



A Wisdom Response to Physical and Health Education: Part I – Course Design

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Abstract

This article focuses on the authors' experiences challenging Western-dominant norms in physical and health education teacher education (PHETE) in Calgary, Canada. In this manuscript, Western norms refers to the dominant, achievement-oriented, neoliberal-focused nature of North American society, as described by Dr. David Smith (2014). By incorporating Indigenous ways of life into PHETE, the authors aimed to create a PHETE space that challenged Western norms and embraced wisdom traditions. This exploration was informed by wisdom traditions and influenced by aspects of hermeneutic philosophy. The purpose of this article is to share the authors' experiences of bringing Blackfoot ways into a PHETE class. This article is the first of two parts; this first part focuses on the design and planning of the Fall 2022 course, while the second part focuses on the experiences in class with students.

Key words: Physical and health education teacher education (PHETE); physical education, Indigenous perspectives; wisdom traditions; holistic

Résumé

Cet article raconte les expériences des auteurs qui ont remis en question les normes dominantes de la culture occidentale dans le contexte de la formation des enseignants d'éducation physique et à la santé (FEEPS) à Calgary, au Canada. Dans ce contexte, les normes occidentales signifient la prédominance dans la société nord-américaine d'une attitude néolibérale qui accorde une importance primordiale aux réalisations, tel que décrite par le Dr David Smith (2014). En incorporant les approches autochtones dans la FEEPS, les auteurs visaient à créer un environnement de FEEPS qui remettait en question les normes occidentales et privilégiait les traditions de sagesse. Cette expérience a été informée par les traditions de sagesse et influencée par des principes herméneutiques. Cet article a pour objectif de présenter les expériences des auteurs dans leurs efforts d'intégrer les approches des Pieds-Noirs dans une classe de FEEPS. Cet article est le premier d'une série de deux; cette première partie porte sur la conception et la planification du cours qui s'est donné en automne 2022, et la deuxième partie porte sur les expériences en classe avec les étudiants.

Mots clés : Formation d'enseignants d'éducation physique et à la santé (FEEPS); éducation physique, perspectives autochtones; traditions de sagesse; holistique

Introduction

The beauty of conversation lies in the potential to learn something new, to challenge what we understand, and to open ourselves up to new perspectives. Gadamer noted, the “hermeneutical conversation...involves equality and active reciprocity...concerned with a common subject matter” (Gadamer, 1976, p. xx). While Gadamer referred to the conversation between individual and text, this statement rings true of verbal conversation shared between individuals and describes how the exploration detailed in this paper began and flourished.

What started off as regularly scheduled, casual conversations shared between two colleagues (the authors) who specialize in teaching physical and health education, resulted in conversation between multiple education and community partners, and a project deeply connected to the authors’ passions, their past experiences, and their shared goals for the future. More specifically, the authors shared a desire for identifying how physical and health education (from K-12 to post-secondary) might be taught more holistically and inclusively, how to affect that change, and the importance of constantly questioning one’s position and perspectives in the process.

It was during the fall of 2021 that Michelle and Lisa (the authors) connected – two individuals determined to broaden traditional notions regarding physical and health education teacher education (PHETE) and foster a more inclusive, holistic approach to physical and health education in K-12 schools. In their conversations, Michelle and Lisa explored the concept of wisdom traditions (see Smith 1999; 2014), which Michelle studied as part of her dissertation (see Kilborn, 2016).

As part of this exploration, Lisa and Michelle read Smith’s (2014) book, *Teaching as the Practice of Wisdom* together, discussing a new chapter each week they met. What Smith wrote about the consumerist, self-centered, achievement-focused societal norms that we experience living in North America, which we describe as Western-dominant norms in this manuscript, resonated with both Lisa and Michelle, as did Smith’s perspectives regarding how schools have been designed to prepare children to become achievement-focused consumers who perpetuate these Western ways. Furthermore, Smith described the importance of well-being and connecting with traditional wisdom in schools, challenging the economy-focused nature of a Western-dominant society. Smith advocated for more attention to the teachings of traditional wisdom, including mindfulness, compassion, and care that have supported the well-being of humanity for thousands of years. However, what Smith did not detail in his book was *how* pedagogues might go about approaching this work.

