

‘RALLYING’ FOR CHANGE:  
EXAMINING THE ENGAGEMENT OF PRE-ADOLESCENTS, SCHOOLS, AND  
COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS THROUGH TRIPLE-BALL VOLLEYBALL  
USING AN APPRECIATIVE LENS

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## **ABSTRACT**

Elementary schools are of critical importance in our society. While their legislated mandate is to teach curricular outcomes to the youth who attend, these institutions are also being asked to do much more. Society continues to rely on schools to provide many student and community needs, particularly where physical activities, athletic achievement, and social development are concerned (Larsen et al., 2013). Community leaders and youth advocates are asking the publicly-funded school system to help ensure that youth receive the activity and education that they need to remain healthy in the long-term (PHE Canada, 2013).

This study was done by creating a “Triple-Ball” volleyball league for pre-adolescent female youth aged eleven to thirteen to participate in, intended not only to create age-appropriate programming, but also to examine the pursuits of this study. The purpose of this study is centred on identifying the practices, resources and people that were essential for a new, volunteer-driven extracurricular physical activity program (Triple-Ball volleyball) to thrive at the elementary school level. An Appreciative Inquiry approach was utilized (Watkins et al., 2011) to guide data collection and analysis. This qualitative methodology uses stakeholder feedback to analyze the context at present, and reimagine what could be if learnings are capitalized on.

In its inaugural season (2014), this “Triple-Ball” league’s administrative team consisted of the author of this research, in the role of teacher, graduate student researcher, and league/schedule coordinator. Additionally, this work relied heavily on a professor with the University of Regina’s Faculty of Kinesiology and Health Studies, as well as a program coordinator with SaskVolleyball. From May through to August of 2014, monthly meetings and daily emails between each other and various stakeholders put the administrative team in position to design a truly community-focused opportunity for pre-adolescent female students.

Data were collected over the course of several interviews with two of the main coordinators of the program. In addition, email threads between stakeholders related to the program were cached and subsequently examined. As an invested stakeholder and administrative team member, the researcher's own thoughts and reflections on the process were also collected.

Eight major categories emerged as a result of an analysis of the data. Communication played a major role in the success of this work. Identifying and relying on established and emerging partners and relationships was paramount. For leaders, motivation in this endeavor was found by the want to 'win' and the perceived need to carry through that which was started to a successful conclusion. Remaining optimistic and coming at challenges from a problem-solving approach led to positive negotiation of problems and navigation of obstacles. Kids, and specifically, a want to see them living with a healthy, active lifestyle, were a motivator towards a better future. Resources of all types – human, infrastructure, financial, and in-kind, were appreciated, sought after, and never in abundance. The success of this endeavour was grounded in a large way in having a stable of volunteers of both quantity and quality. Finally, the personal attributes of the leader overseeing the entire operation was of paramount importance.

Above all else, the evidence suggests that for this type of work to be successful, there should be one convicted, energetic lead in charge of the overall project. Their ability to lean on pre-existing relationships, and rely on a full complement of volunteers, is crucial. Consistent, effective, audience-based communication at all stages of the project was also key. When looking to move forward with programs of similar mission and scope, it would be wise to consider the potential dedication, aptitude, and network that this person would bring to the project.

## **DEDICATION**

*To volunteers;  
the dreamers and toilers  
who work to make the tomorrow of others  
better than their own today.*

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## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Introduction**

Elementary school is an institution that represents a unique time in the lives of young people. School years move quickly, as do the youth experiencing them. In the nine years that Saskatchewan students attend primary and middle school, keeping up with their diverse needs can prove to be a formidable challenge (McNinch & Schick, 2013). For many of our communities' youth, elementary school signifies one of the initial points of contact between a young person and the greater society.

Over time, society has become increasingly reliant on our publicly-funded school systems to meet a myriad student and community needs, not the least of which are physical activities, athletic achievement, and social development (Larsen et al., 2013). The Saskatchewan Ministry of Education – as well as their twenty-seven Boards of Education scattered throughout the Province – mandate physical education at the elementary school level. This is evidenced by a Physical Education curriculum that prescribe at least 150 minutes of weekly physical education and physical activity for grades one through eight, or an average of thirty minutes daily (Government of Saskatchewan, 2020). Representing a large segment of society, many parents are becoming increasingly cognizant of childhood obesity, inactivity among youth, and the plethora of physical and social health complications that have negative, long-lasting effects (Jang et al., 2015). In Canada, specifically, the message is no different: 82% of parents would like to see their publicly-funded education systems place a higher importance on quality physical education (PHE Canada, 2013). The message from community stakeholders is clear: our youth need physical activity in their lives, and schools play an integral role in ensuring they receive it.

The issue is not one of physical health alone. Society's youth are aging in the face of tremendous social and emotional challenges. Despite a multitude of literature, careful programming, practical training, and direct education for those involved, the continual rise of bullying in elementary schools is as prevalent as it is dangerous (Venter, & Du Plessis, 2012). Youth detachment from their schools and communities is a complex problem, one that contributes to a number of difficulties, including high rates of high school dropout and employment troubles (Fall & Roberts, 2012).

In the presence of an ever-growing number of multifaceted complications between youth, their schools, and their communities, concerned stakeholders invested in the long-term health of society's youth have remained optimistic. Looking for creative solutions, schools have turned, in part, to extracurricular programming to increase students' physical literacy and activity levels, while at the same time, exposing them to conditions and situations that may help them develop socially and emotionally (Eccles et al., 2003).

## **1.2 Genesis of the Study**

I am a middle-years teacher with the Regina Public School Division. In the past, I have been an avid volleyball player, coach, referee, and fan. In the fall of 2010, I put my name forward to coach a 14U female club volleyball team with Queen City Volleyball Club (QCVC) in Regina, Saskatchewan. My prior experience with the sport had been limited; I had played volleyball in high school from 2002 through 2004, and had coached two elementary teams for the school that I taught at in 2009 and 2010. I was excited; the club landscape was a competitive one, and the structure offered me a road map to become a certified volleyball coach in Canada.

Even with my limited experience and expertise, it was easy to recognize the power of the serve and service reception at the developmental age that I was coaching. I was naïve; my

interests were in helping my athletes grow and develop, but as a new coach, that meant winning. Winning at 14U meant that athletes on your team could serve and receive serves more efficiently than the other team. Anecdotally speaking, the team that put more serve attempts into play, while limiting their own errors and while receiving the serve, would win the match. In coaching over 100 matches over the course of two years, I do not remember an exception to this rule.

As fate would have it, one of my athlete's mothers was my original thesis supervisor three years later. A professor at the University of Regina's Faculty of Kinesiology and Health Studies, she and I were afforded opportunities to engage in dialogue about issues of mutual interest. Throughout the 2010-2011 season, as well as during training for the 2012 Saskatchewan Summer Games, she and I had many talks on athletic development, physical literacy, the role of sport in the lives of pre-adolescent young people, and education as a whole.

In 2013, I entered the Faculty of Kinesiology and Health Studies to work on my Master of Science degree. This professor agreed to act in the capacity of my supervisor throughout my program. Over the fall of 2013, and into the winter of 2014, I struggled to pinpoint one single area of interest. My goal was to engage in research that empowered my community and engaged its youth, while contributing to both the health of society, and the literature in a particular area.

Our initial conversations around the idea of using Triple-Ball volleyball came about on May 1, 2014. As another season of club volleyball drew to a close in Canada, my supervisor and I returned to discussions of inequities and inefficiencies in the sport of volleyball at the elementary school level. Not all pre-adolescent young people who want to play for their schools survive the competitive reality of roster cuts, and in our opinion, traditional volleyball was simply not meeting the developmental needs of pre-adolescent volleyball players.

Though it has been more accurately understood in recent years, there still exists – and certainly did exist in 2014 – somewhat of a truism in the volleyball community that the Triple-Ball variation of the sport is misunderstood by those who have not seen it played (a detailed description of this variation can be found in section 2.5.1). This frequently changes when coaches, parents, and athletes have come to understand its benefits first-hand. We felt that if we could engage, educate, and empower all relevant stakeholders, we would have the opportunity to make a positive change in the sport, and in our community. As a result, a research project was born.

The original concept saw me in schools with teams on a daily basis, in an effort to gain first-hand data and answer my research questions through a narrative inquiry. Once the project (league) had been set in motion, it became apparent that due to various circumstances, I would not be able to get into the spaces as often as I would need to in order to carry out a narrative inquiry study. Instead, the decision was made early on for my thesis supervisor to step away from her capacity in that role, and serve as one of my primary sources of data in a rebooted Appreciative Inquiry. In conjunction with the developmental program coordinator with SaskVolleyball (and a former teacher and volleyball coach himself), the three of us made up the project's administration and primary data sources. It was our information and perspectives that would ultimately end up being accessed through interviews, for the purposes of data collection. As it turned out, when combined with hundreds of emails between stakeholders, as well as my own perspectives, I felt comfortable with the data I had to analyze in the interest of my research questions.

### **1.3 Position of the Researcher**

I am a teacher. The entirety of my professional life has been spent in the service of our publicly-funded, public education system, and the pre-adolescent young people who it aims to benefit. I received my teaching certification from Saskatchewan's Ministry of Education in 2009. Since that time, I have taught in four Regina elementary schools in the capacity of primary and middle years Physical Education teacher. I have been a classroom teacher for grades three, four, five, six, seven, and eight. As an employee of the school division, I gave back to my educational community by acting as league coordinator for the Regina Public Schools Competitive Elementary Volleyball League, an institution that I managed from 2010 through to the end of 2016. This league tends to serve approximately sixteen female and sixteen male teams annually. It should be noted that while there are currently forty-four elementary schools under Regina Public Schools' jurisdiction, the majority choose not to participate in the division's competitive league, for reasons such as school-based interest (as far as the students and/or coaches are concerned), as well perceived levels of ability.

I have served as a Councillor with my professional organization, the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, since 2011. Since 2015, I have been a sitting executive board director with the same organization. Serving in these roles has afforded me the opportunity to meet professionals from across the teaching profession, from professions auxiliary to education, and from various levels of government. I identify this involvement as it has played a role in informing my thinking on the theory and practice of interprofessional collaboration. I have had the opportunity to witness several real-life partner-based endeavour first-hand. As these experiences occurred adjacent to this study, it is important to identify that one often informed the other. As a board director, being able to apply theoretical and academic understandings of

interprofessional collaboration in my analysis of our administrations' directions and motivations made me more effective in my oversight role of our organization. In turn, being able to see such partnerships in action undoubtedly informed my own assumptions regarding interprofessional collaboration. As the sole researcher and analyzer of the data, I would be remiss to think that these experiences did not inform the conclusions reached in this work.

Prior to teaching, and before working in the landscape of educational politics, I was a competitor. I loved to win, and loved competing with and against others who felt the same. I have transitioned appropriately from one life-space to the next. My passion for competing myself quickly turned to helping others achieve their goals. Thus, began my life as a coach. It was through coaching that I became enamored with teaching and learning, which ultimately led me to my profession. Other obligations and a young family of my own have meant a temporary hiatus in coaching for me; however, to this day, I identify with the role of the coach. Personally, there is little as satisfying as having a hand in mentoring, teaching, and supporting an individual or a group of people whilst they work towards their own ambitions.

The game is so seemingly straightforward, yet it is riddled with complex techniques and tactics that must be employed in a relatively small space over a relatively short amount of time. Volleyball was always my preferred context to teach and coach. I have worked directly with athletes aged four to twenty-three, on the court and on the beach, in developmental contexts, as well as on teams that trained to compete locally, provincially, and nationally. The more that I worked with pre-adolescent youth, the more I began to reflect on my own coaching practices.

I hold a very polarizing view with regards to the 13U and 14U age divisions. When I started this research in 2014, in my opinion, where volleyball is concerned, Canada (schools, clubs, associations, and sport groups) did a less than stellar job in working with its pre-

adolescent athletes. The game of volleyball relies on a group of physically coordinated athletes to be able to move as individuals, and as a collective. As with any rally-based sport, play ends when the ball hits the playing surface, or is ruled out of play. By far, the simplest skill to master is that of the serve: the only ‘closed’, or fully player-controlled portion of the game. After that, all other contacts depend on another player’s manipulation of the ball. A controlled serve has the potential to introduce trajectories and velocities that prove difficult for younger and newer players to adapt to, as they prepare to move to and receive a fast-approaching, or quickly-dropping, volleyball. What can – and often does – follow such serving are misplays. When a game relies on successful service and service-reception before it can progress to the rally, it leaves much to be desired.

