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# A Wisdom Response to Physical and Health Education: Part II – Class Interpretations

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## Abstract

This article is the second of two parts. Part I articulated how an undergraduate physical and health education teacher education (PHETE) course was designed to challenge Western norms by integrating Blackfoot ways of knowing (Kilborn & Taylor, 2024). We use the term Western norms to refer to the consumerist, achievement-focused North American culture that our schools are subject to (Smith, 2014). This second article further documents the journey, which was influenced by aspects of philosophical hermeneutics, and details the interpretations of the class following the course offering – described collectively and individually. We, the authors of this manuscript include the designers of the course as well as the pre-service teachers that participated in the course. This article offers one example of how wisdom traditions were meaningfully taken up to challenge Western norms in K–12 physical and health education and to offer instructor and student perspectives to PHETE and other wellness-focused pedagogues.


***Keywords:*** physical and health education teacher education (PHETE); wisdom traditions; Indigenous ways of knowing; physical and health education (PHE)


## Résumé

Cet article est la deuxième de deux parties. La première partie explique comment un cours de formation des enseignants en éducation physique et à la santé (PHETE) a été conçu pour remettre en question les normes occidentales en intégrant les modes de connaissance des Pieds-Noirs (Kilborn & Taylor, 2024). Nous utilisons le terme « normes occidentales » pour désigner la culture nord-américaine consumériste et axée sur la réussite qui domine dans nos écoles (Smith, 2014). Ce deuxième article porte davantage sur le parcours axé sur des aspects de l'herméneutique philosophique, et présente les réactions (collectives comme individuelles) de la classe après avoir suivi ce cours. Nous, les auteurs de ce manuscrit, incluons les avis des concepteurs du cours ainsi que ceux des enseignants en formation initiale qui y ont participé. Cet article démontre comment les traditions de sagesse ont été reprises de manière significative pour remettre en question les normes occidentales en matière d'éducation physique et à la santé de la maternelle à la 12e année et pour offrir des perspectives aux instructeurs et aux enseignants en formation initiale dans le domaine de de l'éducation physique et à la santé et dans d'autres pédagogies axées sur le bien-être.


***Mots-clés:*** formation des enseignants en éducation physique et à la santé (EPS); traditions de sagesse; modes de connaissance autochtones; éducation physique et à la santé (EPS)

## Introduction

Some researchers and educational leaders have suggested that physical and health education (PHE) environments need to be more culturally meaningful and relevant (Douglas & Halas, 2013; Robinson et al., 2016) and should further consider ways of embedding Indigenous knowledges to disrupt the Western-dominant discourse that is pervasive within physical and health education teacher education (PHETE) (Halas et al., 2012; Kalyn, 2013; Nesdoly et al., 2021; Lorusso et al., 2019; Wasyliw et al., 2020). Although these scholars have taken on this important moral and ethical responsibility to contribute to the advancement of reconciliation among Indigenous peoples and Canadians, Lorusso and colleagues' (2021) scoping review highlights the critical need for research on culturally relevant Indigenous education in PHE spaces.

Eurocentric values and history, which we refer to as Western ways or norms, shape traditional structures of PHE in Canada, where sport technique and achievement-oriented approaches are deeply entrenched in the foundation of teaching and learning (Kilborn et al., 2016; Kirk, 2010). A significant aspect of decolonization is about recognizing and shifting away from the Eurocentric lens and exploring other ways of knowing and being. As educators, exploring more meaningful ways to understand relationships within and among the self, other, and natural world, provides an opportunity for understanding how to teach PHE in a more holistic, inclusive, and wisdom-inspired way. This type of action is encouraged by the Association of Canadian Deans of Education (2010) in the *Accord on Indigenous Education* where "the vision is that Indigenous identities, cultures, languages, values, ways of knowing and knowledge systems will flourish in all Canadian learning settings" (p. 9) and helps contribute to the advancement of reconciliation between Indigenous peoples and Canadians (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2012).

### Philosophical Hermeneutic Influences

Aspects of Gadamerian philosophical hermeneutics influenced our work. This philosophical orientation involves recognizing that individuals hold truth in experience and that through language and conversation we can work to understand (Gadamer 1960/2004). However, Gadamer frequently used the word *interpret* to acknowledge the individual working to understand, stating that "it is enough to say that we understand in a different way, if we understand at all" (Gadamer, 1960/2004, p. 296).

Gadamer discussed several conceptual aspects of hermeneutic philosophy across numerous influential publications (e.g., 1960/2004; 1976), which include the address, horizon, fusion of horizons, historically effected consciousness, and prejudice. Gadamer also thoroughly discussed the nature of conversation and interpretation through spoken word as well as written word and the inner dialogue when interpreting text (Gadamer, 1960/2004). These aspects of philosophical hermeneutics that influenced this inquiry are briefly described below. This philosophy orients our understanding about how we are growing, changing, working to understand, and working to become more inclusive pedagogues. However, it is critical to note that we do not intend to amalgamate Indigenous ways and philosophical hermeneutics in this inquiry; rather, we intend to illuminate how we recognize our learning and drive to understand and grow as pedagogues.

