education centers in Saskatchewan, Canada. Seeking to strengthen the bonds between preschool aged children, their families, and early childhood educators, *Nature's Way-Our Way* focuses on the development of physical literacy and risky play through Indigenous games, activities, cultural connections, and traditional teachings; for example, stories and storytelling as well as opportunities for cultural renewal through land-based learning. Importantly, this initiative is

positioned to advance reconciliation in Canada, in response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015) calls for federal, provincial, territorial, and Indigenous governments; specifically, Call to Action number 12, which seeks to “develop culturally appropriate early childhood education programs for Aboriginal families” (p. 152) and Call to Action number 89, which seeks to “promote physical activity as a fundamental element of health and well-being” (p. 299).

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The *Nature's Way-Our Way* research team comprised First Nations, Métis, and settler individuals; including academic researchers and community-based Elders and Knowledge Keepers from the Ho-Chunk, also known as Winnebago, Tribe in Nebraska, the USA; the Kickapoo Tribe in Oklahoma, USA; the Nakoda (Assiniboine First Nation) in Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba in Canada and Montana and Dakota, USA; the Cega'kin (Carry the Kettle First Nation) in Saskatchewan, Canada; and the Muskoday First Nation in Saskatchewan, Canada. We understand settler is a loaded term, and it is not our intent to obscure the many different routes that non-Indigenous people have taken to call Canada home, all intensely complicated and fraught with vast differences in resources and privilege. We also do not intend to reify categories and place ourselves, or others, into neat and fixed identity boxes; however, settler is the best word we currently have to describe white and western privileges (Liboiron, 2021). Moreover, while the Indigenous community context in *Nature's Way-Our Way* encompasses linguistic groups of Nêhiyawak (Plains Cree First Nation in Saskatchewan, Canada), Nahkawiniwak (Saulteaux First Nation that covers Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia, Canada), Nakota (Assiniboine First Nation that covers Montana and Dakota, USA, and Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta, Canada), Dakota (Sioux First Nation that covers Minnesota, South Dakota and North Dakota, USA, and Manitoba and Saskatchewan, Canada), Lakota (Western Sioux First Nation that covers North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Minnesota, and Montana, USA, and Manitoba and Saskatchewan, Canada), and Denesuline (Dene or Chipewyan First Nation that covers Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and the Northwest Territories, Canada; Office of the Treaty Commissioner, 2018), we emphasize there is no one Indigenous definition, cosmology, or metaphysics. As Tyson Yunkaporta (2020) claims, "an Indigenous person is a member of a community retaining memories of life lived sustainably on a land base, as part of that land base" (p. 36).

While diverse in our backgrounds, the *Nature's Way-Our Way* research team collaborates through guiding principles of Etuaptmumk as conceived by Dr Albert Marshall, an Elder from the Moose Clan of the Mi'kmaw First Nation located in Unama'ki, Nova Scotia, Canada, in 2004. Etuaptmumk is meaningful and relevant to *Nature's Way-Our Way* because it provides the flexibility and malleability for co-created and co-implicated approaches to research. For example, within the broader scope of research design, the *Nature's Way-Our Way* team adopts Etuaptmumk to entangle mixed methods research from western perspectives (Creswell, 2021) with Indigenous research methods (Colbourne et al., 2020; Kovach, 2009; Wilson, 2008; Yunkaporta, 2020). In this instance, we braid surveys and stories that measure and share family, educator, and children's experiences of, and capacity for, physical literacy and risky play with knowing derived through story, ceremony, and land. Following this, *Nature's Way-Our Way* is focused on the protective effects of culture, drawing on evidence that Indigenous cultural connectedness can function as a determinant of physical activity, health, and wellness (Anderson et al., 2016; Ironside et al., 2020).

Practically, this means gathering and cobbling together input from diverse groups of people collaborating in *Nature's Way-Our Way*, including Indigenous and non-Indigenous research team members, early childhood educators, families, and preschool aged children; while also ethically committing to settler obligations and responsibilities to enact good relations with Indigenous governed research and principles of ownership, control, access, and possession (First Nations Information Governance Centre, 2014) with, and for, Indigenous communities (Iwama et al., 2009; Wilson, 2008). By good relations, we are referring to grounded, lived, embodied, and embedded *practices* of knowing, being, thinking, doing, and feeling that cultivates, maintains, and sustains affirmative relationships with others (TallBear, 2014); and to account for our relations when they are not good (Liboiron, 2021).