My views have softened somewhat as measurable improvements have since been instituted; however, there is still much to be desired. The competitive structure that we have in place now rewards winners, and in order to win, teams need to serve more efficiently than their opposition, and receive their opposition’s serves more efficiently than their opposition does with theirs. Regardless of how well an individual or team can pass, dig, attack, and defend, little of that matters when, in my estimation, more points end in a service ace or service error than not at the pre-adolescent stages of volleyball. The obvious irony here is that serving and service reception are two important, yet small, components of the sport. The play is made up of other skills, many of which are not given an opportunity to develop in a game that ceases play the moment a serve goes into the net, out of bounds, or off of a young person’s body erroneously. To receive a service from a height and speed not seen during most other parts of the game is difficult. This difficulty can quickly lead to frustration, particularly in the ever-evolving mind of

an adolescent person. Many quit the game without ever learning the majority of its skills, or even having the opportunity to do so.

#### **1.4 Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to identify what practices, resources and people are essential for a new, volunteer-driven extracurricular program to thrive at the elementary school level. In this study, I investigated the practices and processes that were involved in administering a new extracurricular program. It explored, in detail, the resources – be they financial, infrastructural, or otherwise – that were needed to establish a new activity such as ours. These topics are explored using an Appreciative Inquiry approach, as a means to focus on those contributions that were positive and rendered impacts that lent themselves to successful outcomes within the program's design.

#### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

This work was completed in conjunction with developing a new Triple-Ball volleyball league. In addition to the academic benefits that arrive as a result of studying this league, there are community benefits realized as a result of the successful implementation of new programming.

First and foremost, this effort was put forward for the pre-adolescent young people who directly benefited from it. Today's popular media does not allow society to forget that, as a Canadian society, our pre-adolescent young people are becoming less active, more sedentary, and increasingly obese (Kolt, 2013). There are multiple indicators that help shape the choices that young people make when it comes to engaging in activities that require physical commitments (Chin & Ludwig, 2013). Regardless of the reasons, the reality is that in many Regina elementary schools, extracurricular programming cannot keep up with demand. Due to

several factors, such as the competitive structure of a number of elementary athletic leagues and the player cuts that they bring about, as well as a number of teachers and other school employees who choose not to volunteer their time at the extracurricular level, many pre-adolescent young people who would like to experience such programming do not have the opportunity to get involved at their schools and in their communities. This phenomenon is more likely due to volunteer and programming restraints, and less to do with the availability of infrastructure:

[O]ppORTunities for physical activity have been well implemented at the community level; 95% [of Canadian parents] report that there are nearby parks and outdoor spaces, and 94% [of Canadian parents] report local availability of public facilities and programs for physical activity, such as pool, arenas and leagues. (Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute, 2013, para. 1)

This Triple-Ball volleyball league offered additional and innovative programming to youth and schools who wanted to take advantage of it. It was the hope of this project that these pre-adolescent young people will become physically active more often, will engage in their schools in a way that they had not previously connected to it, and will develop applicable volleyball skills in a research-proven context (Volleyball Canada, 2014a). All of this was afforded to elementary student-participants who may not otherwise have had the opportunity.

Interprofessional collaboration is the way of the future (Johnston & Truluck, 2011). Success at many levels is brought on as a result of many professional people and organizations working cooperatively (Johnston & Truluck, 2011). In the case of this project, there were many different groups and people to consider. All held a specific skill or role to offer up for the benefit of the collective. There were several organizations and informed professionals that came together to make this project possible. Among other institutions whose roles varied in scope, the major organizations included: Regina Public Schools, The University of Regina's Faculty of Kinesiology & Health Studies, and Sask Volleyball. Without them, a study of this magnitude would not have been possible. While literature exists to highlight the benefits of interprofessional

collaboration (Johnston & Truluck, 2011) and warn of the potential roadblocks towards successful execution (Haythornthwaite et al., 2006), this work should allow for data and reflection in the area of interprofessional collaboration, particularly between organizations that have just entered into the collaborative arrangement with each other (Carroll et al., 2010). Its findings, of course, are relatively novel to the context in Regina, and may offer insight into future pursuits similar to it throughout the province of Saskatchewan. As school boards and individual schools wrestle with the place that extracurricular opportunities hold in public schools, issues such as volunteerism, financial costs, and facility availability are all prominent in the discussion. Any relevant literature that could contribute to the conversation would likely be of benefit.

From elementary student-participants, to coaches, to school-based champions, to organizational administration, successful integration and execution of community-driven pursuits serve as an excellent catalyst in motivating future community endeavors (Johnston & Truluck, 2011). The hope of a program such as this is that when stakeholders witness success, they may be more likely to work towards replication in the future.

In terms of motivations among partner organizations, working in and for the service of young people as an instigator should not be forgotten. Work of this nature is beneficial for the community at large; it contributes to a growing body of knowledge and research-based findings and allows opportunity for organizations to hone their abilities to work collaboratively. Of equal importance is the prospect that work such as this offers to young people. The establishment of extracurricular work, for the purposes of allowing youth an opportunity to participate in sport, is a noble pursuit that provides many the chance to play, learn, and work together, in a way that they may not have had available to them otherwise (Holt et al., 2013). In addition to the obvious

exposure to physical activity, properly planned extracurricular activities tend to expose youth to people and programming that teach basic and advanced movement skills to a cohort of young people who may not otherwise have learned them properly, at age-appropriate times in their development (Holt et al., 2013). Transferability of life skills is also likely; youth associated with properly planned extracurricular pursuits have the opportunity to practice self-regulation, budding leadership, working with others with team goals in mind, and building confidence. These traits are all potential byproducts of exposure to extracurricular physical activity, provided that these activities are carried out in an organized fashion (Holt et al., 2013).

Finally, the significance of contributing academic data to the void that exists in Triple-Ball volleyball cannot be overstated. In what has already proven to offer an age-appropriate option to pre-adolescent volleyball athletes learning the sport (Volleyball Canada, 2014b), there is next to no reliable data after years of pilot projects, tweaks, and national participation. It is possible that this study will, in part, remedy the gap in the current literature that is Triple-Ball volleyball, one that remains more than a decade after the variation's conception.

## **1.6 Conclusion**

In conjunction with the accompanying research project, this study seeks to contribute to pre-adolescent athletic development and opportunity, as well as connect them to their school-communities. Additionally, it examined one extracurricular pursuit in schools as it was being offered, aiming to identify options and make recommendations to promote both interprofessional collaboration and community engagement, all in an effort to bolster support and capacity for similar programming. Finally, this research yielded literature to a field that has virtually none: the benefits associated with Triple-Ball volleyball at the pre-adolescent stages of athletic development.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Introduction

Physical activity among Canadian youth is a topic of relevance in Canada (Active Healthy Kids Canada, 2020). In addition to regular curricular programming, many elementary schools offer physically-inclined extracurricular pursuits to their students, in order to increase connections to the school community, build relationships between educators and students, and offer pre-adolescent youth one more avenue to participate in physical activity.

Involved stakeholders in the current extracurricular landscape (i.e., elementary student-participants, parents, teachers, administrators, and community partners) see the role and the merits of these programs differently. Through the power of interprofessional collaboration, stakeholders can be motivated to come together to deliver these services.

In this chapter, the main areas of literature informing this study are discussed. First, an exploration of physical activity at-large in pre-adolescent youth is presented. The importance of pre-adolescent physical activity is explained, as is the pre-adolescent concept of ‘play’. *Sport for Life’s Long Term Development Stages* model is also presented in an effort to allow for contextual understanding of developmentally-appropriate pre-adolescent physical activity. Next, the topic of staff and community involvement at the school level is unpacked, particularly as it pertains to the elementary school level. Following this outline, an in-depth look at interprofessional collaboration is offered. The power of interprofessional collaboration is surveyed, especially as it relates to effective partnerships in community endeavours. Complexities associated with defining partnerships is explored, insofar as the existing literature is concerned. To draw chapter two to a close, a short discussion of the definition and benefits of the Triple-Ball volleyball adaptation are

offered, before a brief conclusion allows for the presentation of this thesis' four research questions.

## **2.2 Physical Activity in Pre-Adolescence**

While it is difficult to determine a precise definition of physical activity, it has been argued that it should be centred on fitness pursuits, learning how and why to be physically active in several contexts, and the health related aspects of those activities (Johnson & Turner, 2016). Specifically, physical activity has to do with a pursuit that is physically active in nature, regardless of whether the act is instructional, objective-based (i.e., winning a match), or purely for leisure. Activities such as “aquatics, dance, exercise, games, outdoor recreation, play and sport” are all valid forms of physical activity (Johnson & Turner, 2016, p. 9).

One difficulty that exists in attempting to combat childhood obesity and physical inactivity is the struggle associated with accurately and reliably assessing quality daily physical activity (Stookey, Mealey & Shaughnessy, 2011). Long-term community planning is important, as it is easier for pre-adolescent young people to be moderately to vigorously physically active on a daily basis if there are facilities within a close proximity to a young person's home and school (van Loon et al., 2013). Clearly, the community-at-large plays a vital role in the promotion and maintenance of physical activity for pre-adolescent youth.

### ***2.2.1 Importance of Physical Activity in Pre-adolescent Years***

It would be a challenge to overstate the importance of physical activity in the lives of Canadian youth. The benefits are many, as are the risks associated with inactivity.

Currently, our national performance ranks poorly in many areas assessed on an international scale, including overall physical activity, active transportation, and sedentary behaviours (Active Healthy Kids Canada, 2020). Perhaps most telling is the literature that

focuses on inactivity as young people age. In Canada, 84% of toddlers (aged 3-4 years) receive enough quality daily physical activity to satisfy international guidelines (Colley et al., 2013). Compared to their childhood (aged 5-11 years) and teenage (aged 12-17 years) counterparts, the numbers tell a much more ominous story; only 7% and 4% of young people in those demographics, respectively, meet the prescribed guidelines (Colley et al., 2013). The issue can also be looked at through a gendered lens; at virtually every stage in life, women and girls report less involvement in organized sport, and less weekly physical activity than their male counterparts (Canadian Women & Sport, 2020). Nearly two-thirds of all female Canadian children and youth are not involved in sport, and the numbers are on a steady decline (Canadian Women & Sport, 2020).

Childhood obesity is on the rise (Kulesa, 2014). To cite one example, Kulesa (2014) explains that “the percentage of children aged 6-11 years . . . who were obese increased from 7% in 1980 to nearly 18% in 2010” (p. 4). With this ever-growing socio-medical epidemic comes the reality that Canadians will pay for their inactive and unhealthy lifestyles. This payment may come in many forms. The negative physical, emotional, and social ramifications for obese individuals are well-documented (Anderson et al. 2007; Haines & Kim, 2013; Jacka et al., 2001; Strawbridge et al., 2002). The burden of obesity is also carried financially; Canadians are committing large portions of their tax dollars to the public healthcare system. As obesity rates continue to climb in Canada, so too do the economic costs of raising overweight young people:

Health professionals are aware that the rising trends in excess weight among children and adolescents will put a heavy burden on health services (for example, 10% of young people with type 2 diabetes are likely to develop renal failure by the time they enter adulthood), requiring hospitalization followed by life-long dialysis treatment. Health services... may not easily bear these costs, and the result could be a significant fall in life expectancy. (Lobstein, Baur, & Uauy, 2004, p. 5)

There is no denying that greater physical inactivity brings with it a higher incidence of obesity in pre-adolescent youth. The literature is quite thorough in its conviction that obese children become obese adults (Anderson et al., 2007; Haines & Kim, 2013). Obese adults have an amplified chance of early morbidity as a result of high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes, sleep apnea, respiratory problems, stroke, heart disease, and many cancers, including breast, prostate, and colon (Reilly et al., 2003). Conversely, young people who engage in physical activity on a regular basis are subject to health benefits such as normalized blood pressure, aerobic fitness, skeletal health, psychological well-being, and healthy levels of glucose metabolic rates (Sallis et al., 2000). Obesity in pre-adolescence brings with it an increase in blood pressure, as well as higher levels of unhealthy fat (Freedman et al., 2009). To further compound the problem with this growing epidemic, young people who identify as being asthmatic, or who have parents who instill in them a fear around asthma, with regards to being physically active, are more likely to disengage from moderate to vigorous physical activity (Haines & Kim, 2013), thus putting themselves at risk to become obese. When monitored, and where education on living with asthma is present, there are few risks associated with being active as a young person with asthma (Haines & Kim, 2013). Physical health ramifications exist where childhood obesity is fostered and allowed to remain unchecked.