Learning about and implementing alternative perspectives of being and doing in PHE is a matter of transforming horizons, where the horizon is one's perspective and understanding of a topic (Gadamer, 1976). For each of the authors, a fusion of horizons (Gadamer, 1960/2004) took place throughout this inquiry, as they listened to, engaged in conversation with, and interpreted the gifts of knowledge offered by the Blackfoot Knowledge Keeper and Elders. As individuals

raised, schooled, and trained in Canadian municipalities, challenging the colonial influences on PHE in a society dominated by Western ways brings attention to the colonial influences on historically effected consciousness (Gadamer, 1960/2004) – the ways in which history effects our horizon and how we understand our world.

Gadamer noted that the "consciousness of being affected by history is primarily consciousness of the hermeneutical situation" (Gadamer, 1960/2004, p. 301). With a critical reflection of the colonial influences on historically affected consciousness, as Canadian PHE teachers and PHETE instructors, Michelle and Lisa recognized they preceded this exploration with inherent Western-oriented prejudices. Gadamer described prejudice as a "judgement that is rendered before all the elements that determine a situation have been finally examined" (1960/2004, p. 273). Our prejudices (i.e., prior understandings) included perpetuating a sport- and achievement-focused PHE model as the norm; prejudices that Michelle and Lisa became aware of and determined to challenge.

In the first part of this two-part article series (Kilborn & Taylor, 2024), Michelle and Lisa detailed that they were addressed to further their understanding while reading Smith's (2014) book *Teaching as the Practice of Wisdom*. In Smith's book, he described the impact of neoliberalism, Wisdom traditions, and many other political and social discourses on the personal and professional lives of teachers. While he revealed many theoretical and general ideas about standing with and against these constructs, he did not detail *how* educators might go about challenging Western norms. Michelle and Lisa wanted to explore how this could be done in PHE.

Gadamer noted that being addressed involves understanding the topic and locating a question, which by doing so, transforms one's horizon (Gadamer, 1976). Not knowing how, only knowing the need to determine one meaningful avenue to this *how*, was what addressed Michelle and Lisa; they recognized the need to take action and attempt to disrupt the inherent Western norms within PHE using wisdom traditions.

## Embracing Wisdom Traditions Through Blackfoot Ways of Knowing and Doing

Evidence of the notion of wisdom can be found in many cultural and spiritual traditions around the world (e.g., Indigenous cultures, Buddhism, Daoism, Sufism, Christianity) and in the history of philosophy (e.g., writings of Plato, Socrates, Aristotle). Smith (2013) recognized the difficulty in summarizing all wisdom traditions into one description; however, after many years of scholarship in this area, Smith (2013) offered several characteristics of wisdom traditions and their connections to the "practice of pedagogical wisdom," including that wisdom understands the natural world as pedagogical, that there is a *way* to life, and that *way* involves consciousness, mindfulness, and a connection between the mind, body, and heart.

In response to the address to engage in this inquiry, Michelle and Lisa planned to have Blackfoot ways of knowing, an example of a wisdom tradition, embraced within a Fall 2022 PHETE course to challenge Western norms within PHE. Detailed in Part I (Kilborn & Taylor, 2024), by engaging members of the Blackfoot community, Michelle and Lisa designed the course and learning tasks with the Indigenous Knowledge Keeper and Elders to work to live this wisdom tradition. By doing so, Michelle and Lisa expanded their horizons through conversation with the Indigenous Knowledge Keeper and Elders. This change in horizon was also facilitated by reading Smith's (2014) book. Gadamer noted that "the meaning of a text goes beyond its author" (1960/2004, p. 296). Both Michelle and Lisa's understandings grew to recognize the many ways neoliberal agendas live in contemporary education, which they contemplated and discussed

together. With the final plans for the Fall 2022 course ready to go, a new beginning was initiated. The experiences that followed within the Fall 2022 course are highlighted in this manuscript.

Whereas the design of the course alongside Blackfoot members broadened Michelle's and Lisa's horizons regarding challenging Western ways in PHETE, this second part continued to broaden those horizons by working to understand pre-service teacher perspectives. There were 21 pre-service teachers in the PHETE cohort, with eight of those students connecting to discuss their understandings and co-author this manuscript. Students used their course journals and any new reflections after their most recent field experiences to write what was most meaningful as a result of their experiences within the Fall 2022 course. It is important to note that while aspects of philosophical hermeneutics influenced Michelle and Lisa in this inquiry, this was not introduced to students to avoid confusion or disrupting the focus of applying Indigenous ways to challenge Western norms in PHE. As a result, in the student sections of the manuscript (below), there are no references to hermeneutic philosophy.

In this article, Michelle, Lisa, and the pre-service teachers collectively identify and detail their interpretations, which are noted below as headings. First, the events and organization of the Fall 2022 class are described. Second, relationships and interconnectedness are discussed, with emphasis on family and embodying values in teaching PHE. Third, we describe the interpretation of living and teaching with Blackfoot Ways of knowing, being and doing, specifically discussing traditional Blackfoot games as a way of honouring Blackfoot values in PHE, as well as how to implement traditional Blackfoot games in a PHE setting. Finally, Michelle and Lisa offer their perspectives regarding the learnings gained through the design and application of this course.

