



RECONCILIATION



Amy Blodgett
Laurentian University

THE RELOCATION EXPERIENCES OF INDIGENOUS ATHLETES PURSUING SPORT IN EURO-CANADIAN CONTEXTS

WHAT WE DID

- In collaboration with local Indigenous community members, this project explored the relocation experiences of Indigenous athletes who had moved off reserves in northeastern Ontario to pursue sport opportunities in “mainstream” (Euro-Canadian) communities.
- Through drawings and conversational interviews, we collected qualitative data from 21 Indigenous athletes about: (1) the benefits of relocation, (2) the challenges of relocation, and (3) strategies for facilitating relocation.

WHAT WE FOUND

- The benefits of relocation included new opportunities and personal growth.
 - Participants felt excited about new opportunities and enjoyed exploring life beyond the reserve.
 - Participants developed clearer visions for themselves and gained a better understanding of their abilities as they navigated new challenges.
 - Participants saw their experiences as a way to contribute positively to their Indigenous communities through storytelling and role modelling.
- The challenges of relocation included culture shock and disconnection from home.
 - Participants experienced anxiety and discomfort in an unfamiliar environment and felt like cultural “outsiders” while trying to integrate with non-Indigenous people.
 - Participants felt isolated and increasingly disconnected from their home communities. They sometimes experienced negative reactions from on-reserve peers, who viewed them as abandoning their home communities.
- Strategies for facilitating relocation centred on receiving social support from athletes’ home and host communities.
 - Indigenous athletes adapted more effectively and felt a stronger sense of belonging when members of both their home and host communities offered support.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

- Relocation comes with both **challenges** and **benefits** for Indigenous athletes. To support Indigenous who are participating in sport programs off-reserve:
 - Provide athletes with opportunities to share aspects of their Indigenous culture and identity within their sport environments and teams.
 - Provide athletes with opportunities to participate in Indigenous sport activities and contexts, such as local pow-wows or Indigenous tournaments.
 - Share educational and inspirational stories of Indigenous people who are pursuing their sport goals and achieving success outside their reserves.



SPORT RESEARCH
RECHERCHE SUR LE SPORT

Canada