Evidence suggests that pre-adolescent physical inactivity can lead to depression in adulthood (Jacka et al., 2011). Furthermore, it is likely that the presence of physical activity can keep depression and depression-like symptoms at bay, in young adulthood and beyond (McKercher et al., 2009). Conversely, the prevalence of physical inactivity in one's life can be linked to reduced levels of depression, depressive symptoms, and new depression diagnoses in adulthood (Kritz-Silverstein et al., 2001; Strawbridge et al., 2002). This benefit seems to extend

beyond certain demographic boundaries, such as sex, race, financial limitations, body mass index, and even the consumption of alcohol and tobacco (Strawbridge et al., 2002). Physically healthy pre-adolescent youth are more likely to be psychologically healthy pre-adolescent youth, and tend to have higher measures of success as adults, where certain outcomes are concerned (Kilburn, 2013).

In addition to the myriad ways youth physical inactivity threatens the physical health of society's individuals, it also brings with it very real economic consequences that involve everyone on a societal level. It is not difficult to see the connection between the risks associated with being obese and developing an overreliance on the healthcare system. This dependence on health services brings with it increased costs. In the Medicare system currently utilized in Canada, increased costs are shared by taxpaying citizens. In this way, obesity places a financial strain on all Canadians; whether individuals are obese themselves does not matter. It is difficult to estimate an exact dollar figure when it comes to the financial burden placed on the Canadian medical system by obesity, but as obesity rises, so too do health risks and diseases (Freedman et al., 2009), and along with them, the economic costs associated with their treatment. There are data that point to the fact that as physical inactivity and obesity rates among adults remain high, so too does the economic and productivity costs. It is estimated that the burden placed on our national healthcare system by physical inactivity, compounded with a decline in workplace productivity as a result of sedentary behaviours, costs Canadian taxpayers over two billion dollars, or over 2% of all healthcare costs incurred in a year (Katzmarzyk, 2011; Katzmarzyk & Janssen, 2004).

Childhood obesity also poses a threat to social justice where economic inequities exist. Research has shown that childhood obesity is far more prevalent in the lives of disadvantaged

pre-adolescent youth (Anderson et al., 2007), and that the gap in rising childhood obesity rates continues to expand between those pre-adolescent young people who are disadvantaged economically, compared to those who are not. In the ongoing fight against systemic social injustice, this is one area where physical inactivity and obesity may prove to be widening the financial and health gaps, especially as younger generations mature into adulthood and start their own families (Anderson et al., 2007).

Participating in organized recreation as infrequently as once a week has a positive impact on the healthy regulation of body weight in pre-adolescent young people (Quinto Romani, 2011). What is more, this same participation can cut the odds of becoming overweight in half. (Drenowatz et al., 2013). Among other benefits associated with participation in organized sport comes the reality that pre-adolescent youth who participate in these activities are also more likely to stay active, while limiting the time spent in front of the screen (Vella et al., 2013).

In short, it is in the best interest of all Canadians to see youth be and stay healthy. By investigating and recognizing the features of successful physically-inclined extracurricular programming, Canada stands to be a physically, mentally, and emotionally healthier and, in turn, a wealthier country as it moves further into the twenty-first century.

### ***2.2.2 The Pre-adolescent Construct of ‘Play’***

The power and potential of tapping into the natural childhood aspiration to ‘play’ cannot be overstated. In studies where age, ethnicity, sex, and even socioeconomic conditions are controlled, evidence suggest that one key to getting young people involved in physical activity is to simply afford them the opportunity to do so (Chin & Ludwig, 2013). Much has been made of the role that excitement and engagement play in the choices that people make in their physical

activity and by extension, their physical health (Baldwin et al., 2013). Pre-adolescent youth are no different.

The difficulty surrounding the theory of why – and how – young people play is well documented (Bergen & Hinshaw, 2013; Bryan, 2018; Colliver & Arguel, 2018). Researchers tend to stress the spontaneous nature of play, rather than examine the phenomenon as a purposeful act, where the young people taking part in the activities are doing so deliberately, and in order to attain achievements. For many pre-adolescent youth, being physically active is often a by-product of a thoroughly enjoyable experience. The benefits in allowing pre-adolescent young people more freedom in selecting how, when, and why they are active could prove to have innumerable physical, mental, social, and economic health consequences, all of which have the potential to benefit whole societies (Anderson et al., 2007; Haines & Kim, 2013; Jacka et al., 2001; Strawbridge et al., 2002).

### ***2.2.3 Long Term Development Stages: “Train to Train” Stage***

As this study’s focus group of elementary student-participant athletes are all females between the ages of eleven and thirteen, it is important to focus on the “Train to Train” stage, as outlined in Sport for Life’s *Long Term Development Stages* model. A surface glance at the rationale for focus at this developmental stage makes its importance clear:

During the Train to Train stage (females 11-15, males 12-16), young athletes need [i]ncreased training hours... at this stage to develop [their] long-term potential. At this stage, athletes are ready to consolidate their basic sport-specific skills and tactics. The Train to Train stage makes or breaks the athlete. Athletes may exhibit special talent, play to win, and do their best, but they still need to allocate more time to training skills and physical capacities than competing in formal settings. To maximize their long-term potential, winning should remain a secondary emphasis. This approach is critical to the long-term development of top performers and lifelong participants. (Sport for Life, 2020, para. 1)

*Sport for Life* outlines the *Long Term Development Stages* model in its entirety, elaborating on why each developmental stage is important and appropriate by broadening the contextual scope, as it applies to the greater goal of lifelong athletic development. Put simply, there is a time to develop a love of physical activity, a time to develop skills ranging from basic to advanced, a time to develop an understanding of a specific sport, and a time to develop a healthy approach to competition. The timing of this sequence varies somewhat depending on biological sex and specific sport, but generally speaking, the development and refining of sport-specific skills falls into the “Train to Train” age band.

The Triple-Ball volleyball adaptation helps to facilitate this focus on skill development. Traditional volleyball relies on a successful service reception in order to arrive at the other phases of the rally. An unfortunate irony for the sport is that learning to properly receive a service is one of the more advanced skills. With a failed service reception comes the end of a rally, and the opportunity for the cycle to repeat itself. Without the Triple-Ball adaptation, many young athletes would not have the opportunity to practice other volleyball skills in a game situation as often as they need to in order to develop them.

### **2.3 ‘Triple-Ball’ Volleyball**

Volleyball is a popular sport that can trace its own roots as far back as 1895 Massachusetts (“History Of Volleyball”, n.d.). Perhaps somewhat ironically, it is interesting that Triple-Ball – a variation introduced to volleyball over 120 years later – cannot easily boast of its temporal and local origins. While its beginnings may be difficult to pin down, Triple-Ball’s benefits are not. The program is sound, and is used as a teaching tool at all levels of the game. Doug Reimer, the University of British Columbia’s women’s volleyball team six-time *U Sports* Championship-winning coach, uses the format in his training sessions to increase the number of

contacts with the ball ('touches') that his athletes will experience (Reimer, 2014). What makes Triple-Ball so special?

### **2.3.1 Benefits – ‘Serve-Toss-Toss’**

According to Volleyball Canada, Triple-Ball volleyball offers pre-adolescent youth a promising alternative to the traditional model that has, in the past, failed to best serve its athletes. Put simply, 'Triple-Ball' gives young and often inexperienced athletes triple the opportunities to rally during a game/match of volleyball; where the traditional format sees all points enter play with a serve, two-thirds of the Triple-Ball opportunities are presented with a toss from a coach on the sideline. It is easy to see how this adaptation leads to more contact: the coach intends to create rallies; the athlete *aims* to avoid them by scoring service aces.

To fully comprehend the rationale and benefits associated with this modified version of volleyball, Canada's *Long Term Development Stages* need to be understood. This framework – initially introduced in 2005 as the result of lagging international podium expectations – challenged Canadian athletes, parents, coaches, athletic clubs, and provincial and national sport organizations to examine their own beliefs and practices around age- and ability-appropriate training (Sport for Life, 2020). This was done to measure and assess how athletes are being exposed to, and trained in, various sports and disciplines throughout their entire lifetime.

The intended athletic cohort for Triple-Ball volleyball was athletes in the "Train to Train" Sport for Life, 2020) stage of the *Long Term Development* framework. The parameters for this stage are generally females aged eleven to fourteen, and males aged twelve to sixteen. The focus in this stage is not on competitive outcomes, as much as the emphasis on training to increase athletic capacities, sport-specific skills, and a general work-ethic required for improvement in the long-term. Meaningful training- and playing-time is invaluable at this developmental age.

Triple-Ball offers all participating athletes more time on the volleyball court (Dunning, 2010; Skelly, n.d.). Volleyball Canada was careful to introduce rules that stipulate a measure of equal-playing time; this ensures an opportunity for equitable development, while safeguarding against young athletes connecting the emotion of boredom with the sport of volleyball (Dunning, 2010; Skelly, n.d.). As rotations are regulated, every participating athlete has a chance to play all six positions equally. In every set, athletes are more likely to serve, receive serves, set for their attacking teammates, receive sets from teammates to attack, and play defense from both the front and back rows. As athletes grow in their confidence in playing each position, their overall confidence as athletes – and as people – will develop (Volleyball Canada, n.d.). This is particularly important where pre-adolescent female athletes are concerned, as the need to avoid embarrassment in sport can often overpower all else (Gilbert, 2001).

Inferential benefits are worth mentioning. With the limit of one serve per rotation comes the guarantee that no individual athlete can serve the set out, literally from start-to-finish, in well under ten minutes. As farfetched as this may sound, in my capacity as both a coach and referee, I have witnessed it happen first-hand on multiple occasions in a typical volleyball setting. Even where a perfect 25-point run fails to occur, one young athlete with the knack for an overhand serve can score many consecutive points, being stopped only by his or her own missed serve attempt. It is always a distinct possibility, and far too often becomes reality at this developmental age. While many sets will not end 25-0 having been served to completion by one over-powering athlete, double-digit service streaks are not uncommon in competition at this developmental age.

Of all the possible benefits associated with exposing athletes to Triple-Ball volleyball, none are more telling than the increased number of rallies an athlete in the “Train to Train” stage will be exposed to (Dunning, 2010; Skelly, n.d.). For the purpose of this research, a ‘rally’ is

considered play beyond the initial contact (the serve) and the first reception of that initial contact (the service reception). In 2009, Volleyball Alberta ran a Triple-Ball pilot at the 13U/14U age. It anecdotally “documented that it more than doubled the number of contacts and rallies versus the standard game [of volleyball]” (Volleyball Canada, n.d.).

In that same year, the Ontario Volleyball Association organized a Triple-Ball tournament for their 14U male athletes to compete in. They collected quantitative data during the event, and compared it to both a traditional 14U volleyball tournament, as well as statistics compiled from the 2009 Men’s World League Final played between Brazil and Serbia (Volleyball Canada, n.d.). The sample size may be small, but the results were telling. In the 2009 Men’s World League Final, points went beyond the initial serve and service reception 68% of the time. To look at this data from the alternative perspective, points ended on a service ace or service error 32% of the time. The Ontario Volleyball Association’s Triple-Ball tournament yielded numbers similar; 81% of the time, points were played beyond the initial serve and service reception. Only 19% of the time did a point fail to reach rally. The exact opposite was true when 14U male athletes played traditional volleyball; 80% of all points ended in either a service ace or service error. A mere 20% of all points resulted in a rally. Put another way, these fourteen year-old athletes were only being exposed to the opportunity to rally one-fifth of the time.

In addition to this support:

By initiating the rally with a serve in the 13U age group... 57% of rallies contain two or less contacts... the second contact volley by the designated setter occurs 13% of the time... a third contact occurs 16% of the time... the average rally contains 0.28 attacks... [and] the average rally contains 4.16 contacts. By initiating the rally with a toss in the 13U age group... 99% of rallies contain two or less contacts... the second contact volley by the designated setter occurs 64% of the time... a third contact occurs 49% of the time... the average rally contains 0.85 attacks... [and] the average rally contains 5.61 contacts. (Volleyball Canada, n.d.)