Within the sections below, the student authors contribute their own perspectives and insights written in first person. We believe this to be the most meaningful approach to writing the article, to identify how our understandings have broadened collectively, as well as individually – with the growth of students being of particular interest for instructors reading this manuscript. Furthermore, to have the students write these accounts was important to ensure the words they wished to represent their meaning with, matched the text that is published for the world to interpret. With our individual sections below, we bring "attention to the instance and the particular," working to "make sense of our [experiences] in such a way that our [experiences] can go on" as physical and health educators who are keen to share and continue to seek more holistic ways of teaching PHE (Moules et al., 2015; p. 4).

Throughout this manuscript, our intention is to offer perspective from the instructor- and student-view so that instructors reading this article might gain some insight as to how our approach to embracing wisdom traditions in our PHETE context was uniquely meaningful to those in our class.

## The Fall 2022 Semester

As described in Part I (Kilborn & Taylor, 2024), the Fall 2022 course was initiated with a learning opportunity at the medicine wheel within Calgary's Nose Hill Park, led by the Blackfoot Knowledge Keeper and Elders. What we experienced on Nose Hill that day influenced everyone profoundly. These experiences laid the foundation and set the tone for everything we did each week in the class. At the medicine wheel, the Elders led the pre-service teachers through important

protocols and ceremony that honoured Blackfoot ways[1] and they spoke about the significance of the medicine wheel to the Blackfoot people, described the historical significance and told stories about their way of life in this area in earlier times. The Elders also spent time talking about their traditional values:

> Aatsimoyikaan (prayer), Kimmapiiypitsinni (compassion), Innakotsiiyinni (respect), Niitsitapiiysinni (way of life), Ihpipototsp (what we have been given), Aksistoiyipaittapiiysiinni (self-starter), Isspommaanitapiiysinni (helpful), Aoahkannaistokawa (balance), Ihkanaitapstsiwa (reciprocity), Pommotsiiysinni (transfer of knowledge), and Kakoysin (awareness).

However, our interpretations of these values could only be conceived to the degree to which we could comprehend them within our Western-influenced historically effected consciousness and perspectives. Nevertheless, this knowledge encouraged us to be reflexive, think, and see the horizon differently as much as possible.

The Knowledge Keeper also gifted us knowledge regarding traditional Blackfoot games and their historical and cultural significance. They encouraged the pre-service teachers to embrace these games and share them with K–12 students, making sure to always situate the games historically and culturally to respect Indigenous ways. For the Elders and Knowledge Keeper, we interpreted that leading with good intention and a good heart would be meaningful progress for implementing Blackfoot ways in PHE, despite not knowing the experiences of Indigenous ways of living and being as they do.

At the end of the afternoon, pre-service teachers were given an opportunity to find their "sit spot" (Young et al., 2010) in the area and sit quietly for several minutes to be in touch with the land and the living things around them, and to reflect on the experiences from the day. As part of the course, pre-service teachers engaged in a weekly reflection and were given prompts for their reflective writing. For that particular week, they were asked to do the following:

> Reflect on your experience at Nose Hill. Think about the words and stories from 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?

Shael described the day with the Knowledge Keeper and the Elders.

**Shael's Perspective: The Day on Nose Hill**

It was a very emotional and moving experience that day. We sat, we prayed to the creator, we gave an offering of tobacco, we listened. The Elders told stories to us that showcased how Indigenous people learned. They told the story of how horses were brought up North, how the Blackfoot peoples used the hill to survey their land, looking for the right time to hunt or whether it was the right time to harvest. They talked about the sacredness of the medicine wheel and how the Blackfoot peoples used the wheel as a metaphor for how they lived their lives. One of the Elders talked about rejuvenation ceremonies that they would perform at the end of winter (signifying the *beginning* of a new cycle). I learned that everyone and everything is connected; all is living, all is related. I learned to ask permission from the Creator to take and give thanks. The

[1] To show gratitude for the Elders and the Knowledge Keeper's time, they were offered a monetary gift, which was available due to funding Michelle received as part of a small *Werklund School of Education Teaching and Learning Grant* that provides support to academic staff to advance on-campus teaching.

Elders talked about the importance of connection, both with the space and with their students, emphasizing that this was at the basis of Indigenous ways of knowing. They talked about how they are helping young Indigenous peoples find “who they are" – helping to undo the damage done by colonizers when their culture and ways of being were ripped apart.

It was a very emotional experience to hear how much damage was done to the Blackfoot culture. They talked about how they are still battling with the damage done by residential schools, and how long and difficult the journey has been to find out who they are and how they fit into this colonized society. They talked about how they still struggle to ask questions or speak up (e.g., at a doctor's appointment) because they were told that in residential schools, they should not ever ask any questions. The Knowledge Keeper and Elders’ work in the school is rooted in helping the Indigenous youth in the community reconnect with their heritage and to guide these young people along their journey of self-discovery as an Indigenous person within a colonized society.

The Elders were gracious in our journey to becoming an ally. They encouraged us to share what we have learned and not to be fearful of making a mistake. Attempting to share Indigenous knowledge and educate students how to become an ally is ultimately intimidating for a white colonial teacher and I am so thankful for their encouragement.