Standing-with Indigenous self-determination and sovereignty

Etuaptmumk aligns with *Nature's Way-Our Way* through its anticolonial agenda that focuses on cultural renewal to support the healing and wellness of Indigenous communities (Hall et al., 2015). *Nature's Way-Our Way* is invested in anticolonialism, rather than decolonization, as a move to avoid reproducing settler and colonial entitlement to Indigenous land, ontologies, and cosmologies. Where decolonizing suggests appropriation of Indigenous survivance and resurgence, anticolonialism initiates a standing-with Indigenous self-determination and sovereignty (TallBear, 2014). Also, colonialism should not be thought of as a universal category, enacted in the same way in every context. Rather, there are many colonialisms with different goals and strategies. However, in the context of this article, we refer to colonialism as the dispossession of Indigenous Ways of Knowing and Being through settler land acquisition (Coulthard, 2014). Specifically, we grapple with historical and ongoing structural inequalities and power asymmetries in Early Childhood Education contexts that continue to oppress Indigenous bodies everyday (Van Ingen & Halas, 2006), to bring Indigenous Knowledges within the contexts of physical activity, physical literacy, and movement pedagogies from something invisible to noticeably absent in colonial education systems (Ahenakew, 2016). In this way, *Nature's Way-Our Way* departs from what Eve Tuck (2009) called damage-centered research. That is, we are not single-handedly focused on how Indigenous peoples are disproportionately harmed by poor health outcomes in comparison to non-Indigenous population. Rather, we seek to bring front and center the pervasive milieus of colonialism that continually work to disrupt Indigenous self-determination and sovereignty to foster physical activity, wholistic health, and wellness (Greenwood et al., 2015; Halseth & Greenwood, 2019; Katzmarzyk, 2008; Turin et al., 2016).

While the relationship between cultural connectedness and physical activity, health, and wellness has long been acknowledged by Indigenous communities, the deleterious effects of colonialism has significantly and adversely affected cultural connectedness through Indigenous

physical and cultural dispossession of land, of rights and connections to traditional territories, and, of spiritual ontologies with land through dislocation and displacement. To examine colonialism rather than its effects is a pursuit that contributes to cultural renewal through actively revitalizing Indigenous worldviews and governance in the research process, understanding that research is one pathway within broader pursuits of national Truth and Reconciliation (Hall et al., 2015). Later in this article, we return to a discussion exploring the guiding principles of *Etuaptmumk in Nature's Way-Our Way*; however, first, we explore concepts of physical literacy and risky play to situate this initiative within a gap in physical literacy and risky play research.

Physical literacy in *Nature's Way-Our Way*

The concept of physical literacy has colonial beginnings, originating in 1884 when American Army Captain, Edward Maquire, described the physicality of an Indigenous culture to possess a movement quality embedded within a specific social context (Cairney, Kiez, et al., 2019). Physical literacy-type practices were later adopted in the 1920s by American educators in response to mechanistic developments inherent in the modernization era that worked to affect upon the physical preparedness of army recruits. Then, in 1993, physical literacy was reinvigorated in Britain by Margaret Whitehead in response to the widespread unease related to the inactivity of the general population and a growing dissatisfaction with school-based Physical Education programs (Whitehead, 2010, 2019). With philosophical underpinnings of monism, existentialism, and phenomenology, Whitehead suggests that physical literacy aims to embrace a more integrated approach in response to pervasive western binary logics set in mind and body, human and nature, and reason and emotion dualisms. Rejecting the idea that the body is a mechanistic tool, physical literacy enacts an embodied integration with the world through sense-making and perceptions as set within the lived experience (Durden-Myers et al., 2020). This means that principles of physical literacy work to displace a single-minded focus on the development of movement competency in children, or body as object, to consider the fundamental centrality of embodiment in the human existence across multiple and diverse movement contexts well beyond sport and school physical education and across the lifespan to optimize learning and flourishing through movement (Durden-Myers et al., 2018; Robinson et al., 2018). More recently, Whitehead and the International Physical Literacy Association have championed physical literacy as the “motivation, confidence, physical competence, knowledge, and understanding to value and take responsibility for engagement in physical activities for life” (Physical Literacy, 2022, para. 3). For Canadian movement, scholars and practitioners, the definition of physical literacy also includes affective dimensions, which relates to motivation and confidence; behavioral dimensions, which relates to engagement in physical activities; cognitive dimensions, which relates to knowledge and understanding; and physical dimensions,

which relates to physical competence. Although it should be noted that Whitehead did not recognize the inclusion of the behavioral dimension (Robinson et al., 2018). Although physical literacy may present differently within a variety of contexts, overall, a physical literacy-enriched experience should support movement opportunities that develop one's competence, confidence, motivation, and active participation.