Perhaps the following summarizes Triple-Ball volleyball’s benefits most succinctly:

In my opinion, Triple[-]Ball [is] a resounding success. It [is] easier to teach the transitional movement skills of the game in a format that promotes longer rallies. It [is] also far easier to convince the team to play aggressively and swing on attack opportunities when they [know] that [they will] be getting numerous chances to attack. The level of play [is] much higher and our team [has] to face a far greater variety of playing situations than if only 20% of the balls [have] gotten to [the] attack phase, as is typical for traditional volleyball at this level. (Dunning, 2010)

Triple-Ball volleyball is not new, nor is it underutilized. This is a variation of volleyball that has been played in Canada by multiple provinces for many years, documented by Volleyball Canada as far back as 2009. At the club level, Saskatchewan has used the modification at its 13U level since at least 2010. Academic research – and the accompanying literature – is lagging behind.

Traditional volleyball does not always give our athletes the chance to practice a majority of the skills associated with the game, skills that they will need to be successful at later stages of the sport. Additionally, so many wasted opportunities to practice the game in its entirety could turn many young people away from volleyball. As it is a game that ‘speeds up’ as athletes mature developmentally, most participants need to wait until they have developed appropriately to realize the full potential of what the game has to offer. This can take a long time in the sport of volleyball. This is the reason that Volleyball Canada has mandated equal play time policies at the 13U level, banned certain positional play at the 14U level, why they have decided against allowing their club teams to utilize the libero position (a defensive specialist who performs only in the back row of the court) until the 16U and 17U stages for females and males, respectively, and why those same age restrictions are set for overhand passing (‘setting’). Volleyball is a sport that needs to be learned, played, and enjoyed in its entirety. At the 13U and 14U levels, it is my belief that this means Triple-Ball.

## **2.4 Staff & Community Involvement in Schools**

Much of what happens in a school happens outside the purview of curricular-based programming. Additional athletic, artistic, and academic offerings – often referred to as extracurricular programming – happen at the behest of students who are seeking an experience outside of what the public education system mandates and resources. This extra programming is made possible as a result of the volunteerism exhibited by staff, parents, and other community-minded adults who feel a want or need to give back in such a capacity. It is no stretch whatsoever to suggest that extracurricular pursuits as they have come to be known would not be possible without the contributions of well-intentioned volunteers.

### ***2.4.1 Elementary Schools & Extracurricular Programming***

The role of the elementary school is changing (McNinch & Schick, 2013). To add to a diverse and changing landscape, economic and social inequities exist throughout our publicly funded education system (McNinch & Schick, 2013). These differences have an effect on which schools can offer certain extracurricular pursuits. If there has been a constant where extracurricular offerings are concerned, it has been the opportunity for teachers and students to strengthen relationships between one another (Gehlbach et al., 2012). There are difficulties in this, in terms of practicalities. For example, the financial and time constraints put on school systems limits the availability of professional development. As a result, it is common to see only the programming that is deemed non-negotiable receive funding and teaching release time. For this reason, many extracurricular programming options tend only to be offered by those who already possess the qualification, experience, and confidence to offer them, as there are few opportunities for professionals to receive additional training in areas that are not directly related to their ability to carry out their job.

All Boards of Education in the Province of Saskatchewan recognize, endorse, and encourage the development of school-based extracurricular programming. This is evidenced in communication from Board senior administration to their schools and employees, encouraging staff volunteerism to make it possible. While there is no direct compensation afforded to teachers and other educational staff who assist with such programming, all of the twenty-seven School Boards in Saskatchewan offer their employees incentives for their dedication to their students through extracurricular pursuits. These incentives come in the form of official recognition and earned days off with pay. To serve as an example, Regina Public Schools and the Regina Public School Teachers' Association have entered into contracts guaranteeing these incentives. In the 2016-2018 LINC (local) contract between the Board of Education and its teachers, Section 3.03 (Leave in Recognition of Extra-curricular Activities) states that:

The importance of extra-curricular activities is recognized as part of the educational offerings provided to students... [and] in recognition of the time and energy teachers contribute to their school communities in Regina, teachers who have accumulated one hundred and twenty five (125) hours of Board-approved extracurricular activities in a school year shall receive a maximum of one day of paid leave in recognition. (LINC Agreement: July 2016 – June 2018)

This language and intent is not unlike many of the other LINC agreements found throughout the province. Boards of Education recognize that extracurricular programming is valuable, and encourage their teaching workforce to offer programming and carry it out themselves.

Parents and students tend to be less specific about the philosophical orientation of extracurricular programming. Instead, they focus their attention to whether the programming is being offered in any capacity, with little consideration for who is offering them (Active Healthy Kids Canada, 2020). With the infrastructure in place, many Canadian parents and pre-adolescent youth want to see these locations being utilized (Active Healthy Kinds Canada, 2020).

From the perspective of the teacher, opinions on the validity and role of extracurricular programming are diverse. Many teachers feel that the profession is already pushed to the brink of exhaustion and burnout in the face of ever-changing policy, innovative practices, and cuts to funding, programs, and resources (McNinch & Schick, 2013). Certain Saskatchewan educators feel that it is the role of the community to provide extracurricular services to its youth, while others would like to see direct compensation for their services in these areas, commensurate to how they are compensated in the scope of their regular duties as set forth in *The Education Act, 1995* (McNinch & Schick, 2013). Still others could not disagree more, citing extracurricular involvement as both a major job satisfier, and an integral method of connection and building relationships with their students outside of the academic context (McNinch & Schick, 2013). Research has confirmed what has long been expected: the strength of the relationships between a teacher and students are paramount in schooling, learning, and achieving goals and outcomes (Gehlbach et al., 2012). The magnitude of their impact seems to have substantial consequences on a large amount of goals, not only academic, but relational and behavioral as well (Juvonen, 2006). The relationship between a teacher and a student is not unlike the connection that a coach and athlete share.

## **2.5 Interprofessional Collaboration**

At the heart of this research is the role that people and organizations can play when they come together under a common banner to work towards a common goal. Broadly understood in the literature as ‘interprofessional collaboration’, this section will explore why these exercises are effective in achieving common outcomes. It will also serve to outline the complexities associated with understanding the various aspects of interprofessional collaboration as a phenomenon.

### ***2.5.1 The Power of Interprofessional Collaboration***

Purposeful change can often take a multitude of human, financial, intellectual, and experiential resources to accomplish. When agencies work together to positively contribute to a community and its people, they bring with their arrangement as many challenges as they do advantages (Haythornthwaite et al., 2006; Johnston & Truluck, 2011; Mosier & Ruxon, 2018). When interprofessional collaboration works at its apex, results that may have been difficult to achieve with resources stretched thin across several organizations become more realistic as they are brought together (Schnobrich-Davis & Terrill, 2010).

Bureaucracy has the potential to impede the development of beneficial outcomes, particularly that which involves interprofessional collaboration (Johnston & Truluck, 2011; Mosier & Ruxon, 2018). Overcoming these challenges when dealing with multiple organizations is essential to the success of cooperative efforts. It is necessary that all institutional collaboration is unequivocally promoted at both the organizational and administrative levels (Sheridan et al., 2006). Sheridan et al. (2006) argue that risks need to be taken, and innovative paths towards outcome achievement must be walked in order for these pursuits to work.

Johnston and Truluck (2011) cite technological advances and advantages as one of many reasons why interprofessional collaboration in recreational programming has become both popular and necessary in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Thriving is preferable to surviving; in order to achieve growth and the successful completion of outcomes, groups working towards creating recreational opportunities must come together to recognize their own strengths and limitations, relative to the group at large (Johnston & Truluck, 2011). Time and money can be allocated most effectively in settings where group teamwork is the norm. This takes place against a backdrop of improved

working relationships and revealed networks, both of which are invaluable during and after a current collaborative process has drawn to a close (Johnston & Truluck, 2011).

It is likely that interprofessional collaboration has as much a role to play in providing recreational services to young people as it does in any other industry, ministry, or group of agencies, particularly as it pertains to the programming of recreational activities:

It is difficult for a single youth agency to make a significant and lasting impact in fulfilling the multiplicity of needs for youth . . . Recreation agencies need to collaborate with other types of agencies to provide positive interventions in the lives of these youth. Without a comprehensive approach to service deliver[y] many youth may fall through the cracks of community systems. (Brown, 1995, p. 1)

Noonan, Morningstar, and Erickson (2008) conducted research that tells of eleven key strategies that have the potential to sustain and fortify interprofessional collaboration. In the context of this research, allowing for *flexible scheduling and staffing* made it possible for school-based teams to put timelines and philosophies in place that work best at the local level. *Following-up* with stakeholders once the season was officially underway offered data to the research team and gave all school-based teams clarity. *Administrative support* allowed for the potential to troubleshoot more efficiently, and more expeditiously. Securing a *variety of funding sources* offered our program more flexibility in its delivery, and more opportunities for growth. *Benefiting from technological advances* allowed for more thorough communication, frequent updates shared between all stakeholders, and a reliable method to share and collect data. *Building relationships* afforded stakeholders to become involved in the entire process, now, and hopefully in the near future. *Meeting with students and families* helped us deliver our mission and goals to critical stakeholders, and allowed for more thorough communication, with respect to the aims of both the project and the research that came out of it. *Training critical stakeholders*, as well as *growing our*

*network of staff and volunteers*, meant that we had a solid cohort of people whose interests matched our own, and whose expertise benefitted the pre-adolescent youth that they directly and indirectly worked for. *Frequent meeting among program administrators* helped keep coordinators, researchers, and community partners abreast of developments. *Disseminating information to a broad audience* was vital and allowed us the opportunity to share the benefits of the program.

### **2.5.2 Partnerships in Community Endeavors**

When it comes to delivering high quality services to a target demographic, one cannot overlook the value that organizational teamwork plays. More specifically, partnerships between community institutions, private enterprises, and government agencies are becoming increasingly prevalent when it comes to the coordination and delivery of recreation and leisure services (Frisby et al., 2004). In a time of heightened transparency, accountability and competition it is becoming increasingly important for organizations and people to identify and seek out others who hold similar ethics and principles in order to work together to achieve similar priorities (Cousens et al., 2006; Thibault et al., 2009). Interprofessional pursuits involving public institutions, tax dollars, and young people must be acutely aware of this, as watchful eyes tend to look closely and critically at that which involves the public's money and minors (Cousens et al., 2006). As an attempt is made to turn mission into reality, there is a significant advantage in not only identifying who potential partners and stakeholders may be, but also in getting them to the planning table, together, in a vision's early talks and conceptualizations (Casey et al., 2009). This strategy tends to produce programming that is more likely to meet initial objectives, and remain in place for a longer, more pronounced period of time, thus raising the magnitude its impact has on those it was designed to affect (Casey et al., 2009). As an added benefit, endeavours set out

on with a well-understood partnership tend to be delivered with less capital, such as time and money (Casey et al., 2009). A phase-in philosophy will also help to increase the chance for lasting success; as much as ‘going big’ with ideas may be tempting, it is important that emerging community partnerships strive to accomplish realistic, yet substantial, goals in the early goings of newfound alliances (Casey et al., 2009).

### ***2.5.3 The Complexity of Defining Partnerships in the Literature: Collaboration***

As evidenced above, the perception that partnerships positively affect the outcomes associated with youth programming has been gaining traction. In an effort to both study and explain this phenomenon, researchers have started to unpack partnership as a term. Recent research has pointed out the reality that much of the literature published on the concept of ‘partnerships’ uses terms like co-management, collaboration, cooperation, working together, and agreement seemingly interchangeably (Plummer et al., 2006). Partnership has come to be understood as any relationship – formal or informal, legislated, mandated, or otherwise arranged – that sees a group of people and/or organizations working in synergy to realize opportunity, measurable outcomes, or any other set of goals deemed worthy (Bramwell & Lane, 2000). It is an affiliation that will aim for change and adaptation, and will be rooted in a common cause or mission that will see work or tasks assigned based on the capital or capacity of each partner to successfully contribute to the overarching set of goals (Brinkerhoff, 2002).