Shael’s reflection, alongside the other students’ reflections, were shared the following week in class in a small group gallery walk. After sharing insights, the pre-service teachers discussed and committed to continue thinking about and working to understand how to live the wisdom and teachings that were shared. The class wanted this knowledge to be the through-line for the course – what guided learning throughout the semester; they started to consider how they might begin to incorporate their learnings into their way of being as a physical and health educator (and for Michelle, her way of being a PHETE instructor). The students were committed to reimagining teaching through a more holistic lens and finding ways to honour and incorporate Blackfoot ways of knowing and being into PHE teaching and learning. While their historically effected consciousness has been influenced by the Western-colonial ways of the past (and present), they were eager to work to see a broader horizon as much as possible.

Throughout the course, the pre-service teachers were intentional in how they approached lesson planning, differentiation, assessment, teaching strategies, and their practice teaching episodes. They took care to weave in the values and perspectives they learned about at Nose Hill that day. They particularly wanted to ensure a holistic approach to their teaching of physical education, such as respecting the four directions and dimensions represented in the medicine wheel, as described by the Elders[2]. For example, in an assignment where students were to facilitate a professional development session on a topic of their choice, one group designed a session that incorporated the four dimensions (mental, physical, emotional, spiritual) into an effective holistic assessment strategy, described below in the section about living and teaching with Blackfoot ways of knowing, being, and doing.

The culminating week of the course focused on “coming full circle.” In the last class, a talking or sharing circle was set up where students brought forward insights and epiphanies related to the question: *In what ways has your vision for PHE teaching and learning changed or been challenged through your learning about Blackfoot values and teachings, and other Indigenous knowledge?* In Indigenous traditions, the circle symbolizes completeness (Chrona, 2022). participants in the talking or sharing circle work to listen openly, and speakers are free to express

[2] Understandings of the Blackfoot medicine wheel were based on the Elders' oral explanation at Nose Hill. A similar description has been written and posted by Lethbridge's Family Centre (2023). See https://www.famcentre.ca/the-blackfoot-framework/

themselves in any ways that are comfortable to them. This circle also fosters a hermeneutic opportunity for interpretation of the truth within others' accounts. This growth in the horizon can be described as a fusion of horizons, which is ongoing and involves challenging the prejudices (i.e., prior understanding) we bring to a conversation or sharing circle like this (Gadamer, 1960/2004).

As part of this day, and in the spirit of *Innakotsiiyinni* (respect) and *Ihkanaitapstsiwa* (reciprocity), the students wanted to share their appreciation for the Knowledge Keeper and Elders in a way that honored the oral traditions of the Blackfoot people. Since the Elders were unavailable for this last class, the students prepared a short oral message that captured some of their reflections and thereby the conscious impact of the knowledge and wisdom that was shared with them at Nose Hill. Each message shared in the talking circle was video recorded and later communicated with Elders, in the spirit of actualizing some of the Blackfoot values of reciprocity, gratitude, respect, awareness, and compassion that had been shared with them.

For the final part of the course, all the students wrote a final synthesis reflection regarding their engagement throughout the course. After the completion of the course, the pre-service teachers were keen to share some of their insights and learnings from the class; it was proposed to write an article together. While the pre-service teacher co-authors considered their initial synthesis reflections, during the writing of this article, they completed two longer K–12 field experiences as pre-service teachers and wanted an opportunity to share further reflections. As a group, Michelle and her students met several times to share and discuss their most recent reflective writing. The collective understanding as a class of Western-oriented PHE teachers morphed by discussing and engaging in learning experiences with the Knowledge Keeper, Elders, and with each other – learnings that had personal meaning and transformed each individual's horizon.

This section detailed some of the organization and experiences of the Fall 2022 course. Next, we describe relationships and interconnectedness as a meaningful interpretation gained regarding the application of Blackfoot ways of living in approaching PHE.

## Relationships and Interconnectedness

Physical education is greatly influenced by the Cartesian dualism (Fitzclarence & Tinning, 1990) that is dominant in Western society, where body and mind are separated. Physical and Health Education Canada (PHE Canada) recognizes the limitations of this perspective and advocates for supporting "students on a journey of wholistic competence" offering the new *Canadian PHE Competencies* as a way to "spark change and be a guiding light for those seeking to develop and deliver more inclusive, empowering, and meaningful physical and health education" (p. 9). In addition, some PHE scholars have written about rejecting this body-mind dualism so that the "embodied persons' subjective experience in the world" (Rintala, 1991, p. 274) is considered. Whitehead's underpinning philosophies of physical literacy includes this monist perspective (Whitehead, 2010) and "recognizes the existence of the different dimensions of the human condition…[where] thinking, feeling, moving, and talking are interwoven and can all be considered embodied" (Pot et al., 2018, p. 247).

The perspective common among wisdom traditions is that body-mind-spirit are connected into a balanced whole (Mehl-Madrona, 2005). Thus, maintaining balance and harmony means working to recognize the relationships we form within ourselves and with others, and paying attention to the physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional together equally. When considering the hermeneutic influences on this inquiry, the authors and class as a whole, worked to understand this perspective – conceptualizations to ponder and morph their horizons.