Focusing on intrinsic valuation of movement, there is emerging evidence that suggests physical literacy may promote lifelong advocacy for physical activity, wholistic health, and wellness, with literature highlighting the importance of targeting physical literacy during the early years to mitigate serious long-term effects of movement deprivation on child development (Belanger et al., 2018; Bremer et al., 2020; Dudley et al., 2017). As Dean Dudley and colleagues (2017) noted,

If the fundamentals of physical literacy have been established and nurtured in these earlier stages, individuals should engage in physical activity as a regular aspect of their lifestyles during adulthood . . . we need individuals by this [adult] life phase to appreciate the intrinsic value of physical activity, as well as its contribution to health and well-being. (p. 446)

Evidence of physical literacy promoting the intrinsic value of physical activity to act as a necessary determinant of health and wellness was also established by Daniel Robinson and colleagues (2018) and John Cairney, Kiez, et al. (2019), with Cairney et al. stating, “It is becoming clear that if PL [physical literacy] is in reality a gateway to increasing PA [physical activity], then it follows that PL must also be a necessary determinant of health via its impact on PA” (p. 372).

Similar narratives are also taken up in interdisciplinary scholarship that calls for risky play to be embedded within early childhood activities to promote physical activity, and thus, support children's health and wellness (Brussoni et al., 2012, 2015; Milteer et al., 2012; Sando et al., 2021; Sandseter, 2007; Sandseter & Kennair, 2011). Heeding this call, and appreciating the scope for physical literacy to exist within an iterative relationship with risky play, *Nature's Way-Our Way* also focuses on risky play through locomotor activities like skipping, running, climbing, galloping, jumping, hopping, rolling, sliding, and leaping; stability activities like balancing, hanging or dangling, stretching, bending, turning, and twisting; and manipulative and object control activities like stick handling and ball catching and throwing.

Risky play in *Nature's Way-Our Way*

Risky play is a pedagogical strategy that helps children test limits, develop perceptual motor capacity, and respond to dangerous environments and activities in appropriate ways (Herrington & Brussoni, 2015; Pellegrini, 2021). Risky play in *Nature's Way-Our Way* draws on Ellen Beate Hansen Sandseter's (2007, 2009) original definitions of risky play, as further developed by Johan Sando and colleagues (2021) to promote opportunities to play with great heights that initiates a danger of falling; play with high speeds that initiates a danger of collision; play with dangerous tools, for

example, ropes and sticks that initiate a danger of cuts and bruises; play near dangerous elements, for example, bodies of water; play on structures that are muddy, wet, icy, or snowy; play through rough and tumble activities that initiate a danger of harm to each other through wrestling, fighting, fencing with sticks; play in which the child might disappear or get lost; and play with impact, for example, crashing into objects.

It should be noted that risky play has potentially different connotations for a child than for an adult. For example, play with great heights for a child does not mean standing on the side of a cliff but might simply mean standing on a chair; or play in which the child might disappear or get lost might mean playing in a fort under a table, not necessarily fending for themselves in the middle of the woods. Similar to the focus of physical literacy that strives to promote autonomous, confident movers, risky play focuses on child-centered agency that encourages child autonomy to make appropriate decisions for their own safety and the safety of others. As such, risky play is set within a strengths based approach to movement, in which adult interventions offer opportunities for appropriate risky play through affirmative and encouraging language and responses; rather than deficit-based and constraining language and responses that foreclose the conditions of possibility for risky play. Building on the innate strengths and resilience of preschool aged children, educators, and families, a strength-based approach to risky play in *Nature's Way-Our Way* is focused on priorities of creating social change set in affirmative movement patterns *with* the world. This is particularly relevant in Indigenous Knowledges, as the body is understood as the basis of relationships through sensing, thinking, acting, and being that is grounded in creative and relational participation with nature (Cajete, 2000).