When discussing partnerships, it is important to define the type of relationship or relationships that are being sought. Brown and Keast (2003) places the terms cooperation, collaboration, and coordination along a continuum. Cooperation is usually brief in its relationship, and exists where the efforts of those involved are voluntary (Brown & Keast, 2003). Coordination, on the other hand, typically exists where partners or people are compelled to

appear towards working towards a common goal; this may be forced literally by legislation, or by a perceived need for organizational survival (Brown & Keast, 2003). This working definition is extended by Jamal and Getz (1995), who posit that collaboration takes cooperation one step further, and exists where multifaceted issues or potentially problematic conditions impeding success may lie. This collaborative ideal brings with it a more complicated dynamic; however, the opportunity for success where partners are approaching problems with an integrated, holistic method can have the potential of yielding success in deeper ways, and can lead to enhanced communication among member partners throughout the partnership (Shaw & Allen, 2006).

## **2.6 Conclusion**

Physical activity among youth is an area of national importance (Active Healthy Kids Canada, 2020). Many school-based programming affords teachers and youth the chance to come together, so that they may build on school-community connections, and enhance relationships that exist within the school. This is done against a backdrop of physical literacy, activity, and health promotion.

Many community stakeholders – elementary student-participants, parents, teachers, coaches, and community institutions, to name a few – acknowledge the important roles that these programs play in involving youth in sport and their communities. It is through organizational interdependencies and collaborations that these stakeholders may join forces to offer these supports most efficiently.

## **2.7 Research Questions**

This work sought to examine the process, resources, and people that are needed in order to have a collaborative partnership flourish in an effort to create a new program for the

betterment and development of young people. Specifically, the four research questions are as follows:

1. What practices and processes are involved in administrating a new extracurricular program? How are difficulties or constraints with these practices and processes dealt with?
2. What resources are involved in administrating a new extracurricular program? How are difficulties or constraints with resources dealt with?
3. What people and organizations are involved in administrating a new extracurricular program? How are difficulties or constraints with people dealt with?
4. What elements are present within the framework of this league that would suggest increased chances for stability? What elements are missing?

The methodology that will be used to examine this research and answer these questions will be discussed in the following chapter.

## **CHAPTER THREE: METHODS**

### **3.1 Introduction**

Outlined in this chapter is a specific description of the worldview and methods of research that were utilized throughout the work. The research participants are identified in detail, as is the rationale for having included each in the study. The general design of the research is explained, as is all data collection methods that were used. Data analysis is discussed, as are the ways trustworthiness was insured throughout the study.

### **3.2 Qualitative Research**

The work presented here aimed to gather the opinions and perspectives of the interviewees regarding the relationships that exist between multiple stakeholders, as they pertain to extracurricular pursuits, interprofessional collaboration, and the Triple-Ball (modified volleyball) game. A qualitative approach to this research suits these purposes ideally, as the objective was to study human behaviour (Creswell, 2014). Through the lens of a pragmatic worldview, an analysis through Appreciative Inquiry was carried out.

#### ***3.2.1 The Pragmatic Worldview***

Research should inform practical application. In my profession, I am constantly looking for pedagogical rationale founded in research to help me teach more efficiently and effectively and, in turn, help my students experience more achievement and growth. Perhaps it is through this belief that I felt a pragmatic approach (Creswell, 2014) best suited my research questions. A pragmatic approach “emphasize[s] the research problem and use[s] all approaches available to understand the problem... [to] focus attention on the research problem... and then us[es] pluralistic approaches to derive knowledge about the problem” (Creswell, 2014, p. 10-11).

### **3.2.2 Appreciative Inquiry Research**

It is not hyperbole to note that collaborative, innovative, and strength-based processes emerge when people dialogue in an appreciative model. The process itself enables them to co-create a future that is “owned” by all involved in the dialogue; and this mutual “ownership” results in a collaborative process for co-creation. Once individual members of a group or organization internalize the power of focusing on the positive aspects of a situation, the more facile the group or organization gets at managing the reality of constant and relentless change. (Watkins et al., 2011, p. 4)

An Appreciative Inquiry research method best suited the needs of this research. The Appreciative Inquiry method is inherently positive in nature, and is intended to be looked at in whole. Research questions were posed as opportunities to identify those elements that may have promoted the success of the program, and to determine those factors that may have lent themselves to stability. Potential future planning as a result of the findings is looked at as innovation. This research sought, among other things, to define and articulate the forces behind success, and look toward the future with an eye on what could be (Watkins et al., 2011). As Appreciative Inquiry seeks to focus on transformative ideas through open dialogue and question-asking, it is egalitarian by nature: an important feature when conducting research informed by various stakeholders with myriad levels of authority (Hung et al., 2018). Clearly, Appreciative Inquiry as a research lens was an appropriate vehicle to utilize in this quest for answers and imagination.

As a methodology, Appreciative Inquiry was first enunciated in the mid 1980’s by its early champions. Cooperrider and Srivastva were among the first to examine complex social and societal phenomena through a relatively new lens that lent itself to exploring, identifying, and studying factors in processes that were already experiencing successful outcomes (Cooperrider, 2010). With Appreciative Inquiry as a tool, the focus of this study is on what worked. In their work outlining Appreciative Inquiry as a methodology of modern qualitative study, Watkins et

al. (2011) offer a framework by which to approach unique and exciting questions, whose endgames circle around the notion of the identification of factors making positive impacts on a process, procedure, program, or experience. This method is made up of five stages of research, each focused on the positive, what is going right, and what could be when imagination and collaboration take root. Watkins et al. (2011) refer to these dimensions of Appreciative Inquiry as “the five ‘D’s” (p. 86). It is these “five D’s” that were used to drive the focus of all data collection tools and opportunities that presented themselves in the context of this research, including, perhaps most significantly, the semi-structured interviews that will be discussed in detail in sections that follow.

### **3.2.2.1 Definition.**

The *definition* section of the framework allowed participants to delve into an examination of the challenges sought to be remedied by positive intervention. This was crucial to the success (and point) of the entire Appreciative Inquiry approach: challenges were identified; however, instead of the labelling and accounting of problems, *definition* allowed for positive, exceptional examples of success to rise to the surface. During this phase of the Appreciative Inquiry process, focus was determined and distilled. As with all aspects of this methodology, the questions, mysteries, or potentials were determined and framed in the positive, in such a way that allowed the semi-structured interview discussions to be helpful, hopeful, constructive and optimistic in nature (Watkins et al., 2011). This stage, while relatively simple and straightforward in its scope, was needed to help ensure that groundwork and design were critical to the process right from the start. The significance of ‘framing’ of the question as a potential opportunity for improvement, rather than as the answer to the problem, was highly important. Insofar as this study was concerned, framing helped to shine a light on that which was already being, or was likely to be,

successful, rather than seeking new or additional solutions to issues that may not have been as pertinent (Watkins et al., 2011). In short, framing helped to focus on that which worked for the challenges that were experienced in context. Questions posed in this Appreciative Inquiry study looked more like, “what practices or policies are already in place that need to be expanded or nourished?” rather than, “in what ways are current practices and policies problematic, or holding success back?” A simplistic difference, to be sure, but one that certainly set the tone for the entire study as one of optimism and excitement, rather than pessimism and restoration. Watkins et al. (2011) sum this dichotomy:

[Appreciative Inquiry] is an approach to the development of human systems that recognizes that we can choose to approach human systems with the view that either... [h]uman systems are primarily constellations of problems/obstacles to be analyzed and overcome, or... [h]uman systems contain mysterious life-giving forces to be understood and embraced. (Watkins et al., 2011. p. 120)

### **3.2.2.2 Discovery.**

Inquiry was the cornerstone of this part in the process. Here, carefully crafted questions and queries were used in an effort to identify, extract, and elaborate on the life-giving forces that were present (Watkins et al., 2011). Unlike a more traditional interview looking for fact and/or attitude, the Appreciative Inquiry helped to arrive at a process much more akin to discussion or collaboration. Generative at heart, the ‘interview’ was guided; the main questions were created by the interviewer and shared with the interviewee ahead of time. The difference was experienced in a shared responsibility for learning, evolving, and pushing thought; both parties privy to the discussion (i.e., the researcher/interviewer, and the research participant/interviewee) bounced ideas off one another. At times, questions generated questions. In the case of this study, this phenomenon took root over successive interviews: while much of the initial talks with participants were devoted to discussing questions that had previously been agreed to, dialogue

evolved as rich and interesting topics and themes began to emerge as a result of the interview itself.

Stories are central to the discovery process of Appreciative Inquiry. While the design process generally allows all parties to build the positive framework with which to explore issues of mutual interest, the discovery process “seeks to explore and bring alive the appreciative stories... stimulat[ing] participants’ excitement and delight as they share their values, experiences, and history... and their wishes for the... future” (Watkins et al., 2011, p. 147). During the semi-structured interviews, it was obvious that this was very much the case. Research participants were all too happy to share anecdotal offerings, insights, and burning questions as a result of what they had experienced. This was the strength of the story; it held incredible utility for this research. Stories are, by their very nature, common to the human condition. They connect people across time and space, engage and provoke. Critical to this work’s focus on stability is the fact that they are alive. They inspire in the present with an eye towards the future. Out of questions come stories, and out of stories come themes that can be analyzed and turned into refined data. In this study’s case, Appreciative Inquiry’s discovery phase allowed for the elicitation of those ideas for change and transformation that might hold hope for a better future (Watkins et al., 2011). This study embraced the lived experiences that were shared as the result of focused, pointed inquiries that specifically and purposefully asked interviewees to offer commentary on those occasions where collaboration, partnerships, and communication led to successful outcomes.

### **3.2.2.3 Dreaming.**

Here, the goal of the study was a simple one: to create a collective image of a desired tomorrow (Watkins et al., 2011). There were myriad important questions to be examined

throughout this phase of the process. What needs to be in order to help serve our community? Where do the most exciting opportunities present themselves? From what, where, or whom are motivations derived? These are big questions; thinking big was critical to dreaming big.

It is this dreaming that allows Appreciative Inquiry its separation from other similar methodologies. Certainly, it was what gave it a great share of its allure, insofar as this study was concerned:

It is [dreaming] that makes [a]ppreciative [i]nquiry different from other visioning or planning methodologies. As images of the future emerge out of grounded examples from its positive past, compelling possibilities emerge precisely because they are based on extraordinary moments... [t]hese stories of unique and joyful moments are used like an artist's paint to create a vibrant image of the future. (Watkins et al., 2011, p. 215)

This dreaming work should excite. In the case of the research conducted here, dreaming inspired, and allowed thought and possibility to flow freely. During the dreaming, reimagining a better future was not held down by any constraints. It was imperative here that all participants maintained a glass-half-full mindset when engaging with their interviews, and that there were numerous ways to make this optimism percolate to the fore of all insights and offerings.

#### **3.2.2.4 Designing.**

During the design phase, the abstract, exciting work that had been dreamt up to this point was given structure and order. This is not to suggest that the grandiose ideas and aspirations that were imagined prior to this phase were ‘reigned in’; quite the contrary; in this phase, there was an attempt made to channel ideas and intuition into “possibility statements” (Watkins et al., 2011, p. 236), in an effort to give the spirit of the work a body to take shape in. In the context of this work, this was the place where the program essentials presented themselves, as far as stability was concerned.

### **3.2.2.5 Delivery.**

This phase represents the payoff of the Appreciative Inquiry process. It is here where the fruits of the labour will ultimately be realized; where big, optimistic thinking can become mechanized and begin to change the construction of the world around it. This phase is rife with learning, experimenting, and constant evaluation of outcomes.

As Watkins et al. (2011) allude to, this phase may well look different depending on the rationale for conducting the Appreciative Inquiry in the first place. In some cases, it can last for a long period of time; in fact, depending on the purpose that Appreciative Inquiry has been dispatched as a methodological tool for change, it may be a continual, ongoing process. In the case of the program that was built, and the related research that was used to study it, this phase was not explicitly examined or explored, as the pilot program no longer existed as it had during the study.

## **3.3 Research Design**

Certainly, as this research is built and measured on the back of an accompanying project created, in part, for this research, elements of a case study exist. According to Creswell (2014), “[c]ase studies are a design of inquiry found in many fields, especially evaluation, in which the researcher develops an in-depth analysis of a case, often a program, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals” (p. 14). This research aids in understanding the role that interprofessional collaboration can have in Regina’s elementary extracurricular programming. Yin (2009, 2012) cites that, in general, case studies have parameters set around them, usually dictated by a timeframe (i.e., a beginning and end date), and that it is the researcher’s duty to collect the information needed using sound data collection tools over a similar duration.