We interpreted that the Elders emphasized kindness, respect, compassion, being helpful, and reciprocity when sharing their wisdom with the pre-service teachers. They shared that building relationships with students and among students means you have to listen and have patience. Teaching young people how to be healthy and well begins with working to know yourself, take care of yourself, and reflect on how this can affect others – we are all connected. Understanding the dialectical and reciprocal relationships with ourselves, students, and all living things, forms an environment where teaching and learning can respect and accept all students and their situatedness. Zack, Braeden, and Maddi describe some of their insights about relationships, family, interconnectedness, and mindfulness below.

**Zack's Perspective: Reflections on Family**

It is clear to me that my journey as an educator changed drastically after that day when we were fortunate enough to have the Blackfoot Knowledge Keeper and Elders come talk to our class at Nose Hill Park. From that point on, I become more aware and connected with myself as a person and as a professional. There are certain insights that I do not think I would have developed if it was not for our class with them. One reason why the class influenced me so much is because the Knowledge Keeper and Elders spent so much time talking about the importance of family – how we define family and community within the school and beyond.

That day at Nose Hill with the Elders opened my mind to what teaching is genuinely about: relationships. Relationships are so critical for us to have with our students, but also for them to have with each other. Furthermore, the spiritual, physical, mental, and emotional approach of the medicine wheel would be an instrumental tool for teaching any subject, but especially a wellness-oriented class.

The holistic, land-based approach to physical education in my practicum experience, allowed me to develop relationships with my own students that are so meaningful. This approach to teaching gives you many ways to connect with your students as opposed to a sports-based approach that otherwise feels limited. In turn, this creates a positive environment in the classroom as a whole, which provides students with a safe and comfortable environment to learn in.

Finally, it is evident in my experience that the more positive relationships you have in your classroom, the greater the sense of interconnectedness is. I can say with confidence that if I was never exposed to these Indigenous perspectives by the Knowledge Keeper and Elders at the Medicine Wheel, I would not be as assured in my teacher abilities, or as in-tune with the world we are lucky to share.

**Braeden's Perspective: Embodying Blackfoot Values in Teaching**

Lifelong learning is a key principle of Indigenous education, it is also one of my core values. The Blackfoot Elders shared the importance of children in their society. In and out of the classroom, students have just as much to teach us as we have to teach them. This has been a helpful perspective shift for me. Now, I actively seek student feedback and often incorporate more questions into my lessons.

After taking this course, I got a great opportunity to work with Indigenous youth from my practicum school. This particular school experiences challenges with attendance and participation, but I feel that working to connect with the students certainly made a difference. I co-taught the grade eight students about body systems through several wilderness first aid lessons. The students were so hilarious and once they got comfortable, they totally bought into the activity. I also learned a lot about Stoney culture from them. Several of them already knew some traditional hand games

that we had spent a considerable amount of time trying to research for a project with the grade five students at the school.

The sacredness and interconnectedness of all things means that the land is a teacher to us as well. When I took outdoor education classes we would talk about land as teachers, but back then I always interpreted that as the mountain or river teaching and humbling you. Now, I have a more holistic perspective informed by an Indigenous lens – land can have meaning for us and can allow us to have embodied and numinous experiences.

**Maddi's Perspective: Mindfulness**

Mindfulness is beautifully intertwined with Indigenous ways of knowing as many of the Blackfoot values encourage this way of being. Mindfulness practices are about stopping to pay attention to things in the moment – conscious living. There are so many ways to do this with students – meditation, reflecting, or simply stopping just to ask your students how they are doing that day. It is so refreshing that we were taught about incorporating these types of practices into our classrooms because I think that by taking the extra five or 10 minutes a day to connect with your students will be extremely powerful. This ties into creating positive classroom environments and is a practice that will help our students feel safe and a sense of belonging.

Zack, Braeden, and Maddi's perspectives help us to understand how the Blackfoot values and ways of knowing, shared that day on Nose Hill, inspired them and challenged how they approach and think about PHE. Next, we explore the interpretation of living and teaching with Blackfoot ways of knowing, being, and doing – the *how* or application of knowledge to practice; in particular, students discuss traditional games.

## Living and Teaching with Blackfoot Ways of Knowing, Being, and Doing

It was a clear goal from the beginning, as described in Part I (Kilborn & Taylor, 2024), to *experience* the wisdom traditions sought to challenge Western norms in PHE within the Fall 2022 course. By doing so, this was an attempt to teach and learn hermeneutically – to listen to and work to understand the words and experiences shared by the Indigenous Knowledge Keeper and Elders and then to open ourselves and discuss the excitement and tensions associated with living this work in PHE.

Below, Kate and Tessa share how they interpreted the gifts of knowledge they received from the Blackfoot Knowledge Keeper and Elders; specifically, recognizing the value in the traditional games that were introduced by the Blackfoot Knowledge Keeper. The pre-service teachers practiced teaching these traditional games with each other during a subsequent class in the Fall 2022 semester.

**Kate: Traditional Games as a Way of Honouring Blackfoot Values in Physical Education**

A key conversation during the day on Nose Hill revolved around how to learn and share traditional Blackfoot games in physical education. The Blackfoot Knowledge Keeper talked about several games, their history, and shared stories and cultural traditions associated with each game. I thought it was really helpful learning about the games and then having the opportunity to practice teaching those games with my classmates. Teaching these games helped me to learn the importance of incorporating traditional games into physical education to create more meaningful experiences and learning opportunities for students to engage in.