Michelle had carefully considered the importance of incorporating a more holistic approach to PHETE by way of her dissertation (Kilborn, 2014) and through conversation with her mentors (described in Michelle’s Arrival below); however, while she had a solid understanding of the topic, she realized she was not affecting her classes as significantly as she envisioned. In previous classes Michelle taught the topic of embracing a more holistic approach to teaching physical and health education, and more specifically, Indigenous perspectives in physical education reading materials were studied. However, Michelle became driven to *live* a wisdom-inspired approach in the context of the PHETE courses she was currently teaching, to challenge inherent Western norms in physical and health education.

Alternatively, Lisa became more aware of things she had not been able to articulate before (detailed in Lisa's Arrival below); in particular, the Western norms she was so used to but not consciously aware of within her North American context, as well as the importance of challenging those norms to offer a more inclusive environment in physical and health education. Having done work towards implementing school wellness as a K–12 teacher using a comprehensive school health approach, Lisa recognized the drive for school wellness was to foster student achievement; where student achievement was the ultimate priority which wellness fostered, rather than wellness being the priority. Lisa realized that despite her best intentions to prioritize wellness in schools and in her PHETE courses, it was always a means to an end of student achievement. Lisa was driven to challenge the Western values of achievement and self-centeredness that Smith (2014) articulated and to move forward in PHETE, living wisdom traditions in her classes.

Michelle and Lisa were curious, and eager to explore together; they were *addressed*. Gadamer identified the address as locating a question and by doing so, challenging and transforming one's own understanding (Gadamer, 1976, p. xxi). "Understanding begins...when something addresses us" (Gadamer, 1960/2004, p. 298). With Smith's readings, Michelle and Lisa recognized the need to make shifts away from the Western model and towards a more holistic, wellness-focused approach to PHETE; however, they did not know how to go about it. As part of their new understanding, Michelle and Lisa realized they were embarking on an exploratory inquiry, unsure and open to what might come in this expansion of their horizons.

What followed this address were conversations and ideas that focused on how the authors could influence meaningful change in PHETE. Further to this, they discussed how they could consider wisdom traditions in their teaching, challenge societal norms by doing so, with the aim of ultimately positively influencing the experience of children in K–12 physical and health education.

Motivated to affect meaningful change, Michelle and Lisa talked about embracing various traditions of wisdom. Wisdom traditions can be described as, a set of remembered stories, practices, deep truths, probing questions, and a capacity for self-critique exploring how human beings can live with meaning, community, and care for the earth. These include Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish, Sikh, Christian, Muslim, Taoist, Indigenous, humanist and many other traditions. (Kyllo, 2023, para 4)

We discussed the importance of embracing various wisdom traditions, not just any one perspective within a PHETE class, and the importance for all pre-service teachers to have the opportunity to utilize traditional wisdom they might bring with them from their own cultural context. By doing so, the PHETE students' cultures and strengths would be celebrated and invited into their pedagogical approach. Embracing the students as individuals who have knowledge to share, not knowing what truths they have to share, invites *aletheia*, which Gadamer defined as truth (Gadamer, 2007), into the class. This embraces the "unhiddenness of beings" by encouraging students to bring what otherwise may be left unknown in a Western-dominant PHETE space to the forefront (Gadamer, 1976, p. 225). By creating this space, the PHETE students would have an opportunity to learn from each other, to expand their horizons and their understanding of how various wisdom traditions may inform the approach to teaching physical and health education.

Gadamer described horizon as “the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point” (Gadamer, 1960/2004, p. 301). The horizon is what an individual understands, which can be expanded upon when individuals are open to understanding how the horizon may be seen differently by others. In the following section, Michelle and Lisa describe in first person how they arrived at the exploration detailed in this paper.

Michelle’s Arrival

My journey towards reconceptualizing physical and health education began when I was a teacher in the K–12 system. As I outlined in my book, *A Curriculum of Wellness* (Kilborn, 2016), I began to problematize the way I was as a teacher, and how my colleagues and I encouraged or unintentionally discouraged our students to lead active, healthy lifestyles. I began to purposely work to understand why my disengaged students disliked physical education. I began to realize how boredom, lack of connection to their lives, negative peer interactions, and perceived lack of value of physical education impacted my students and were all factors that were reported by other authors as reasons students were disengaging in physical education (Humbert, 2006; Oliver & Kirk, 2016). I did not want to go back to the ways of knowing and doing that reflected the dominant discourse in physical education, which is often described as a sport-technique (Kirk, 2010) approach that separates the physical dimension in a way that does not promote wholeness. I was committed to a more holistic approach to teaching and learning in physical education, where principles of mindfulness, interconnectedness, kindness, compassion, reciprocity, and balance, woven together were the fundamental grounding to help guide our students (and ourselves) to take better care of the self and each other (Kilborn, 2016).