Engaging with scholarly work intersecting Indigenous Ways of Knowing and Being with physical literacy (Dubnewick et al., 2018; Fraser-Thomas et al., 2017; Milko, 2020; Nesdoly et al., 2021; Paul et al., 2019) and risky play (Bauer & Giles, 2018; Gerlach et al., 2019), *Nature's Way-Our Way* adopts Etuaptmumk to promote physical activity, health, and wellness that is grounded in the voices of Indigenous peoples (Lavallée, 2007; Lavallée & Lévesque, 2013; Strachan et al., 2018). Yet, there is scant evidence in the literature that addresses the Indigenous Knowledges, physical literacy, and risky play nexus within Early Childhood Education contexts; particularly through an Etuaptmumk approach. To address this gap in the literature, *Nature's Way-Our Way* actualizes physical literacy and risky play rooted in Indigenous games, activities, cultural connections, and traditional teachings, and opportunities for land-based learning through guiding principles of Etuaptmumk.

Guiding principles of Etuaptmumk

As a method of learning to see from one eye, the strengths of Indigenous Knowledges, and from the other eye the strengths of western knowledge, Etuaptmumk recognizes that both Indigenous Knowledges and western knowledge are distinct and whole in and of themselves but uses them

together for the benefit of all (Bartlett et al., 2012; Iwama et al., 2009). Symbolizing the guiding principles behind Etuaptmumk, the late Mi'kmaw Chief of the Acadia First Nation, Nova Scotia, Charles Labrador evoked the idea of *Trees Holding Hands*. As Chief Labrador explained, "Go into the forest, you see the birch, pine, maple. Look underground and all those trees are holding hands. We as people have to do the same" (Institute for Integrative Science and Health, n.d., para 3). As Lee-Anne Broadhead and Sean Howard (2021) commented, "Two-Eyed Seeing offers the Western eye a chance to look at itself—and the world around it—afresh" (p. 17). In this way, the purpose of Etuaptmumk is to generate a relational process that brings two scientific traditions together to create a transcendent, transcultural third, ethical, space of research (Broadhead and Howard, 2021; Ermine, 2007).

To actualize the potential of Etuaptmumk, however, is not without western responsibilities and obligations that acknowledge the shared condition of colonialism (Donald, 2009). This shared condition is one that calls for different responsibilities and obligations within land-specific relations to evaluate biased dialogues and purposeful and ignorant misrepresentations of Indigenous cosmologies, as derived from, and further contributing to, structures of the settler state (Belcourt, 2015; TallBear et al., 2020). It is also important to highlight that Indigenous Knowledges are derived from entirely different epistemological and cosmological foundations to that of western knowledge, meaning the two cannot necessarily be combined or absorbed into western epistemologies (Tuck et al., 2014). For example, the colonial imaginary that sets humans *apart from* land is vastly different from Indigenous perspectives that situate humans as a *part of* land, in which land has its own agency (Wildcat, 2005). Furthermore, as a proper noun, Indigenous Knowledges are emplaced and situated within specific cultural and land-based contexts, whereas western knowledge is typically taken up as generic and universal. Importantly, given the pervasive and dominant nature of western knowledge, there is risk that this form of knowledge works to co-opt and reappropriate Indigenous Knowledges (Liboiron, 2021).

In critical consideration of these tensions, *Nature's Way-Our Way's* approach to Etuaptmumk does not intend to blur or blend these two diverse, contrasting, and often conflicting worldviews; nor does it attempt to equalize perspectives within balanced harmony and turntaking (Hall et al., 2015). Rather, our research team seeks to activate the most appropriate lens through critical considerations of the Four Rs of research with Indigenous peoples which include respect, reciprocity, responsibility, and relevance (Canadian Institute of Health Research et al., 2018; Kirkness & Barnhardt, 2001; Snow et al., 2016). Here, we take up practices of Indigenous *métissage* through land and story-based approaches to curriculum informed by relationality to work with affirmative differences *between* different human cultures in holding "together the ambiguous, layered, complex, and conflictual character of Aboriginal and Canadian relations without the need to deny, assimilate, hybridize, or conclude" (Donald, 2012, p. 536). For example, respect is taken up through

Indigenous métissage as we work with different ontologies, epistemologies, cosmologies, methodologies, and ethics between Indigenous Knowledges and western knowledge; moving away from difference between categories, boundaries, and borders as oppositional and dualistic to position difference in affirmative ethics, in that through difference, the other comes into being (Braidotti, 2009). Reciprocity is taken up through Indigenous métissage, in which we activate a shared give and take of power within the research team, and between the research team and the communities, initiating conversations that explore the shared expectations of individuals in the research team and between the research team and communities. Responsibility is taken up through Indigenous métissage, in which we address the impact of research on individuals and communities through accountability of the research team to maintain research relationships into the future. While the type and form of collaboration might change shape as the research progresses and transforms into new projects and initiatives, we are always responsible to the network of relationships because without the integrity of the relationships holding the initiative together, the focus point of inquiry loses meaning and context. And relevance is taken up through Indigenous métissage, in which we ensure the research being conducted within communities meets the priorities and needs of that community, in which we depart from a colonial and universalizing one-size-fits-all approach, to address the contextualized, emplaced, and situated needs and strengths of any given community.