I also learned the importance of connecting with local Knowledge Keepers and Elders when embracing Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing in physical education.

Furthermore, I learned the importance of emphasizing culture, history, and the Blackfoot values associated with traditional games. Initially, I wondered if non-Indigenous teachers need to seek permission to use traditional games in class. However, it goes beyond white settlers getting permission and sharing knowledge; it is about experiencing learning *with* the local Knowledge Keepers and Elders and then sharing in a way that honours the gifts of knowledge received. One of the Elders explained that they wanted to share about their culture, history, and people so that we could seek understanding in the spirit of truth. The Elder encouraged us to go forward with these ways, recognizing that there is no one *right way* in terms of when and where, just making sure that the approach works to honour the history, values, and meaningfulness of the traditional games.

**Tessa: Applying Traditional Games to Context**

When the Elders shared their wisdom and knowledge about Blackfoot teachings, they reassured us that it is okay to make mistakes but that it is just important to try our best when we are teaching Indigenous ways of knowing and doing. I had the chance to explain and play a few of the traditional Blackfoot games that we received from the Elders in my physical education practicum experience. It was a unique and amazing opportunity to be able to share with my students the experiences, knowledge, and games I received from the Knowledge Keeper and Elders. Instead of just explaining how to play the games, I also wanted to describe why we were playing the games and why it is important to share and incorporate Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing. First, I described my experience on Nose Hill Park, where I received the games, and then I explained the meaning and history behind each game. Making sure I worked to help students understand the *why* before bringing in these games to class was a positive step towards having students learn in a holistic and meaningful way. I am grateful to have had this experience and this opportunity. I am excited and determined to incorporate more Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing into my physical education classes moving forward.

**Josh and Merissa: Detailing Application of Blackfoot Values to Context Through Instruction and Assessment**

The text within this section includes two voices that worked together. The first part of this section was written by Josh and the second section was written by Merissa, as identified by the headings below.

***Josh's Reflection***

Both resources and opportunities for reflection throughout this course, as well as practicum experiences have brought to light that the Western, sport-focussed norm of physical education is more prominent than a holistic, wellness approach in Alberta. Merissa and I saw first-hand some of the negative impacts a sport-based-model (focused on the assessment of sport techniques and skills) can have. For students who could not demonstrate a high skill level, their grades suffered and their desire to be physically active diminished as they often seemed to feel that they were not good enough to be in the class. Although the new Alberta K-6 curriculum attempts to help shift to a wellness approach, there is much knowledge sharing that is needed to be able to teach physical education in this way. Reflecting in this class taught us how "Indigenous knowledge can both guide and complement learning in physical education" (Kayln, 2014, p. 153) which led to the collaborative development of an Indigenized assessment strategy focused on goal setting as a differentiated assessment to collectively support all students' individual needs.

This assessment tool focused on goal setting aligned with our group's goals of accounting for students' differing abilities, engagement, motivation, and personal goals when it comes to physical activity and physical education. Simply setting goals was too broad and lacked reliability when it came to assessment, so our group refined goal setting to include specific categories. Using our knowledge from recent learnings about the Blackfoot medicine wheel, we refined student personal goal setting to whereby students would make goals in each of the mental, physical, spiritual, and emotional dimensions of wellness. The development of this assessment strategy moved beyond a simple insertion of piecemeal activities and instead integrated Indigenous knowledge as a way to enhance teaching and learning in physical education (Kalyn, 2013).

***Merissa's Reflection***

When implementing this assessment strategy, it is important to demonstrate how the specific activity you are doing in physical education encompasses each dimension depicted by the medicine wheel. I adapted this assessment tool to fit within a badminton unit during my field experience. To get students thinking about physical education as more than simply a place to be physically active, or where sports were played, I began the first class of the unit by posing the question, "If we had to define physical education how would we define it?" After a brief discussion, I then shared with them my borrowed knowledge and understanding from Indigenous perspectives that recognize the whole person – acknowledging not only the physical, but the mental, spiritual, and emotional aspects as well. To demonstrate what I meant by physical education as being holistic, I shared an image of the medicine wheel which gave students a helpful visual representation of the relationships between all four aspects of human behaviour elicited through the engagement in physical education.

I also explained that in physical education, students often work to learn a new skill or a new game, which requires the mental capacity to learn it, emotional responses to the challenges and successes of the acquired learning, spiritual satisfaction through the challenge and success and even the interaction with the environment they are learning in, and the physical challenges of achieving the goals through the completion of the action. I spent two days on each aspect of the wheel. The first day involved introducing the aspect and allowing students to explore, and then having them set goals; these efforts were then enacted on the second day. For example, when working with students on *how* emotion is a part of physical activity, we discussed concepts such as: responding positively to success and challenges (cooperation), asking for support (acknowledging when you feel like you are struggling), encouraging others and yourself (positive self-talk), and seeking out and attending to movements that elicit happiness and enjoyment. If, for instance, the emotional part of physical activity was to seek out and attend to movements that elicit happiness or enjoyment and we use badminton as the physical activity, specific examples may include completing a great smash shot, keeping a long and exciting rally going, pulling off a great fake on a drop shot, or defending a smash shot. Students were then asked to attend to emotional reactions, what caused these emotional reactions, and then write them down as a goal to work on in the next class. If they found themselves reacting negatively to ineffectively finishing rallies, they might set a goal of finding different partners to rally with as a way to seek a different setting which may provide more enjoyment. Alternatively, they might be successful in seeking out enjoyment but could better support others through encouraging words or offering a student who is not enjoying themselves to be their partner.