During my doctoral program and my initial years in academia, I was fortunate to work with some highly respected curriculum scholars, including David Smith, Terry Carson, Dwayne Donald, Bill Pinar, and Janet Miller. I began a much deeper dive than I had ever considered and participated in more “complicated conversations” (Pinar, 2012, p. 8) about teaching our children how to be healthy, where health refers to “wholeness...being whole, sound or well” (Harper, n.d.), as well as how to live and be well. I began to “facilitate this *complicated conversation* about physical education within the context of curriculum studies by weaving together wisdom and existential perspectives, and reconceptualist curriculum theory” (Kilborn, 2016, p. 12).

In contrast to traditional curriculum theorists who identify most closely with the Tyler Rationale that prioritize functional knowledge, technical rationality, transmission forms of instruction (Giroux et al., 1981), and conceptual-empirical perspectives that are characterized by logic and the scientific method, embracing reconceptualist curriculum theory involves accepting that curriculum is political and situated historically (Pinar, 1978/2004). The interpretive nature of reconceptualist curriculum theory emphasizes subjectivity, autobiographical, phenomenological, existential experience, and a “centrality of intentionality to understanding human action” (Giroux et al., 1981, p. 14). Reconceptualists also examine “matters of temporality, transcendence, consciousness and politics” (Pinar, 1975, p. xiii), and endeavor to understand the educational experience.

Of particular influence was my work with renowned curriculum scholars, David Smith and Dwayne Donald, who encouraged me to look at things differently and consider more deeply how a wisdom perspective could disrupt traditional ways of being, thinking, doing, and lead to greater wholeness. Approaching wellness in this way involves an embodied approach that opens up new possibilities for enlightenment with a view of humanity that Aoki (1979/2005) notes as a “dialectical relationship between one’s subjective being and one’s objective world” (p.339). This approach where inquiry is lived inter-subjectively is grounded in wisdom traditions and the understanding that “life has a Way to it, a Way to live that is compatible with, or co-extensive with the very manner of Life’s unfolding” (Smith, 2008, p. 2). Wisdom traditions guide us to re-examine our world from a point of view that demands consciousness, mindfulness, and connections between the mind, body, and heart (Kilborn, 2016).

A wisdom response to the dilemmas that face the field of physical and health education involves an understanding of how fragmented the school system has become (including individual and collective wellbeing), and the lack of the fundamental unity of the world that wisdom traditions support. Smith (2011) explained,

It is a mark of all wisdom traditions that the world inheres in a fundamental unity that cannot be broken except artificially as an act of human will. Human wellbeing depends on a unity between word and act, between self and other, and between the human and natural worlds, and between life and death. (p. 171)

The use of wisdom traditions to explore the meaning of health requires one to consider health as “intrinsic to our nature, and thus already fully present within us. The source of health is...our wakeful awareness, clarity, vitality and caring. Tuning into this intelligence at work in us can guide us toward living in a healthy way” (Welwood, 1992, p. 155).

When considering teaching physical and health education in a holistic way, it is important to ground oneself in the concept of wholeness. Wholeness is “about the incorporation of all aspects of life and the giving of attention and energy to each aspect within ourselves and the universe around us” (Hart, 2008, p. 134). One way the concept of wholeness can be conceptualized is through the medicine wheel (used by Indigenous peoples such as Cree, Dakota, Ojibwe, and Blackfoot) where relationships are represented in sets of four, associated with the four cardinal directions (Hart, 1999): four seasons (spring, summer, fall, winter), four aspects of humanness (emotional, physical mental, spiritual), four cycles of life (birth/infancy, youth, adulthood, elder/death), and four elements (fire, water, wind, earth). Wholeness involves movement in and through all of the aforementioned aspects and is critical to wellbeing; of significance is the balance of the four aspects of these relationships so that one part is not highlighted at the detriment of the others.