For my research, the case study was ‘Saskapalooza,’ a recreational Triple-Ball volleyball league that ran in the fall of 2014. For approximately seven months, the project ran its course from its early conceptualization right through to completion. This project saw hundreds of student-participants and their school-based Champions train and play in this league. Insofar as this case study is concerned, my research was informed by using data created within that seven-month window (i.e., email threads between various participants and stakeholders, as well as reflective journaling throughout) and shortly thereafter (interviews with two key coordinators and a personal questionnaire).

It is important to reference the term Saskapalooza. The word was used throughout the conceptualization, actualization, and execution of the entire Triple-Ball volleyball league. Saskapalooza was the name of both the league that was created and implemented, as well as the name that was given to the final, season-ending event made up of a day of tournament play, food, fun, and other events that were planned in an effort to end the season in a positive, fulsome way. Interview participants used the term Saskapalooza in such a way throughout their responses.

### **3.4 Research Participants**

There were many different community stakeholders involved in Saskapalooza; however, it was only the program’s administrative team that was relied on for interviews used in this research-driven pursuit. Individuals and organizations were asked to offer their time, resources, and expertise, so that the community and its youth had the opportunity to benefit from their generosity.

#### ***3.4.1 Program Administration***

Program administration referred to anyone who was involved in the creation, maintenance, and delivery of this project. The researcher, the university coordinator, and the

program coordinator are referred to in the capacity through which they primarily served (researcher, university coordinator, and program coordinator).

It should be noted that at the outset of the league's creation associated with this research, the university coordinator was my thesis supervisor, while the program coordinator was on my research committee. As a result of an adaptation in the research methodology (from a narrative inquiry/case study to an Appreciative Inquiry), both became primary contributors through semi-structured interviews. Due to the obvious conflict of interest, both resigned their official roles on the thesis team during the fall of 2014.

### ***3.4.2 Other Program Participants***

Saskapalooza's program administration served many roles. In addition to being representative of the three primary interprofessional collaborative partner organizations, these three people also served as the chief sources of data for this research. Although they were integral to both program delivery and research data, there were other groups involved in the development and execution of this league. Several of these groups were given cohort names by the administrative team. These names are used throughout a discussion of the data; as such, it is important to reference them here.

For the purposes of this research, 'elementary student-participant' refers to a female athlete who was attending a participating elementary school, generally aged eleven through thirteen, or in grade six, seven, or eight. The female demographic was chosen as the focus due to the landscape of volleyball in Regina that existed in 2014: the recruitment of female players was less of a challenge, as the sport was generally accepted as more popular with female pre-adolescent youth than with their male counterparts.

‘Student-coach’ refers to a student registered in Kinesiology 180 (Growth and Development), in the Fall 2014 semester at the University of Regina. These student-coaches had the opportunity to lead Triple-Ball volleyball instruction at the elementary school to which they were assigned. These student-coaches were also responsible for carrying out various administrative functions associated with managing/leading an elementary school team, such as organizing practices, assisting in transportation during the season, and officiating matches between other schools. In return, this student was granted a certain amount of credit towards their final grade for various tasks associated with the project. Each of these student-coaches successfully completed a Criminal Records Check, as completed by Regina Police Services.

For the purposes of this project, ‘school-based Champion’ refers to Board employees, such as a teacher, who worked at a participating elementary school as part of their regular employment. This person (or people) was responsible for satisfying the Board’s requirement of having a school-based employee in direct supervision of elementary student-participants during all extracurricular programming. Apart from their supervisory role, school-based Champions were permitted to assist student-coaches where and when needed; however, this was not necessary. No knowledge of volleyball, or Triple-Ball, was required on their behalf. If the school-based Champion was a teacher, any hours worked in a supervisory role could have been counted towards receiving one paid day off, as all teachers with the Regina Public School system were able to earn such a benefit if they volunteered 125 hours outside of their regular duties over the course of the 2014-2015 school year, seventy-five of which had to be supervisory hours (hours with students).

‘School-based administration’ refers to the principals, vice-principals, and learning leaders who, as part of their duties, oversaw all activities, functions, and programming that was

offered at their school. That included all curricular and extracurricular business. While these people may or may not have had direct involvement in this program, all school-based administrators knew of this research and its goals.

### ***3.4.3 Saskapalooza: A Journey***

May 2014 marked the birth of Saskapalooza. Key organizations were identified and brought together that would pave the way for interprofessional collaboration. A professor with the University of Regina's Faculty of Kinesiology & Health Studies had already committed to bringing several resources to the effort. The program coordinator with Sask Volleyball was willing to join the research team in both coordination and advisory roles.

After creating the mission, vision, and goals for Saskapalooza, these partners sought to obtain financial assistance early in the process. The administrative team was pleased to learn that Regina Police Services had agreed to waive the \$45 fee associated with students obtaining a Criminal Records Check as part of a class. Additionally, SaskSport communicated their willingness to support the effort with a grant.

In June 2014, an email was delivered to the principals of each of the forty-one schools serving pre-adolescent youth. Attached to the body of the message was a dashboard of the program, what its goals were, how it would be managed and coached, and the key factors that made it different from extracurricular programming already being offered. By the next morning, five elementary schools had responded in the affirmative. The initial goal was six or eight teams, as this would have allowed for a manageable number of teams to coordinate. After several inquiries, and once students had returned to school in the fall, fifteen teams from eight different schools represented the initial cohort for the 2014 league.

Elementary school principals were the target audience for initial contact for two prevailing reasons. First, it was assumed that the likelihood of a principal thoroughly checking their emails at the end of June was higher than the probability that a classroom teacher would do the same. Second, the Board email server is set up to distribute to whole groups of applicable people. “Elementary School Principals” is a preset option for distribution. “Elementary School Teacher” is the closest preset option for distribution to potential school-based champions. A lot of people who would not be interested in our project would have also received our communication.

Of the eight schools that participated in the league, the school-based administrator chose to act as their champion on three occasions, either for part of the season, or as their permanent champion. In the other five cases, the school-based administration forwarded the content on to those individuals at their school who were likely to be most interested in the action project.

The next challenge that was presented to program (league) administration came in September, when there were approximately two weeks to recruit twelve to eighteen student-coaches from Kinesiology 180. Various incentives, including the opportunity to earn credit towards a university course, tangible and intangible training as a Triple-Ball volleyball coach, becoming a leader of pre-adolescents, and becoming a role model to younger people, were offered to this group. Formal training opportunities to work towards coaching certification was presented to these student-coaches, depending on both the interest and engagement from each individual Kinesiology 180 student. It is important to note that due to the elementary student-participant demographic consisting solely of female minors, at least one student-coach on each team had to be female.

The student-athletes represent a major demographic; on fifteen teams in eight schools, there were 178 participants involved in playing in the Triple-Ball volleyball league. The project (league) administration felt that this component of recruitment would not be hard to satiate, and was correct; hopeful projections had set the recruitment metric here between seventy and 100. Schools that had support from their champion likely had a local knowledge that a particular student body would be receptive to the program, and would encounter few difficulties recruiting enough elementary student-participants to fill out a roster of ten to fifteen. Depending on a school's population and inclination, some carried a Triple-Ball team in addition to a team that competed in a traditional volleyball league.

These teams practiced at least twice a week throughout the back-half of September 2014, all of October 2014, and the beginning of November 2014. They played matches once every two weeks, playing two other schools in three-team round-robin play. Finally, on November 21, 2014, all participating teams came together at the University of Regina to participate in several Triple-Ball volleyball matches, engage in fun activities, and watch a pair of *U Sports* volleyball contests. This celebration of volleyball began at noon, and ran until approximately 10pm.

#### ***3.4.4 The Elementary School Extracurricular Landscape in Regina, Canada***

In the City of Regina, there are nearly 100 schools, serving youth in kindergarten through to grade twelve. For decades, the way that schools have offered additional programming has remained unchanged. Every year, each school is encouraged to determine what pursuits they will offer their students, based on the expertise, availability, and individual interests of the local school staff, and in some cases, the greater community at-large.

At the elementary school level, this usually means an assortment of offerings. Regina Public Schools currently has within its jurisdiction forty-seven schools offering an elementary or

middle-years education. As of September 2020, of these schools, three are associate schools, and twelve are designated community schools. Volleyball, basketball, and track and field are the three athletic mainstay programs. Curling, lacrosse, field hockey, badminton, and cross-country running are offered at certain schools, as availability permits. Of significance to this study is the fact that these programs usually follow certain teachers to new schools as they are transferred periodically throughout their careers. There are artistic extracurricular pursuits offered as well; band, choral, musical theatre, and improvisational clubs are all popular programs at various schools around the city. Occasionally, book clubs, outdoor and science clubs, and student activity councils will flourish at certain institutions.

In the case of athletic extracurricular offerings, the developmental/competitive ideology falls into a dichotomy as often as it appears on a spectrum. Many schools do a satisfactory job of balancing competitive expectations with physical, emotional, and social developmental needs. In some cases, competitive pursuits take away from the developmental mission the extracurricular programming set out to achieve. Regina Public Schools' Competitive Volleyball League is one place where this has the potential to happen, particularly if a school is endowed with a one-time generation of grade eight anomalies, who have the opportunity to 'win it all'. It must be stressed that many coaches do an outstanding job of balancing competitive desires with developmental concerns. This could be made easier with more suitable age-appropriate programming, where coaches are not asked to choose between competitive obligations and developmental concerns.

### **3.5 Data Collection**

Once it had been decided that an Appreciative Inquiry would be used to frame the interviews and analyze the data, the realignment of our research team meant that the original data collection methods were adapted. Multi-faceted interviews, discussion forums, and focus groups

that were initially planned for were replaced with semi-structured interviews with two of the program administrators, as well as a self-answered appreciative questionnaire from me (the researcher, and a program administrator). An analysis of every email thread that I was privy to, was the subject of, or was carbon-copied on was utilized in order to triangulate data.

In the case of both semi-structured interviews, I transcribed all data verbatim. My own self-completed appreciative questionnaire was completed in Word. Emails were sorted and labelled in such a way that made their content more accessible (i.e., removing the disclaimers that accompanied several emails in one ‘Reply All’ thread made for efficient truncating; ‘Reply All’ threads were broken down so as to delete repeat emails). I created field notes and journal entries throughout the months that Saskapalooza ran. These notes were taken in an ad hoc fashion; I journaled when I felt it was important to do so, and not at prescribed intervals.

### ***3.5.1 Ethics***

Prior to the collection of all raw data outlined, ethical approval from the University of Regina’s Research Ethics Board was sought and obtained. Both project administrators who were the subjects of semi-structured interviews signed and dated consent waivers as per their willingness to engage in the research formally.

### ***3.5.2 Semi-structured Interviews***

Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data from two of the three program administrators. Interviews are excellent tools used to collect qualitative data, as they allow for an in-depth understanding of an issue or circumstance (Creswell, 2014). In the case of this research, they brought with them a challenge that needed to be managed: semi-structured interviews were time-consuming and required re-evaluation as new questions and themes emerged as a result of the interview contents. They represented the bulk of my data collection methods.

The work of Watkins et al. (2011) was used to create a ‘hub’ of appropriate starting questions for the interviews. Questions were thoughtfully constructed in such a way that allowed for collaborative discussion around a focus on the positive. The list of starting, pre-planned questions that were shared with participants prior to the first interview, can be found in *Appendix C*.

For both participants, two interviews were conducted. Each interview with the university coordinator lasted for approximately ninety minutes, and were held on March 24, 2015, and June 3, 2015. Each interview with the program coordinator lasted for approximately sixty minutes, and were held on January 22, 2015, and May 20, 2015. The audio from all interviews were recorded, before I transcribed them verbatim.

### ***3.5.3 Self-completed Appreciative Questionnaire***

As with the semi-structured interview, the self-completed appreciative questionnaire was composed of the same guiding questions, organized by using four of the “five D’s” outlined by Watkins et al. (2011). After considering the entirety of the program’s scope, and consulting field notes and reflexive journals compiled throughout the entire process, I answered these questions myself. Unlike the process utilized during both semi-structured interviews, where I engaged both coordinators as researcher and interviewer, I answered each question independently. This is important to note; while many ideas and new lines of questioning came about as a result of collaboration during the semi-structured interviews, I had no such person to with whom to engage reflectively. This was done in four sessions, each taking approximately ninety minutes, and was completed on four consecutive days, from July 9 – July 12, 2015.