Indigenous métissage in practice

Led by Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Keepers, the *Nature's Way-Our Way* research team co-created 10 physical literacy-enriched resources to braid physical literacy and risky play through Indigenous games, activities, cultural connections, and traditional teachings. To begin, Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Keepers in the *Nature's Way-Our Way* team proposed 10 Indigenous games and activities, also including an Indigenous story to accompany the games and activities (Figure 1). This approach to stories and storytelling highlights one of the contrasting worldviews in Indigenous Knowledge and western knowledge, in that for Indigenous peoples, stories are a living being engrained with their own agency; and thus, storytelling is an embodied and interconnected form of knowledge sharing that enacts living knowledge rooted in animate (Cajete, 2000; Garrouette & Westcott, 2013; Wilson, 2008). This stands in contrast to western knowledge that typically view stories as an instrumental tool for research and as a passive object of study awaiting cultural representation (Rosiek et al., 2020). Addressing the specific movement nuances within the 10 Indigenous games and activities, the *Nature's Way-Our Way* team then looked for openings to overlay elements of physical literacy; focusing on the concurrent development of movement confidence, competence, motivation, and active participation with the cultivation of feelings of belonging, cultural connectedness, autonomy of movement, and positive challenges differentiated for diverse learning needs and strengths of diverse children.

hop This is a physical literacy enriched activity for children ages 3 to 5

Tatanka, Tatanka Cross the River

Physical literacy links: Developing movement competence (jumping, leaping, targeting, landing); developing confidence; developing motivation; developing social skills (cooperation, teamwork); developing body control and spatial awareness

Language/literacy links: Movement words (jump, boundaries)

Equipment: Tape, towels (for "boulders")

Where: Indoors or outdoors

Storytime

- First Nations people living on the prairies and plains were adept at traveling, navigating by the stars and landmarks. Their travels took them across rivers and mountain ranges along paths that were sometimes hard to travel and where the ability to be really good at jumping is essential. This game is a modification of a game already played in most schools on reserve "Tatanka, Tatanka." In this modification, there will be a race across an imaginary river. This modification will allow students to practice jumping and landing in a specific spot

Let's play

- Begin by placing tape on the gym floor to mark where imaginary boulders would be.
- Students would practice jumping across the boulders in order to cross the river.
- Children will be divided into two teams, Tatankas and Hunters. The race course will be made by creating two distinct rows of "boulders" parallel to one another; one for Hunters and one for Tatankas.
- Hunters will race Tatankas. If you don't beat the Tatanka, you become a Hunter. If you are a Tatanka and you win the race you get to stay a Tatanka.
- The race can last until there is one winner, or can run for a determined amount of time.

Confidence

- Consider showing the children how to jump from rock to rock, then let them copy you.
- Be creative with ways to avoid lineups and keep children moving through the "course"

Connection

- What kinds of connection (to people, places, objects, culture, etc.) can you offer?
- For example: connection to culture through the story.

Cues for Movement

- Arms back, bent knees
- Arms swing up and forward
- Take off and land on both feet simultaneously
- Bend knees to absorb force

Positive Challenge

How else could a child move from one end to the other?

- Prescriptive- try leaping, create different distance between boulders
- Creative- how many different ways can you cross the river?

Figure 1. *Tatanka, Tatanka Cross the River*: An example of the *Nature's Way-Our Way* physical literacy-enriched resources (artwork by Lexa Specht and Shayla Pitt).
tatanka = bison; buffalo.