Over the past several years, I have had the opportunity to live and be within different geographical, political, and cultural environments and texts that provided further perspectives which helped me continue problematizing the dominant discourse of the dualistic Western epistemology and helped me dwell within that often uncomfortable third space that Aoki (1986/1991) described as the “zone of between” (p. 163). Dwelling in the tension of the “zone of between” is where curriculum comes to life and, as noted by Aoki (1989/1990), involves recognizing what it means to be alive. I continue to ask myself: What are the tensions that we must dwell within to open the question of inquiry in a way that encourages multiple perspectives and possibilities beyond the status quo? How have or

how do I contribute to society's seemingly detrimental philosophy that has "effectively usurped that which is naturally there for children—an intrinsic awareness of how to be whole, how to be healthy?" (Kilborn, 2016, p. 3).

Challenging myself and my own limitations as a teacher educator, I knew I had not changed as much in my PHETE courses to reflect philosophically what I had been so passionate about for over a decade. Serendipitous discussions about wisdom traditions and other hermeneutical musings with Lisa was the catalyst in this phase of my being and becoming a physical and health education teacher educator.

Lisa's Arrival

As a former K–12 physical and health education teacher in Alberta, Canada, I taught within a system I knew. I was born and raised in Calgary, schooled in the Calgary public board, and trained at a Calgary university. I was immersed in societal norms that I would not have defined as Western-oriented, because I was unaware of any alternative. All I knew is that I needed to be the best I could be, and that academic achievement was paramount and celebrated from grade school to university, to my work as a teacher, and what I could foster with my students.

When I started teaching full-time, the activities I engaged students in were somewhat unique to my pedagogical approach but existed within units and a year plan that was designed for me by the physical education department head. As a new teacher, there was a delicate approach needed to trying to do anything differently – new approaches or content needed to fit within the general approach of the department, the units or weekly activities (e.g., badminton, soccer) and their locations (e.g., main gym, field) that were pre-planned for all the physical education teachers in the department. Being a team member of the physical education department meant actively engaging students in lessons that fit within the existing system. Especially as a beginning teacher, or at any point where I switched and became a new staff member to a school, there was some need to fit in; fitting in meant abiding by the norm and not taking anything on that was unique enough to require additional time and effort on behalf of the department head. Fitting in felt like a requirement to getting a permanent teaching position – to be a teacher who can do things well within the existing context and vision of the department head. This was my experience at all three schools that I taught at in my eight years as a K–12 teacher. There was an expectation to fit into existing approaches to physical education.

When I became a department head, I found myself in a position to affect change. Our department engaged every physical education student in an exit survey each semester, which fostered student voice and informed the units organized for the following semester. These changes involved fine-tuning the program (e.g., offering more choice to students and not making certain units mandatory) and we otherwise largely continued what I had been taught and experienced in K–12 schools, aligned with the culture that existed at the school, within an achievement-focused society. As part of fitting in, I was completely unaware as to how Western-dominant the approach to education was; it was a system that was normal to me, and I knew nothing different.

While working on my PhD, several learnings affected my perspectives on teaching; I was introduced to a critical view of teaching and learning. Rather than always accepting what existed and investing effort into fitting in, I was introduced to the importance of

questioning and exploring teaching and learning contexts for equity, diversity, and inclusion. I was fortunate to be a teaching assistant in two graduate courses centered around Blackfoot ways of knowing and living. During my time in these courses, I learned about Blackfoot ways of life, and I became inspired by concepts of wellness through knowledge that I was gifted by the instructor, Elders that contributed to the class, and the students. I learned that wellness is deeply rooted within Blackfoot ways of life – in relationships between people and the greater community, through ceremony, in the land and life around us, and in traditional language. These learnings led me to curiosities regarding how conversation regarding wellness and physical education programming could be more inclusive and inviting for all students.

With these learnings and shifts in perspective, I began questioning the physical education practices I had worked so hard to fit into. I started to understand and became able to name the Western-dominant, achievement-focused society I had become a product of, and I started asking questions about who was left out and how they might be left out in physical and health education. Furthermore, I started to question what I might do as a PHETE instructor, to inspire future K–12 teachers to question the Western-dominant nature of Canadian education while also preparing them to fit in, recognizing the tension that exists between living and working in a Western society and challenging Western ways, what Michelle, citing Aoki (1986/1991) referred to as a “zone of between.” I wanted to explore how PHETE could be more holistic and more inclusive, to foster more holistic and inclusive K–12 physical education that aligns with curriculum.

The Class

Through conversations regarding Smith's (2014) work, Michelle and Lisa found themselves motivated to affect meaningful change in PHETE, and not to just continue talking about the need for change. We needed to do something more to challenge Western ways within physical education. With one semester to prepare, Michelle and Lisa discussed how they might bring their motivations to fruition. Michelle suggested that she embrace the authors' motivations in her approach to teaching a PHETE class.