### ***3.5.4 Email***

In an effort to triangulate data to ensure trustworthiness, and given the realization that vast amounts of data existed within the conversations that took place between all stakeholders throughout the process, email threads were kept regarding all discussions considered material to the project and the research that came out of it. In order to facilitate this, I was Cc'd on every non-confidential email that either the university coordinator or the program coordinator had with any stakeholders, unless the sender considered the content to be confidential in nature. I also maintained a database of all email discussions throughout the process. This database was used after the league had reached its conclusion, for the purpose of being able to revisit certain junctures of the league's development and execution.

Between May 16, 2014, and December 19, 2014, emails were sent to and from the student discussion forum of Kinesiology 180 (63 emails), as well as to and from my own email account (721 emails), for a total of 784 emails that I either sent or received on matters germane to the Triple-Ball volleyball league and the research that came out of it. It must be stressed that I received no emails unless I was an original or Cc'd recipient. Put simply, all stakeholders new that I was privy to any information being discussed.

### ***3.5.5 Researcher Field-notes and Journaling***

Though not as robust in scope and depth relative to the semi-structured interviews, self-completed appreciative questionnaire, or emails, I was able to make use of note-taking throughout the project. These summaries were generally reflective of my thinking, questions that I wanted to have answered, or synopses of key events that I felt might become important to the research, once the project had been completed.

As a data collection tool, these were primarily used to aid in the generating of questions utilized during the semi-structured interviews. I wrote down dates, times, and events that I felt might be of importance, as well as thoughts and observations I considered to be germane to my research questions. This journaling proved to be helpful in facilitating navigation and triangulation impressions through the hundreds of emails that I had at my disposal.

### **3.6 Data Analysis**

I collected enough raw data through semi-structured interviews, self-completed appreciative questionnaire, and relevant email threads to have achieved data saturation (Creswell, 2014), and looked for common trends and experiences that connected individuals with one another. I determined those themes that connected key stakeholders and their shared experiences around the *definition, discovery, dream, and design* components associated with the Appreciative Inquiry method (Watkins et al., 2011). Note that an explanation as to why the *definition* component was not utilized as a theme can be found later in the paper, in my explanation of the data analysis.

I manually organized all findings, prior to examining them for its themes and trends. Establishing trustworthiness was crucial; therefore, I have outlined how I achieved this in my work.

Obviously, the process that a researcher undertakes to move from raw data to a more refined organization is important to a study's impacts and authenticity. Universal as it may be, it is a process that can often be informal and creative, leaving much of the way forward – as well as the burden of explanation – in the hands of the individual researcher (Stuckey, 2015). The process by which one codes data is highly individualized. Not only should and will data be coded and grouped differently by each individual, it is also true that a researcher not rely on one

method for all studies (Elliott, 2018). It can be argued that “decisions about aspects of coding such as density, frequency, size of data pieces to be coded, are all made by individual researchers in line with their methodological background, their research design and research questions, and the practicality of their study” (Elliott, 2018. p. 2850). In the context of this study, using an Appreciative Inquiry methodology meant looking at all data through a purposefully affirmative, optimistic lens. Additionally, as this research sought to offer concrete advice for people and groups who may be considering embarking on a similar endeavour, data that appeared to lend itself to real-world solutions was what was sought for analysis.

When dealing with data gathered via qualitative research tools, researchers must carefully and purposefully apply their chosen coding technique after considering all options available to them, even if that means borrowing from and combining pre-established systems in order to create their own codes (Blair, 2015). Regardless of the process used, it is incumbent that the researcher communicates both how and why a particular process was used.

Prior to outlining the analysis process, I offer a word on terminology. As Elliot (2018) asserts, “a semantic mire has developed in that different people use different terms to refer to the same thing and the same terms to refer to different things” (p. 2852). When discussing coding, different researchers use the term ‘code’ to refer to different stages in their data analysis. I use four terms to outline my process, using the terminology and rationale that both Elliot (2018) and Creswell (2014) offer as a starting point for discussing data analysis. As both remind us, the terminology is not as important as what the process is attempting to accomplish.

In the sections that follow, I explain how I *labelled* raw data in an effort to catalogue and distill data, to distill large sections of text down to their essence and to inventory them in such a way that I could access them easily. I tell how I *coded* my labelled data using key words,

concepts and phrases that felt important to the heart of the process. Using these codes, I clarify how I arrived at the creation on several *categories* that helped to organize codified information succinctly. Finally, I share my rationale for taking these categories and arranging them in a *thematic framework* set around the Appreciative Inquiry method, as enunciated by Watkins et al. (2011).

I chose to heed the advice of Blair (2015) by creating a coding process that, I felt, would work for both my data and my study at-large. What follows is a meticulous description of each stage of the development of the data, from raw text through to thematic framework.

### ***3.6.1 Preliminary Engagement with the Data***

Once all interviews had been transcribed, the self-reflective appreciative questionnaire had been completed, and email threads had been organized, data analysis began. The first step was a preliminary read. At this early stage, each piece of data was looked at twice: once while transcribing and organizing, and another during a purposeful read-through. Having already conducted the interviews, and because I was carbon-copied on the vast majority of the emails pertaining to the administration of Saskapalooza, I was already generally familiar with the content even before its respective transcription or organization.

While notes and questions were made, no real scrutiny was applied, and no coding was done. The purpose of this fairly time-intensive practice was twofold. Firstly, prior to truly diving deeply into the data, I felt a need to gain a reasonable assurance that the quantity and quality of the contributions present would be enough to satisfactorily answer the research questions posed within the framework of this study. Secondly, because I had been intimately involved with both the carrying out of the project, and with the interviews and emails used to collect the data, I felt my proximity to the data was as much of a liability as it was an asset. This was important; while

Unluer (2012) tells of the many advantages that come with being an insider to research during a case study, such as speaking a common ‘insider language’, sharing similar values, and being able to exercise relative power and authority in order to expedite timelines and obtain permissions, Gunawan (2015) warns of the potential pitfalls that can ensue when researchers become too close to the creation of the data they must analyze. Impartiality may be at stake, possibly affecting analysis. Shifting from the role of an administrative participant to that of the researcher meant that it was important to achieve a more holistic outlook on what it was that was being worked on, to gain something of a third-person perspective, so as to help ensure that none of the ‘big picture’ was overlooked or ignored (Stuckey, 2015).

### ***3.6.2 Initial Data Highlighting***

After completing a preliminary read-through of all interviews, the questionnaire and emails, the next step in my process involved me going back through all materials again, this time searching for that which could be seen as most valuable for the purposes of my study. Throughout my search for ideas, concepts and quotes, I maintained four large posters at the front of my work station. Each poster had a word or words written on them to draw me back to my research questions. The four boards read, “Practices & Policies,” “People & Organizations,” “Resources,” and “Stability.” I wanted to maintain a constant and thorough connection as to why I was doing the work in which I was invested. Additionally, I needed to keep visual reminders in plain sight, so as to make sure that the data I was coding was going to prove relevant and valuable.

A careful examination of all data left intriguing pieces highlighted. As all data had been meticulously transcribed and/or organized, all raw data appeared on numbered pages. As such, each interesting piece was given a label in the form of [LETTER; NUMBER], where [LETTER]

referred me to a particular piece of data, and [NUMBER] referred to the page number on which I found an entry. The pieces of data were given identifiers that would be easy to recognize. The interviews with the university coordinator, program coordinator, and the researcher appreciative questionnaire were labelled as [UC], [PC], and [RAQ], respectively. As a result, a piece of data found on page 17 of the interview with the program coordinator would be labelled as [PC17]. As I did not want to exclude or discriminate against any data that may have, in any way, lent itself to my findings, I highlighted text liberally during this early stage, always erring on the side of inclusion. If a page had more than one entry, lowercase letters were assigned to the page number on which they could be found. I could then flip quickly to that page in my binder of raw data, and find the highlighted item that I was looking for, along with any jot notes or questions that I had made in the margins. I made a table of these labels organized by research participant.

Whereas the email threads, field notes and journals – primarily used for administrative purposes – were used in this research to inform progress and create questions that could be answered through dialogue, it was the express and sole purpose of the interviews and questionnaire to generate the primary data that would be required to answer my research questions. For that reason, it is important to point out that emails and field notes did not have data that became labelled or coded for categorization and thematic creation. Their administrative format and content did not lend themselves properly to the Appreciative Inquiry model of question-asking and seeking out creative solutions. They were used to triangulate data, or provide evidence or quotation to support findings.

In an effort to illustrate how I took a piece of raw data and used it to inform the development of categories and themes, I will use the same piece of text throughout this discussion of data analysis, and show how it developed throughout the process.

While working my way through the semi-structured interview with the university coordinator, I found myself intrigued by the substance of the following excerpt:

*For example, the whole media release fiasco we had, where the students and I had taken pictures of all the teams. I thought it would be good for the kids to come out as see all the teams together on this poster, put the poster together and send it on a Thursday night to all the schools that were involved. And then first thing in the morning, there are two kids in that poster that don't have media release forms. Some of the others, [university coordinator's name], they don't but the fact is that we could probably get them from their parents. I got the impression when talking on the phone to one of the principals was that one of the kids was in some sort of custody battle between the parents and basically they were, for lack of a better word, in hiding. So that child should not have been in the picture but we could spend time negatively who's at fault, who's at fault, who's at fault, the coach for putting them in, or me for taking the picture or the champion teacher for not alerting us, the contacts, the principal or the children themselves, we could have gone on over and over about that. But when I got the email back I sent out the email to all of the principals, who on this poster should not be there? Like, wham bam, and I will fix it. And they trust me enough. They sent me which child and which picture the champion teacher needed to be crossed out. So I spent five hours sitting with photo shop putting [the university's mascot] over those girls or deleting them from the photo or putting in someone else in, because I was missing some of the coaches. So I had them take pictures of the coaches, email me, them, on their cell phone, and putting the picture overtop of the kid in the picture that was there. Again, but it was problem solving, finding positive ways to get everyone through it to the end. That was one of those little things, yeah, we didn't have, a coach that was a pedophile. If that had gotten out, the risk managers would have been all over us about that, right? If something had happened to the child, you know a conflict of things, it's the real world right? It happens, do you just go, "Oh, woe is us, let's stop, take the kid out of the program, or throw the poster, the baby out with the bath water and all the other kids go down, you know was always an issue of, that's what I felt like a bit last semester. Always negotiating the whole project forward, negotiating forward, to try to keep everything moving. (University coordinator, semi-structured interview)*

At the time, I felt this spoke to my need to learn more about both the people and processes that may enable a program like Saskapalooza to be successful. As it pertained to my research questions, I worked on it, distilling it down to the essence of what was most important, and labelled it:

[UC5b] *We could spend time [looking at] who's at fault, who's at fault, who's at fault... we could have gone over and over about that. But... I will fix it... You've*

*got to move past [problems], fix what you can, adapt, and move forward... you step up. You get it done... I think [there are] people who are willing to figure a way out... It is again [an] example of negotiating to get where you need to go.*  
(University coordinator, semi-structured interview)

Once this was done, I entered the text's label into my list of pertinent text under the 'University Coordinator' heading. I also made a copy of the text sample and placed it in a bank with others that I had deemed pertinent, interesting, unique or important. This list was used during the next stage of my data analysis, allowing me to spend the majority of my time with the data that mattered most.

### **3.6.3 Coding Concepts from Labelled Text**

In this next section, I outline the process by which I discovered concepts and ideas as a result of engaging with my labelled text. It is here that I began the process of coding my data, using my labelled text to create succinct impressions that, when grouped into similar notions, would later become categories.

Keeping my four research question posters at the front of my work station, I placed all 153 pieces of labelled text data in front of me, and began reading them. These pieces of text had been 'split' from larger segments of text, a process that Bernard (2011) describes as one that, while time-consuming, creates smaller, more digestible pieces of text, usually filled with the more pertinent information. I read each piece once, attempting to pull ideas and trends from them. I highlighted different words or phrases and wrote jot notes or questions above each as was needed. Upon the second read-through, I added what more I could, and eventually began to see concepts emerge. As I wrote these concepts above various labelled pieces of text, I also wrote the words and phrases separately, and placed them to the side. Once I had finished painstakingly completing this process for all 153 labelled pieces of text, I was left with my coded concepts.

At this point, I had moved from my raw data to a place where I had labelled 153 pieces of text, and had connected each to a coded concept or concepts. Each coded concept had the labelled mark of any text associated with it. This was important to ensure that when the time came to back claims up with quotations, I would be able to do so with ease.