This is one way that my classmates and I applied the shared knowledge from the Blackfoot Knowledge Keeper and Elders to create a more holistic assessment strategy and how I brought this tool to life with my own students. I think this is a more holistic way to approach physical education

and demonstrates how Indigenous knowledge is not simply inserted as an afterthought but rather integrates Indigenous ways of knowing, doing, and being to guide teaching and learning in physical education.

Considering Merissa's reflection, one may argue that using her Indigenous-inspired assessment approach in a sport unit like badminton facilitates teaching in a zone of between (Aoki, as cited in Pinar & Irwin, 2005), where small but positive steps can be made towards more holistic physical education, without completely disrupting what exists. In Part I of this two-part manuscript series, Lisa noted the implicit pressure she experienced to fit in as a K–12 teacher (Kilborn & Taylor, 2024). Approaches like Merissa's may lead to more sustainable, holistic changes in physical education – actions that may not feel as intimidating for K–12 teachers early in their career to suggest to those more resistant to change or established in their practice.

In this section, students shared their understandings regarding applying the values and knowledge gained from the Blackfoot Knowledge Keeper and Elders to their work as PHE teachers. Next, we offer reflections from Michelle and Lisa with regards to their experiences as course designers, as well as a collective reflection from the authors.

## Indigenous Ways and PHETE: Reflections

In this section of the manuscript, Michelle and Lisa offer their perspectives individually and collectively regarding their reflections; first, Michelle describes her experiences, followed by Lisa's perspectives. Finally, collective reflections and closing thoughts are offered regarding this inquiry and opportunities moving forward.

### Michelle's Reflections

I have always respected Pinar's encouragement to education professionals to "engage in *complicated conversation*[3] with ourselves, our subject, and our students" (Pinar, 2004, p.9), and I believe more broadly with our colleagues, our communities, our Elders, all living things, the land and beyond. We should however approach these conversations in the way that Gadamer (1976) reminds us: open to challenging our prejudices and as a result, transforming our horizon.

Lisa and I began our conversation about problematizing traditional notions of PHETE and what it means to foster a more holistic approach, and while I had read Smith's work many times, I never had the opportunity to dialogue deeply with anyone to situate it more fully in PHETE. Considering Smith's (2014) perspectives in the context of PHETE in our conversations, opened new possibilities and avenues to understand differently, in a way I had never experienced before. As a teacher educator, situating myself with a wisdom perspective within my PHETE classes alongside all the conversations with others brought new opportunities and approaching ways of being.

In the teaching profession, it is often emphasized that providing a positive, safe, welcoming environment is critical to an inclusive and engaging classroom. I have always strived to do this with my pre-service teachers – modeling strategies that they then could use with their students. I now realize how much more this is connected to encouraging a more holistic approach to PHE. To invite my own students to come on this journey required more than just doing cooperative games and icebreaker activities in class; it involved being vulnerable and interacting beyond the

[3] Pinar (2004) believes that "the complicated conversation that is the curriculum requires interdisciplinary intellectuality, erudition, and self-reflexivity" (p. 8). In his discussion about the anti-intellectualism in the field of education, Pinar (2004) encourages the profession to "engage in 'complicated conversation' with our subject, our students, and ourselves" (p. 9).

professional – being human, working to break down inherent instructor-student power structures, and building not just a community, but a family. The new understandings about what this means, as shared with us by the Elders, had a profound impact on our class – we began to think, feel, move, and act in ways that reflected Blackfoot values. It was clear that many of the learnings along the way reflected a wisdom perspective – understanding that the natural world is pedagogical in itself; that there is a way to life, and that way involves consciousness, mindfulness, and a connection between the mind, body, and heart (Smith, 2013).

My horizon has changed through my conversations and interactions with Lisa, the Blackfoot Knowledge Keeper and Elders, and my students. What I learned from all of these family members has impacted my way of being a teacher educator that will have lasting effects on the PHETE program, the preservice teachers I worked with in 2022, the new pre-service teachers to come, and their future students. As I prepare for a new cohort of students, I continue to remind myself to pay attention and remain open — there are new vantage points to consider that will be helpful in the ongoing journey of challenging Western-dominant ways and embracing wisdom traditions in PHE**.**

**Lisa's Reflections**

Described in Part I (Kilborn & Taylor, 2024), as a former K-12 PHE teacher, I always felt the need to fit in – to fit into schedules laid out, common practices, and other teachers' and leaders' views of PHE. However, with the learnings I have been gifted in my doctoral program with Blackfoot Knowledge Keepers and Elders, I began to understand the value of questioning norms rather than accepting them point blank and working to fit into them.