The class planned for was a Fall 2022 semester class of second year PHETE students, instructed by Michelle. To understand the context of the course within its program and what students were introduced to prior to the exploration detailed in this paper, this section includes some additional information about the class.

Part One of Two Parts

Michelle had taught the students the semester prior in the first part of a two-part physical and health education specialization course series focused on introducing students to concepts, theories, and design planning in physical and health education. Students then embarked upon a four-week field experience with the cohort coming together again for the second part of the physical and health education specialization course series.

Aligned with her dedication to teach PHETE more holistically, as described in Michelle's arrival, in the first course, Michelle invited students to engage in an on-going conversation about the notion of a reconceptualized physical and health education program that was more holistic and wellness oriented. As part of this journey, students engaged in a *currere*-informed (Pinar, 2012) writing exercise that helped connect educational concepts

and issues with reflections of past, present, and future personal and professional life events, artifacts, and other phenomena; this is a key component to a wellness-oriented approach to teaching and learning—understanding our own consciousness and having perspective *in* ourselves by asking ourselves who we are as teachers and how these answers may influence how we teach (Feldman, 2009). This process involves more than just learning and experiencing the world – it involves understanding, to the best of one’s ability, the situatedness of an individual, knowing one can never fully grasp their situatedness due to the historical and temporal nature of it (Gadamer, 1960/2004). Starting with themselves, students participated in a type of autobiographical process that adapts the method of *currere* where individuals “sketch the relations among school knowledge, life history, and intellectual development in ways that might function self-transformatively” (Pinar et al., 1995, p. 515). This process revealed many insights and understandings for students and overall, further motivated them to reconsider how to think about and teach physical and health education.

There are some topics that are expected to be considered in curriculum and pedagogy courses, which include Indigenous perspectives in physical education. During the first part of the course series, Michelle assigned a chapter by Kalyn (2014) from an undergraduate textbook which introduced students to how Indigenous knowledge can guide learning in physical and health education. A short time was given in class to discuss the chapter reading and students were then left to decide where and how they would apply this knowledge. However, Michelle was acutely aware that she needed to move beyond teaching *about* Indigenous knowledge in physical and health education and allow pre-service teachers to “engage in learning experiences through Indigenous knowledge, which should be done through local Indigenous peoples” (Kalyn, 2014, p. 155).

Part Two of Two Parts

At the same time, Michelle and Lisa were engaging in conversation as to *how* wisdom traditions could be meaningfully taken up to challenge Western ways in PHETE. With inclusion as a priority, Michelle and Lisa wanted to leverage the strengths and perspectives of the pre-service teachers that populated the class. That being said, perhaps PHETE students would arrive much like Michelle and Lisa did in their K–12 teaching positions—schooled and influenced greatly by a Western-dominant sociocultural context. Michelle and Lisa discussed embracing Indigenous ways of life as one way to incorporate wisdom traditions in PHETE, which served as an opportunity for students to engage with wisdom traditions who otherwise may not feel or consciously identify that they have wisdom traditions of their own to bring to the conversation. Discussion evolved to embracing local Blackfoot ways of knowing as an example of a wisdom tradition that could challenge Western physical and health education, that all students could take on and explore.

The adventure as to exactly how to go about engaging pre-service teachers in Indigenous learning experiences began. This situated both Michelle and Lisa in spaces of unknowingness, charging forward past zones of comfort into new and necessary territory. As a first step in discovering how to go about meaningfully engaging pre-service teachers in Indigenous ways and experiences, Michelle and Lisa asked for guidance from education colleagues, Indigenous leaders, and community members. There were many avenues explored to connect with Knowledge Keepers and Elders within the Blackfoot community

within Treaty 7 land where Michelle and Lisa both live and teach. The following section details how Michelle and Lisa engaged a Blackfoot Knowledge Keeper and Elders.

Engaging the Blackfoot Community

Michelle and Lisa were well aware that they were not knowledge holders of Blackfoot ways of life. Rather than exclusively pointing the PHETE students to required readings written by Blackfoot authors and attempting to lead them through conversation regarding the readings, Michelle and Lisa felt the work would be most meaningful conceptually and experientially by engaging Blackfoot community members in the conversation and in the class – they were driven to live the work. Michelle and Lisa were looking to be guided, to learn, to expand their own horizons, and inspire broadening of the students' horizons.