In many ways, there is a natural synergy between the monistic and wholistic philosophical underpinnings of physical literacy with the physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual interconnectedness of Indigenous wholistic health and wellness (Doucette et al., 2004; Lavallée, 2007; Toulouse, 2021). While physical literacy has been critiqued for its over-emphasis on movement competencies (Robinson et al., 2018), emerging physical literacy scholarship reinstates the embodied nature of movement across multiple contexts as a move to displace an over-emphasis on the mechanical techniques of movement (Cairney, Dudley, et al., 2019; Dudley et al., 2017; Durden-Myers et al., 2018, 2020; Kriellaars et al., 2019). Through a focus on embodied movement practices, *Nature's Way-Our Way* seeks to draw out contextualized, emplaced, and situated stories that show how movement does relationships (Land & Danis, 2016; Riley & Proctor, 2022); relationships with self, physical activity, health, wellness, each other, and broader worldly ecologies.

Indigenous métissage in practice is also evident in *Nature's Way-Our Way* land-based learning resources

(Figure 2), in which seven Activity Cards were co-created with two Métis early childhood educators and a Nêhinawak (Swampy Cree First Nation that covers northern Manitoba and eastern Saskatchewan, Canada) and Métis land-based educator. The land-based learning resources follow the seven Sacred Teachings, the four Nêhiyawak Directions, and the Saskatchewan Government's Essential Learning Experiences (Four Directions Teachings, 2012; Government of Saskatchewan, 2015). The land-based learning resources adopt traditional Indigenous forms of learning that are intimately connected to relational reciprocity with land (Battiste, 2010; Coulthard, 2014; Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario, 2020) and wholistic health and wellness associated with the Indigenous Medicine Wheel's focus on physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual wellness; while also considering western knowledge as presented in provincial early learning frameworks for young children's physical, socio-emotional, intellectual, and spiritual development.

Nature's Way-Our Way Land-based learning activity for children ages 3-5

A Sensory Trail



Sacred Teaching: Courage
What is courage?
How do you show courage to navigate the trail?

Storytime

◆ Every winter, Momma bears hibernate and give birth to one or two baby bears in dark warm hole. When the spring moon comes and the eagles return, the bears wake up. Momma bear knows it's time to search for food. She's been feeding baby bear this whole winter. Baby bear knows only the dark, therefore he can't see much, but he uses his other senses to follow her. She guides her cherished baby bear over and around many obstacles. He also must be courageous and trust his own senses. She walks slowly and gently, he follows close. Safely around trees as she holds branches for him. She moves things out of the way. He can hear crunchy leaves and dry branches cracking. He smells grass, his tummy grumbles, "mmmm, smells good!" Everything is new. Bears are sacred animals to the Cree people: they are not feared but respected. It is said, if you wear your shoes on the wrong feet, you will meet a bear. Be courageous and back away slowly while making yourself big. Bears will not bother you unless she is protecting her cub! Egosi.

Nature's Way-Our Way Land-based learning activity for children ages 3-5

A Sensory Trail (continued)

Developing Skills

- Locomotor skills, fine motor skills, stability & balance, space & body awareness.
- Self-awareness, sense of belonging, identifying & regulating emotions, perspective taking & empathy. Solving problems (curiosity, exploring, observing, cause & effect, predicting), listening with interest, imagining, exploring time, exploring position/direction.
- Experiencing a sense of wonder, awe, & joy.
- experiencing heightened sensory awareness, developing an appreciation of beauty, interconnections with Land.

Equipment: Rope (with knots threaded a few meters apart), sweaters or old cut up sheets for blindfolds.

Location: Outside (amongst trees if possible).

Let's Play!

- In pairs, guide your blindfolded partner and take turns to lead your blindfolded partner along the sensory trail (a rope that weaves its way through a small area of the outdoors).
- Guide: it is important you guide your blindfolded partner carefully and safely. Move slowly and make sure the ground is safe for them to walk upon. Talk as little as possible. Remind your partner that along the rope you will reach a number of knots. At each knot pause and do the following:
 - First knot: feel the texture of three natural surfaces. How much can you learn about each object through your touching its surface.
 - Second knot: your partner will help you choose three items of vegetable matter. Smell each item carefully, one by one. Repeat this process but crush each item between your fingers.
 - Third knot: Pause. Can you feel where the sun is in relation to your body? From which direction is the breeze blowing? How does the sun and breeze feel on different parts of your body?

Building Confidence & Competence: Can the guide move further and further away from the blindfolded partner so that they are trailing the rope on their own for longer distances?

Extension Activity: Invite children to paint or draw some of the items explored at the three knot sites.