The understandings I have gained through the design of this course with Michelle and the Blackfoot Knowledge Keeper and Elders, as well as conversations following the course offering with students' writing, has continued to transform my horizon. In this transformation, I have gained awareness of aspects of my historically effected consciousness; I recognize that working to fit in perpetuates societal norms that may need to be challenged to be more inclusive of all students that arrive in PHETE and K–12 contexts. As a PHETE instructor early in my career, I continue to feel a pull to fit in, but recognize this need to continuously question and challenge what is.

The understandings I have gained from this inquiry also encourage me to continue to question aspects of my historically effected consciousness that I do not recognize. Gadamer (1960/2004) noted, "it is the tyranny of hidden prejudices that makes us deaf to what speaks to us in tradition" (p. 272). While I can never fully understand how I am situated, I can continue to converse with those who share different ways of living and doing, eagerly listen, and hope that I can bring more consciousness to my perspectives and how they have been molded. With more awareness as to my situatedness, perhaps I can better understand, articulate, and challenge the prejudices I bring to my work as a pedagogue.

**Collective Reflections**

As non-Indigenous teacher educators raised in Canada, Lisa and Michelle recognize that they are products of the Western paradigm and are working to build learning relationships between Indigenous and Western knowledge perspectives. This journey started with an address – a recognition for the need to explore *how* wisdom traditions could be embraced in a PHE setting through PHETE (Kilborn & Taylor, 2024), following reading and learning about why this work is so important (see Smith, 2014).

Planning the Fall 2022 course, experiencing the semester with pre-service teachers and learning from the pre-service teachers' interpretations has broadened Michelle's and Lisa's

horizons regarding how to approach PHETE more holistically. The authors learned that building relationships is critical to embodying knowledge, as Indigenous people share a hermeneutic perspective that knowledge is active, dynamic, and always changing. Michelle and Lisa continue to work to understand how Indigenous ways can be meaningfully brought into a more holistic approach to PHE and PHETE. They continue to keep in mind that "Indigenous knowledge is not something you read or hear once and immediately understand. Learning to listen, reflect, build learning relationships, experience the teachings, and inquire further, are aspects of experiencing Indigenous knowledge" (Kalyn, 2013, p. 155). Important to note, listening, reflecting, and an openness to further inquiring are also all qualities of living hermeneutically (Gadamer, 1960/2004).

From this pedagogical inquiry, Michelle and Lisa also recognized the importance of open minds and good-intentioned hearts when seeking wisdom from Knowledge Keepers and Elders, which was shared and demonstrated through vulnerability, gratitude, and reciprocity in conversation. Lisa and Michelle learned the value in working to be comfortable with not knowing exactly how the semester would transpire following collaboration with Indigenous Knowledge Keepers and Elders, which resulted in rich collective learnings that would not have been meaningful or even possible without this collaboration. Michelle and Lisa were also reminded that through conversations with pre-service teachers, as well as reading pre-service teacher reflections, resulted in an expansion of horizons, detailed and painted in colours far richer than anticipated. Moving forward as instructors of PHETE, Michelle and Lisa look forward to more opportunities to collaborate with local Indigenous Knowledge Keepers and Elders as part of the ongoing work needed to embrace wisdom traditions and challenge Western norms in physical education.

## Closing Thoughts

"The horizon of the present is always changing in the light of new circumstances and new knowledge" (Moules et al., 2015, p. 47). With this in mind, all the authors recognize that with each ending, a new beginning awaits; a new course, new pre-service teachers, new K–12 students, a new context, and an opportunity to continue to embrace the uncomfortable and unknown.

The knowledge that we have gained from our experiences in the design of (Kilborn & Taylor, 2024) and within the Fall 2022 course is inspiration for future course offerings and engagement with wisdom tradition knowledge holders to challenge Western norms in PHE moving forward. Honouring Indigenous ways of knowing and doing in PHE helps foster a wisdom-inspired approach that moves beyond unauthentically inserting one-off activities and allows for students to engage in learning experiences with and through Indigenous knowledge (Kalyn, 2013). Michelle, Lisa, and the pre-service teachers respect the knowledge and stories shared, are grateful and humbled by the opportunity to work and learn alongside the Indigenous Knowledge Keeper and Elders, and are thankful for the permission to share the knowledge gifts received, to learn from those gifts, to add to that knowledge, and action it in PHE.

It is prudent to reiterate here that both articles (Part I and II) are not intended to be a strict guide for incorporating Indigenous way of knowing or wisdom traditions overall in PHE. Rather, this was one approach meaningful to one context and those reading are encouraged to reach out to local Indigenous community members so that meaningful ways forward can be explored together.

This two-part project has offered all of us insight regarding how to challenge Western norms in PHE by working to live wisdom traditions. However, this exploration has also sparked new questions for future inquiries. Michelle and Lisa continue to question how they might move forward inclusively, by embracing various wisdom traditions within a PHETE class. Additionally,

the need for funding was recognized through this pedagogical inquiry; while the Knowledge Keeper and Elders were offered gifts in exchange for their time and knowledge, these gifts were only possible due to an internal grant that Michelle received (see Kilborn & Taylor, 2024) Further exploring how universities might financially support instructors to engage in similar inquiries is needed. Furthermore, there is opportunity to explore the experiences of in-service teachers following the completion of their teacher training, when working to implement a PHE program designed to challenge Western norms.

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