Michelle and Lisa reached out to contacts within Ever Active Schools, which is an organization that supports health promotion in Alberta schools (Ever Active Schools, 2022a). Following a weekend attending Shaping the Future, Ever Active Schools' annual conference (Ever Active Schools, 2022b), with several conference sessions led by various Indigenous knowledge holders, Michelle and Lisa connected with individuals they met to seek guidance regarding who to talk to, how to approach them, and how to incorporate Indigenous ways of life into the PHETE class. The Ever Active Schools team connected Michelle and Lisa with a Blackfoot community member in Southern Alberta who has a background in physical and health education; this person will be referred to as the Blackfoot Knowledge Keeper in this manuscript.

Michelle, Lisa, and the Blackfoot Knowledge Keeper initially met over Zoom. The first meeting was focused on introductions, which was initiated by the Blackfoot Knowledge Keeper. This time was used to get to know one another and allowed for working to understand the Blackfoot Knowledge Keeper's family origin, life story, and professional work. The Blackfoot Knowledge Keeper also articulated how their school operated to best support students, from starting the school day with prayer led by Elders, providing food for students, and a smudge. Interestingly, the Blackfoot Knowledge Keeper also noted that the physical education program within their building did not significantly differ from programs at other Alberta schools. This was designed intentionally to instill pride of Blackfoot culture within the students, while preparing them to succeed in a Western-dominant society. We discovered with this that both parties lived in Aoki's (1986/1991) "zone of between", approached from different directions; Michelle and Lisa were seeking Indigenous ways to make physical and health education in a Western society more holistic and inclusive, while the Blackfoot Knowledge Keeper was also in a zone of between, embracing Western ways within Blackfoot culture to help students function in a Western society.

For the next step in our journey, the Blackfoot knowledge keeper organized a meeting for us to meet two Elders. It was important to connect with them at this point to receive their wisdom and guidance in how to proceed with planning and learn about what perspectives were most important when working with pre-service teachers to spark (re)imagination about physical and health education teaching and learning in more holistic ways. This was a time for dialogue and to share and build relationships so that the design

of the course incorporated ways of knowing, being, and doing that represented Blackfoot culture, values, and traditions, as communicated by the Elders.

Subsequent meetings and conversations helped refine the design and schedule for the course further, with the focus on how to meaningfully incorporate Indigenous perspectives. There were some institutional constraints that Michelle had to consider as well, such as a required unit plan assignment that was in place to ensure consistency across all specialization areas within the teacher education program. The interactions and sharing of history, experiences, traditions, and values, sparked ideas of how to engage with students to meaningfully embrace Indigenous ways of life in a PHETE course. One Elder emphasized the importance of understanding the holistic part of teaching overall and how this affects each person and how it impacts the teacher and their interactions with students. The other Elder explained how important it was personally to share about Blackfoot ways, about their history and traditions; Michelle and Lisa recognized their responsibility to seek perspectives from Elders to tell the stories of their people.

The plan for the course was shaping up and it was agreed that it would be important to introduce Blackfoot values and ways of life early in the semester, as a way of framing a more holistic approach to physical education curriculum and pedagogy learned throughout the semester. At this point, Michelle and Lisa were also counselled by the Elders that one of the most important aspects of this journey to incorporate Indigenous ways of life into this PHETE course was not just how we started but *where*.

Given that the nature of the course was a four-hour class once per week for a total of eight weeks, that extended time slot allowed for travel to an off-site location. Michelle, Lisa, the Blackfoot Knowledge Keeper, and the Elders agreed that hosting the class at the Siksikaitsitapi (Blackfoot people) medicine wheel, located at Ootssapi'tomowa (Look Out Hill) on the east end of Nose Hill Park in Calgary, AB, would be a meaningful space for students to begin their learning (City of Calgary, n.d.). Designed by elder Aatoso'taowa (Andy Blackwater) from Kainai, this landmark honours the traditional practices of leaving a landmark wherever the Siksikaitsitapi travelled within their homeland and provides "a way of maintaining [their] connection to the land, a place [they] can revisit and make sacred offerings in recognition of [their] special kinship to the land and the environment" (City of Calgary, n.d.).

The plan for the initial class was decided between Lisa, Michelle, and the Elders. First, for an Elder to speak to the class about Blackfoot ways of life and wellness. The second part of the class would involve acknowledging the space and connecting to it. The third part of the class would involve time with the Knowledge Keeper, who would introduce traditional games to the students. Lastly, Michelle would connect the learnings from the day to the assignment(s) (described further below).