Figure 2. *A Sensory Trail*: An example of the *Nature's Way-Our Way* land-based learning resources (beaded artwork and story by Michela Carrière).
egosi = that's it; that's the end.

Valorizing the border culture of the in-between: implications for *Nature's Way-Our Way*

In this article, we have discussed the anticolonial praxis in *Nature's Way-Our Way*, and how this initiative braids physical literacy and risky play through Indigenous games, activities, cultural connections, and traditional teachings to promote wholistic health and wellness, and cultural renewal for Indigenous preschool aged children, their families, and educators. Following the guiding principles of Etuaptmunk, the *Nature's Way-Our Way* research team seeks to generate a third, ethical space of research that draws from the strengths of both Indigenous Knowledges and western knowledge (Ermine, 2007). We do this through practices of Indigenous *métissage* that hold together the diverse, contrasting, and often conflicting aspects of Indigenous Knowledges and western knowledge in activating and actualizing ethics and politics of affirmative difference between knowledge systems (Donald, 2012). This means that forms of Indigenous Knowledges and western knowledge are not blurred or diluted together through a one-plus-one logic (Whatmore, 2002), but rather, attention turns to the border culture of the in-between (Fine, 1998; Jones & Jenkins, 2008). The border culture does not separate extremes down the middle, inevitably silencing and denying the middle space and subsequently reifying categories and their hierarchical positions within power differentials. Rather, working in the third, ethical, and middle space creates an assemblage of heterogenous relations that promotes a rich and fluid dialogue between diverse epistemic worlds within the research team *and* between the research team and Early Childhood Education Centres.

While the dialogues within this third, middle space can be fraught with tensions and contradictions, it is the tensions and contradictions that work to proliferate new patterns of knowing, being, thinking doing, and feeling in generating new stories, assemblages, and worldings. For example, so far, the *Nature's Way-Our Way* initiative has been well-received by the Early Childhood Education Centres that we have begun collaboration with; yet this not without many, and sometimes challenging, learnings derived from the contextualized, emplaced, and situated stories of each center. As such, one of the most crucial findings thus far, has been the importance to focus on the relationships within the *Nature's Way-Our Way* network of collaborators that includes the social relationships with people and material relationships with land and place. This is not to suggest a focus on content and outcomes is not important nor a worthwhile pursuit, especially since aims and objectives of *Nature's Way-Our Way* are to promote physical activity, health, and wellness among Early Childhood Education communities; but rather, a focus on relationships reemphasizes the role of processes and journeys in achieving outcomes through adaptive, flexible, and relationally malleable ways.

Continuing our collaborative relationships with Early Childhood Education Centres across Saskatchewan, next steps in *Nature's Way-Our Way* will be to learn about Indigenous games and activities from the situated contexts

of families and educators. Creating revitalized educational opportunities for Indigenous preschool aged children, their families, and early childhood educators, the goal here is to generate a comprehensive range of culturally rooted and co-created resources that can be shared among the network of Early Childhood Education Centres within *Nature's Way-Our Way* and beyond.

Authors' note

Kathryn Riley (PhD) is a Postdoctoral Fellow in the School of Public Health at the University of Saskatchewan, exploring physical literacy and risky play as taken up through Indigenous games, activities, cultural connections, and traditional teachings. Kathryn completed a BA in Education and a BA in Sport and Outdoor Recreation at Monash University, Australia, in 2007. She then completed her Masters research through Deakin University, Australia, in 2014. Taking up ecofeminism and narrative inquiry in this study, Kathryn explored place-based mindfulness as a strategy to promote environmental ethics in Australian Outdoor and Environmental Studies. In 2019, Kathryn obtained a PhD through Deakin University, Australia, conducting her research within the Saskatchewan-based education system of Canada to explore new and different ways to (re)story human/Earth relationships for, and in, these times of the Anthropocene. Kathryn's research is focused posthumanist and new materialist scholarship within an anticolonial praxis in education to promote a sense of belonging with Country, Land, and Place.

Amanda Froehlich Chow (PhD) is an Assistant Professor in the School of Public Health at the University of Saskatchewan. Amanda's research program aims to apply wellness approaches in conjunction with community-based participatory research methods to promote the wholistic wellness. Froehlich Chow's current projects weave in Indigenous methodologies including Etuaptmunk, alongside intergenerational and land-based wellness approaches. Every aspect of her research is guided by community relationships as she works collaboratively, alongside Indigenous community members and non-Indigenous allies to develop and implement culturally rooted community-based initiatives aimed at promoting overall wellness among children, their families, and communities. In addition, Froehlich Chow has research and lived experiences understanding the unique factors influencing the health and wellness of those living in rural areas.

