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Problematizing the pathways to elite athlete development in Indigenous Canada: A Case Study of Hockey Players

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Opening Face-Off (1 of 2)

Truth & Reconciliation Commission of Canada – Call to Action #89:

- “...amend the *Physical Activity and Sport Act* to support reconciliation by ensuring that policies to promote physical activity as a fundamental element of health and well-being, reduce barriers to sports participation, increase the pursuit of excellence in sport, and build capacity in the Canadian sport system, are inclusive of Aboriginal peoples” (TRC, 2015).

Opening Face-Off (2 of 2)

Truth & Reconciliation Commission of Canada – Calls to Action #90:

“...ensure that national sports policies, programs, and initiatives are inclusive of Aboriginal peoples....:

- i) ...stable funding for, and access to, community sports programs that reflect the diverse cultures and traditional sporting activities of Aboriginal peoples.
- ii) An elite athlete development program for Aboriginal athletes.
- iii) Programs for coaches, trainers, and sports officials that are culturally relevant
- iv) Anti-racism awareness and training programs” (TRC, 2015).

Purpose and Intentions

- To honour and celebrate the participants' excellence and resilience both in sport and in life;
- To critique existing elite hockey pathways; and
- To counter-storytell the hockey histories of Indigenous hockey—pluralizing the previously singular (Allain, 2019).

Making the Cut

Snapshot of Literature

- Indigenous (cultural pride) and non-Indigenous (hockey future) conceptions of opportunity (Rathwell et al., 2021).
- Death of Beardy's Blackhawks: Elimination of vital elite pathway and unification opportunities (Rathwell et al., 2021).
- Johnson et al. (2019) and five themes on relocating for sport:
 - Support webs;
 - management of emotional challenges;
 - moving forward amid setbacks;
 - comfort in new spaces; and
 - cultural connection maintenance.



Purposive Sampling Method

Lac Seul First Nation (Sioux Lookout, ON);

Fort William First Nation (Thunder Bay, ON);

Eagle Lake First Nation (Dryden, ON); and

Treaty 6 (Saskatoon, Saskatchewan)

“In 2002, I boarded VIA Rail Train No. 1, destined for Sioux Lookout, Ontario. Surrounded by family and reunited with my father, hockey saved my life.”

- Mike Auksi.

Indigenous Hockey Pathways

- The athletes navigate between both Indigenous and mainstream hockey systems/spaces;
 - The NAHC represents a critical opportunity to 'get noticed';
 - Playing in community-based tournaments is important; and
 - Exercising Jay Treaty rights allows to play USHS and not as an import (en route to NCAA).
- Mainstream Minor Hockey;
 - Little Native Hockey League (LNHL);
 - National Aboriginal Hockey Championships (NAHC);
 - Youth and Adult Community-Based Hockey Tournaments;
 - Tier II Junior 'A';
 - Major Junior Hockey;
 - US High School;
 - U SPORTS/NCAA;
 - Professional & International.

Themes

- Re-locating from home/family for hockey;
- “Giving back” and high-performance coaching transmission;
- Importance of strategic network-building; and
- The beauty of a lifelong relationship to the game.

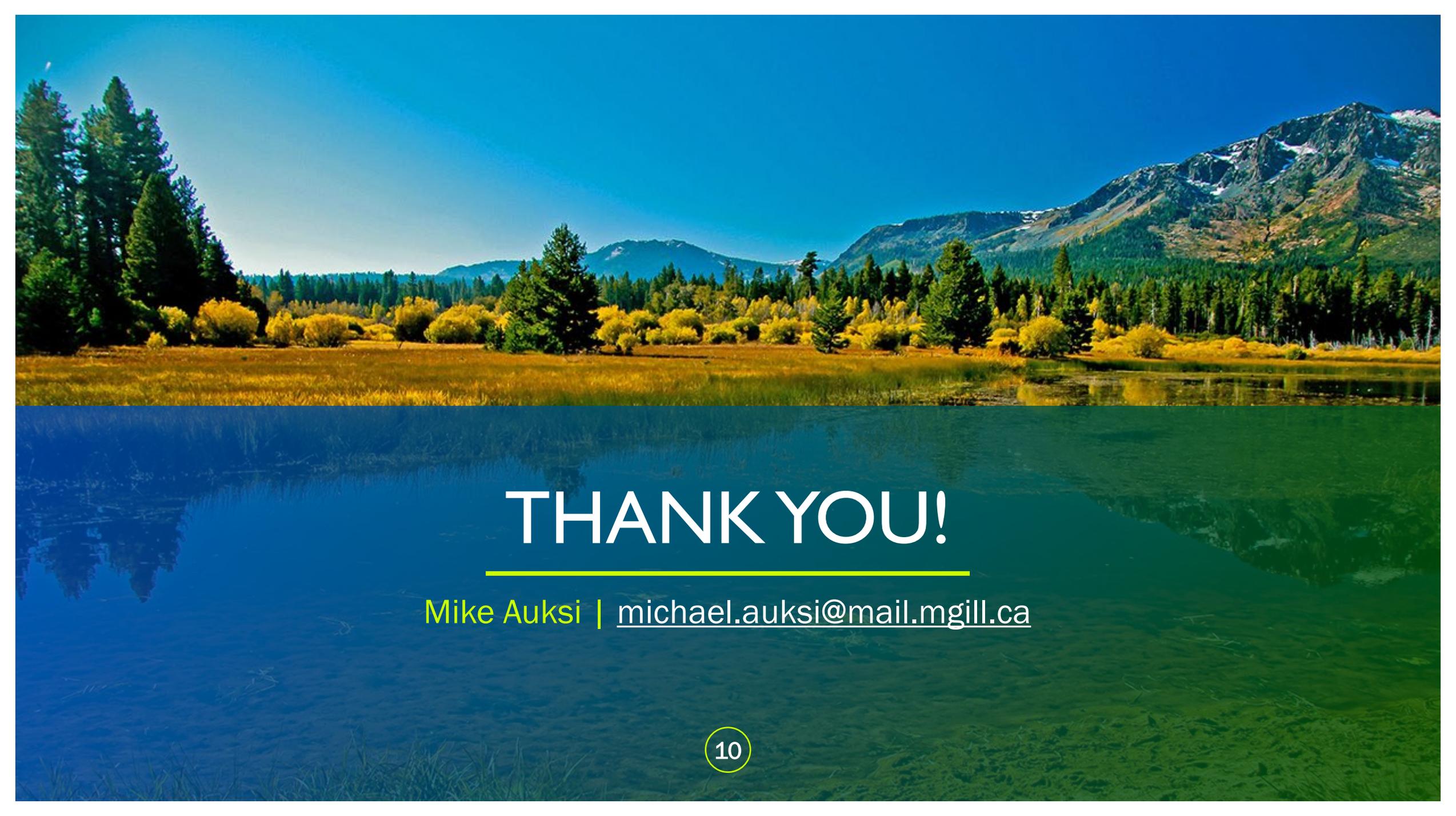
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THANK YOU!

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