To show gratitude for the Elders and the Knowledge Keeper's time and willingness to drive to Calgary for the class, they were offered a monetary gift, which was available due to funding Michelle received as part of a *Werklund School of Education Teaching and Learning Grant* that provided support to academic staff to advance on-campus teaching. This monetary offering was accepted and appreciated, though the Knowledge Keeper indicated that just the opportunity to share Blackfoot ways of life with the students was a gift in and of itself.

Following two meetings with the Knowledge Keeper and one meeting with the Knowledge Keeper and the Elders over the course of the 2022 summer, Michelle and Lisa discussed how the course assignments might best offer an opportunity for students to reflexively explore their learning and meaningfully reflect that learning in their course assignments and ways of being as emerging physical education teachers. Michelle confirmed the following learning activities and assignments, which are detailed in the Appendix: (1) reflection and in-class discussion; (2) key insights and gratitude; (3) course engagement and reflection assignment.

Living and Being in Physical and Health Education Teacher Education

Teaching about teaching is a complex, multi-layered endeavour with a “continual need for teacher educators to be conscious of not only what they are teaching, but also the manner in which that teaching is conducted” (Loughran, 2006, p.11). As Michelle prepared for this semester, she thought about how the knowledge being gifted could permeate throughout the class. She questioned how instructional activities and tasks could be designed so that they would encourage and open emerging teachers to asking questions, taking new perspectives, embodying new ways of doing, and living the Indigenous values learned about in a way that helps reimagine how students approach teaching and learning in physical education (teacher education). Simultaneously, Michelle worked to recognize the dual role that teacher educators hold where “intentionally or not, [they] teach their students as well as teach about teaching”, noted by Korthagent et al. (2005), as cited in Loughran, 2006, p.7) and acknowledged that in the very manner of her own being, Michelle would have to continue to build a respectful, collaborative, and supportive environment within the class that invited everyone to embark upon their individual and collective journey to carefully question, unpack, and re-envision teaching and learning in physical education. Michelle’s journey to this point had brought her to a renewed conceptualization of her own teaching about teaching while at the same time realizing how these new learnings could impact her students’ learning about teaching in new, holistic ways.

Many of the learning activities and assignments created for the class were inspired by Michelle’s own knowledge and practice with wisdom traditions, the conversations with the Blackfoot Elders, and the on-going dialogue with Lisa. Furthermore, there was attention to embracing the key components of living a wisdom-inspired curriculum, which involves mindfulness, compassion, kindness, a focus on the journey (not just end-product), and interconnectedness (Kilborn, 2016). To reflect these considerations, on-going reflective and reflexive opportunities for students were paramount; therefore, a weekly reflection and culminating course synthesis was an important part to the students’ learning journey. However, throughout the weeks, the students needed to be able to connect with one another, to learn about how to support one another for collective change, for an ongoing broadening of horizons, collectively. They moved beyond being a student in a class to a community of teachers and in the case of this class, a family.

Following discussions regarding how to incorporate wisdom traditions in PHETE, engaging Blackfoot members in the design of the course, and thoughtfully reapproaching each assignment for the class, Michelle felt ready to take on the new semester with her class. The plan for the course looked different than in previous years and Michelle was

ready to dive into territory not yet explored, to embrace feelings of being uncomfortable, not knowing exactly how the semester would go.

Closing Thoughts

The intention of this manuscript is not to offer a how-to guideline regarding engaging Indigenous ways of life in the planning of a PHETE class, focused on challenging Western ways. Rather, this manuscript offers an example as to how two PHETE instructors planned a course to embrace traditional wisdom.

What Michelle and Lisa learned in this process as PHETE instructors was transformative. Not only did they experientially learn one approach to engaging wisdom traditions in the design of a PHETE course, they were also reminded of the importance of working to be comfortable with the uncomfortable. Michelle and Lisa recognized they did not know exactly how things would transform and despite wanting that control, they worked towards letting go and having the courage to explore into the unknown in meaningful ways.

Finishing preparing for the Fall 2022 course initiated a new beginning – the actual teaching and experiences within the course. Thus, this article is the first of two parts. This first part identified how Michelle and Lisa designed a PHETE course to embrace wisdom traditions and challenge Western ways. The second part details the experiences of Michelle and her students in the Fall 2022 course described in this article, as well as the insights and learnings that formed new horizons.