Kathleen Wahpepah (Elder) is a member of the Ho-Chunk, also known as Winnebago, Tribe of Nebraska and Kickapoo Tribe of Oklahoma, and is an American-born Canadian permanent resident. She is married to Tim Eashappie, Sr., a member of the Cega'kin (Carry the Kettle) Nakoda Nation, Assiniboine #78 First Nation. Elder Kathy has expertise in child, youth, and family engagement. She has developed innovative programming for young adults on reserve recognized by the national branch of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada as best practices.

M Louise Humbert (PhD) is a Professor in the College of Kinesiology at the University of Saskatchewan. Her research focuses on the physical activity experiences of those left on the margins of movement spaces and opportunities with a strong interest in the experiences of girls and young women in physical activity and sport. She is a community engaged scholar with above 25 years of experience listening to the needs of community members and working with them to develop initiatives that will support them in their efforts to provide opportunities for children and youth to develop physical literacy. A former president of

Physical and Health Education Canada, Louise is passionate about the role that schools and teachers can play in helping children and youth find and nurture a lifelong love of movement.

Mariana Brussoni (PhD) works, plays, and lives with her family on the ancestral and unceded territories of the *skwxwú7mesh* (Squamish), *selilwiltulh* (Tsleil-Waututh), and *xʷməθkʷəy̓əm* (Musqueam) Nations. She is Director of the Human Early Learning Partnership, and Professor in the Department of Pediatrics and the School of Population and Public Health at the University of British Columbia. She is an investigator with the British Columbia Children's Hospital Research Institute and the British Columbia Injury Research & Prevention Unit. Mariana's cross-disciplinary research investigates child injury prevention and children's risky play, focusing on parents' and educators' perceptions of risk, and design of outdoor play-friendly environments.

Natalie Houser (PhD) is a SSHRC-funded postdoctoral researcher at the University of Manitoba in the College of Rehabilitation Sciences. Natalie's current research is focused on physical literacy-enriched pedagogy and creating physical literacy-enriched movement opportunities in different contexts, working toward building more confident and competent movers. She is also a research associate at the Center for Circus Arts Research, Innovation and Knowledge Transfer (CRITAC) in Montreal. Natalie is currently a co-investigator on several grants working with children within school-based and recreational contexts, as well as with specific groups of children including individuals with neurodiversity, newcomers, and Indigenous children and their families.

Marta C Erlandson (PhD) is an Associate Professor in the College of Kinesiology at the University of Saskatchewan. Her research focuses on the growth and development of children and youth and the impact of physical activity, sport, and inactivity during this critical time. With expertise in implementing community-based physical literacy and physical activity intervention, Marta's research engages community driven research questions as she works with both healthy and disadvantaged clinical populations.

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Glossary

Cree language

egosi that's it; that's the end

Lakota language

tatanka bison; buffalo

Mi'kmaw language

Etuptumuk Two-Eyed Seeing that learns to see from one *eye* the strengths of Indigenous Knowledges, and from the other *eye* the strengths of western knowledge

French language

Métissage involves land and story-based approaches to curriculum informed by relationality

Indigenous peoples

Cega'kin Carry the Kettle First Nation in Saskatchewan, Canada

Dakota Sioux First Nation that covers Minnesota, South Dakota and North Dakota, USA, and Manitoba and Saskatchewan, Canada

Denesuline Dene or Chipewyan First Nation that covers Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and the Northwest Territories, Canada

Ho-Chunk; Winnebago Tribe in Nebraska, USA

Kickapoo Tribe in Oklahoma, USA

Lakota Western Sioux First Nation that covers North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Minnesota and Montana, USA, and Manitoba and Saskatchewan, Canada

Métis distinctive peoples encompassing Indigenous and European heritage across Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, Ontario, British Columbia, and Northwest Territories, Canada, and Montana and North Dakota, USA

Mi'kmaw First Nation in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, Canada

Nahkawiniwak Saulteaux First Nation that covers Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia, Canada

Nakoda Assiniboine First Nation that covers Montana and Dakota, USA, and Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta, Canada

Néhinawak Swampy Cree First Nation that covers northern Manitoba and eastern Saskatchewan, Canada

Néhiyawak Plains Cree First Nation in Saskatchewan, Canada

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