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Appendix 1

Assignment Description & Learning Activities

Critical Reflection & Course Engagement Assignment

This reflection is an opportunity to engage with the course at a deeper level. It provides me with evidence that you have done the readings and reflected on the discussions/activities in class, including how they connect (or not) to your own experiences/ideas. These responses also help ensure that we all can actively participate in the class.

Part I: Discussion Facilitation (sign-up for date)

You are expected to become an expert on one of the required readings and facilitate a group discussion (approximately 20 minutes). There will be an opportunity to sign-up for the readings on Day 1 of the course (eligible articles for this task will be discussed in class). For this part of the assignment, prepare three discussion questions, with a short, bullet form plan for how you will facilitate a lively, active, and engaging discussion (this will be submitted with Part I and II). Be creative in how you have the class engage with the material. This session and crafted discussion questions should not be merely a summary of the article (descriptive questions) but should get people thinking about the key concepts, issues, practical connections to teaching and learning, and/or get everyone to deeply engage with the author's point of view (analytical questions). As part of your daily reflections (below), you will include an assessment/analysis of the quality and success of the discussion. Additional information about criteria for this self-assessment and analysis will be discussed in-class.

Part II: Weekly Reflections (on-going: submitted with Part III on October 28th)

You are expected to write a reflection each week that touches on learnings and insights from course readings, activities, presentations, and discussions (200-300 words). Your reflection will be evaluated based on critical analysis, demonstration of engagement and quality, informed writing. Additional information about writing in this way will be provided in class and posted on D2L.

This assignment also calls for “making connections”. Comment on something in the readings/discussions/ activities that especially appealed to you, intrigued you, moved you or annoyed you. How does it help you grow as an emerging teacher? How does it connect (or not) or change to your own thoughts, experiences, or knowledge? Why do you think that is important? How does it relate to teaching and learning in your discipline and how will you apply concepts to your future teaching? Don't comment on everything that drew your attention; rather, develop one thought in some depth. Make sure to include your critical question at the top of every reflection.

This assignment calls for “quality of writing”. While the focus of this assignment is on critical analysis and making connections, a lack of writing clarity, comprehension, and quality can detract from the overall message being conveyed. As such, it is important to pay attention to writing quality (grammar, spelling, punctuation, sentence structure, etc.).

Part III: Synthesis

This part of the assignment is a synthesized statement (maximum 800 words) that tells the ‘story’ of your reflections and engagement throughout the course. It is a synthesis of all your weekly reflections and interpretations. It is intended to give you the opportunity to formally reflect on the significance of the course to your journey in being and becoming an educator in your particular discipline, your views about physical education, and how it may or may not have facilitated movement of your knowledge, skills and attitudes about teaching physical education.

A key focus of our semester has been reimagining teaching physical education through a more holistic, wellness-oriented lens and finding ways to honour and incorporate Blackfoot ways of knowing and being into physical education teaching and learning. Think about the wisdom and teachings that were shared with you in September. What further insights and understandings built from there? How is this sitting with you now? How has this impacted you personally and/or professionally? In what ways has your vision for physical education teaching and learning changed/been challenged through your learning about Blackfoot values and teachings, other Indigenous knowledge, and other holistic models/understandings?

Note: This assignment is to be assembled in a professional manor. In other words, take pride in what you hand in and treat it like a work of art (creative elements that help to reinforce your points are welcome!).

Nose Hill Reflection Prompts (used for Part II Weekly Reflection)

Reflect on your own experience at Nose Hill. Think about the words and stories from the Knowledge Keeper and the Elders. Think about the actions, gestures, the space, the place, symbolism, and Blackfoot values. Think about the connections you made—relationships, values, community. What did you learn? What came up for you—feelings, memories, experiences? What gifts did you receive? From who/what and how did you receive those gifts? What specific insights do you have from the day that are significant to you personally and professionally?

In-Class Learning Activity: World Cafe—One Week Following

This learning activity provides students with an opportunity to share some of their key insights from their experiences and reflection on the time spent with the Elders and knowledge keepers at the medicine wheel on Nose Hill. Students will come together in 4 groups and discuss feelings, memories, experiences and record on chart paper key highlights from that day. After some time, one student will stay at the chart paper and the groups rotate to another spot. Another discussion will take place, facilitated by the host student who shares insights from previous conversations.