This entire process was purposefully completed over several days during the course of one week. The reading, highlighting, note-making, grouping and regrouping took many hours. My intention behind breaking the task up was to limit the workload on any one day, and more importantly, to allow myself to return to my own work – my own thinking – to see if my interpretations of the data would evolve.

It was here that I would group, regroup, and combine the text parcels. Each time I did, the reason for their groupings became more obvious. I used additional notation adjacent to each mound of text that I was creating to write down categories that I believed were beginning to form around the data, a practice that Stuckey (2015) promotes.

Once I was satisfied that I had exhausted my coded data, and I was comfortable with the seven categories that I had created, I had six coded data entries which I struggled to place. After thinking on them for a fair amount of time, I realized that they were not, in fact, outliers. They all spoke to concept of in-kind support, and an innate sense of community pride intrinsic in giving to a worthwhile cause. Grouped together, these data gave me an eighth and final category.

Two features of my organization left me feeling confident that I had determined strong and relevant categories. First, most of my eight categories had a fair share of the data speaking to its existence. In other words, the data were spread reasonably well across the categories. Second, all of my categories were strongly supported by the contributions of each of the three primary data sources.

Returning to an examination of the exemplar provided in the previous section, it was text like this that made up my collection of 153 pieces of data with which I constructed coded ideas:

[UC5b] *We could spend time [looking at] who's at fault, who's at fault, who's at fault... we could have gone over and over about that. But... I will fix it... You've got to move past [problems], fix what you can, adapt, and move forward... you step up. You get it done... I think [there are] people who are willing to figure a way out... It is again [an] example of negotiating to get where you need to go.*  
(University coordinator, semi-structured interview)

The codes that I made regarding this quote were, “Leader: problem-solving is a must,” “Leader: personal or professional challenge,” “forward-looking,” and, “negotiating obstacles.”

Once I was confident that I had discovered and coded all concepts and ideas, I began to group them to determine broad categories that could be explored. At this stage, I did not attempt to label or name categories; rather, I was only looking to see that my codes could fit together. Groups were created using the coded ideas that had been carefully created using labelled text, a process that Stuckey (2015) refers to as the creation of a ‘data dictionary’. As these codes were read, highlighted and labelled, they were grouped and regrouped based on common language and ideas. As the pieces of text were being slid adjacent to each other, it was easy to see what their notes and highlighted pieces had in common. Synonyms that appeared on different pieces of text were changed to develop a sort of common language. Eventually, text was organized into eight groups. Each had words and phrases that I crafted into sentences of ideas. These became my eight categories.

This entire part of the process was influenced by the methods that Blair (2015) offers as one method to move from data to codes. The coded ideas with labelled text pieces as support are presented in *Table 1*. It should be noted that the labelled data pieces adjacent to each set of codes should be seen to be a ‘set’; that is, one piece of labelled data does not necessarily equate to one code. Each section of labelled data, when looked at together, revealed codes:

**Table 1***Coded ideas grouped by commonalities with labelled text support*

Grouped coded concepts	Labelled text supports
Building appropriate capacity through active healthy living pursuits is motivation in and of itself.	[UC3b, 14f, 15a, 20b] [PC3e, 4a, 5a, 7e, 8a, 9c, 10a, 11b, 12a, 15b] [RAQ3a, 5a, 5b, 7b, 8b]
Simple motivation: healthy, active kids.	
Communication as a tool to secure partnerships and sponsorships. Communication as a ‘sale’ tactic for Triple-Ball volleyball. Communication with and between pre-existing partners and relations as crucial. Consistent communications with volunteers throughout the process. Communication used for future recruitment.	[UC14e, 24c] [PC2, 3f, 4b, 6a, 6b, 7a, 11a, 13a, 13b, 13c, 15c, 16a, 16b, 17] [RAQ3b, 4f]
The utilization of pre-existing relationships is the staple of ‘having your back’. Counting on each partner to do their job. Relationships as backstops in difficult times. Partners ready to go above and beyond.	[UC3a, 4c, 5a, 14c, 18b] [PC3c, 6c, 8c, 12c] [RAQ6b, 7c]
Spending energy and time on looking and moving forward, not backward. Constantly redefining the game plan and strategies. Planning is always preferable to troubleshooting. Forward-thinking helps to focus time and energy not just on the now or the item, but on the future, or on the big picture.	[UC2, 5c, 10c, 11a, 12c, 13a, 14a, 14b, 15c, 16a, 19a, 21c, 23a] [PC3b, 4d, 7d, 12b, 15a] [RAQ2a, 2b, 3e, 4a, 6c, 7a]
Fixing problems of all sizes oneself: the hallmark of a leader, and motivating in and of itself. Many diverse skills required.	[UC6b, 6c, 7c, 8a, 10a, 11b, 12b, 13b, 16c, 17a, 18c, 19b, 22b, 25, 29] [PC1, 5c, 6d, 7b, 8b, 9a] [RAQ2d, 3c, 4b, 4c, 5d, 6a, 7d, 8d]

**Table 1 (cont'd)***Coded ideas grouped by commonalities with labelled text support*

Group coded concepts	Labelled text supports
Problem-solving is a must. Energy as infectious, inspirational and motivational. Might find a personal or professional challenge. Capacity building. Personal conviction increases odds of success in the role. Find one lead. Get it right.	
Partners as motivation. Sense of responsibility. Succeeding together. Alignment between dream and mission, vision, values and goals. A job well done can motivate for future success.	[UC4a, 5b, 5e, 6a, 7a, 7b, 8b, 10b, 11c, 12a, 15b, 16b, 17b, 18a, 20a, 23d, 24d] [PC2, 8d, 8e, 9b, 12e, 14, 18] [RAQ2c, 3d, 4d, 4e, 5c, 6d]
Recruiting people to key positions, especially on the administrative leadership team. Volunteers as essential, both quality and quantity. Not all volunteers are equal. Recruiting to volunteer positions and partnerships that one knows early on will be required.	[UC9, 19c, 21a, 22a, 23b, 23c, 24a, 24b, 26] [PC3a, 5b, 7c, 10b, 12d] [RAQ8d]
Importance of securing basic assistance and partnerships to help meet the mandate. Corporate connections are enhancers and quality drivers. More resourcing would have helped, and would still help in the future.	[UC5a, 14d, 21b] [PC3d, 4c] [RAQ4e]

### 3.6.4 Naming Categories using Coded Text Groupings

Once the coded concepts had been grouped, the next phase of the process was to bring them together under a system of categorization. Strauss and & Corbin (1998) describes this

process as ‘axial coding’: taking initial codes and using them to develop key codes. Again, I have chosen to refer to these ‘key codes’ as categories.

At this point, I had eight clusters of coded ideas. I was confident that they had been linked together for good reason; the fact that I was able to reference each to their original home in the raw data gave me assurance that I had adequately assembled these collections. The next job was to ‘bring them together’, so to speak, under a unifying title or impression.

Compared to the preceding phase, naming, or unifying, my categories was a relatively straightforward process. Keywords, especially those that repeated themselves within the codes, were used as a starting point. Where applicable, a focus on the positive was maintained; that is to say, I purposefully avoided unifying my codes under an impression that could have a negative connotation. For example, grouping one collection of codes under category, ‘A Want to Succeed: Motivation for the Present’ was purposeful. The data could have offered itself a category more along the lines of a fear of failure, or a want not to disappoint. Once I had arrived at a name for a category, I read it back to myself, and massaged it until it adequately captured the essence of why groups of code were brought together. *Table 2* depicts the final product:

**Table 2**

*Categories created by coded concept groupings*

Category	Grouped coded concepts
Communication: The Why & How to Stay in Touch	Communication as a tool to secure partnerships and sponsorships Communication as a ‘sale’ tactic for Triple-Ball volleyball. Communication with and between pre-existing partners and relations as crucial. Consistent communication with volunteers throughout the process. Communication used for future recruitment. The importance of communication from a place of authority.
Relationships: Relying on Partners New & Old to ‘Have Your Back’	The utilization of pre-existing relationships is the staple of ‘having your back’. Counting on each partner to do their job. Relationships as backstops in difficult times. Partners ready to go above and beyond.
A Want to Succeed: Motivation for the Present	Partners as motivation. Sense of responsibility. Succeeding together. Alignment between dream and mission, vision, values and goals. A job well done can motivate for future success.
Working with Obstacles: Optimistically Negotiating Forward	Spending energy and time on looking and moving forward, not backward. Constantly redefining the game plan and strategies. Planning is always preferable to troubleshooting. Forward-thinking helps to focus time and energy not just on the now or the item, but on the future, or the big picture.
Healthy, Active Kids: Motivation for the Future	Building appropriate capacity through active healthy living pursuits is motivational in and of itself. Simple motivation: healthy, active kids.

**Table 2 (cont'd)***Categories created by coded concept groupings*

Category	Grouped coded concepts
Support: Human, Financial & In-Kind Assistance	Importance of securing basic assistance and partnerships to help meet the mandate. Corporate connections are enhancers and quality drivers. More would have helped, and would still help in the future.
The Leader: Traits, Characteristics & Personality	Fixing problems of all sizes oneself: the hallmark of a leader, and motivating in and of itself. Many diverse skills required. Problem-solving is a must. Energy as infectious, inspirational, and motivational. Might find a personal or professional challenge. Capacity building. Personal conviction increases odds of success in the role. Find one lead. Get it right.
The Volunteer Cohort: A Necessity in Program Delivery	Recruiting people to key positions, especially on the administrative leadership team. Volunteers as essential, both quality and quantity. Not all volunteers are equal. Recruiting to volunteer positions and partnerships that one knows early on will be required.

**3.6.5 Using Categories to Create a Thematic Framework**

The focus shifted to making sense of what it was that these categories were trying to communicate. When considering these eight categories, I returned to the foundations of the Appreciative Inquiry framework. Saldana (2016) offers that any thematic organizations be arrived at as a result of reflecting on the nature and the substance of codes and categories, but

that they are not themselves to be coded directly from the data. I used this understanding in my approach of thematic discovery. As I explain, the use of the Appreciative Inquiry model allowed me to thematically organize my categories in a way such that they accentuated the strongest, most positive dimensions of the framework offered by Watkins et al. (2011).

Prior to examining my process, important attention must be afforded to apparent lack of what Watkins et al. (2011) refer to as the fifth ‘D’ – *delivery* – in the presentation of categories. To be clear, Watkins et al. (2011) call for the use of the Appreciative Inquiry framework as a method by which a given situation can be, to put it plainly, made better. Where a traditional approach to making better often begins with the identification of a deficit (negative), Appreciative Inquiry keeps as its focus the identification of the best (positive). The Appreciative Inquiry model for improvement, as explored by Watkins et al. (2011), works its practitioners through the process, starting with the identification of that which works well. It concludes with those same practitioners applying their learnings to their surroundings or situation in the hopes of using their findings to actualize positive growth and meaningful change. As the goals and research questions addressed in this study did not call for the re-creation, re-implementation, or betterment of Saskapalooza at a future time, it was not appropriate to use this dimension of the framework to formulate questions, conduct research, or analyze findings.

When approached from the perspective of a researcher using the model to build research questions, it is easy to see that Watkins et al. (2011) have developed a scaffold so perfectly suited for the Appreciative Inquiry method. That it was a useful tool for the creation of probing queries was not surprising. What was unexpected was how well these same guiding sections – *defining, discovering, dreaming and designing* – allowed for an early thematic organization of the categories that I had discovered.

In the case of my research, participants *defined* communication and relationships as imperative to our success with Saskapalooza. In the minds of research participants, both were utilized well, and were associated with positive program outcomes. They *discovered* or identified that an innate want to succeed, combined with the focus of looking to the future optimistically to go through obstacles were both sources of drive and determination. In other words, they had shown appreciation for that which breathed life into the project and their work on it (Watkins et al., 2011). By using healthy, active kids as their motivation, and by lobbying individuals, corporations and community partners for various supports, research participants were *dreaming*. In an effort to build a future together (Watkins et al., 2011), research participants *designed* a method where singular leadership and mass volunteerism were both crucial in securing success.

Using the same framework by which interview questions were constructed, I was able to see how newly discovered categories and concepts could be appropriately arranged and grouped using the model put forward by Watkins et al. (2011). This organization would assist me in answering my research questions, ultimately enabling me to demonstrate practical considerations for people and organizations looking to create programs similar to Saskapalooza. *Table 3* demonstrates this categorical organization:

**Table 3***Thematic framework organizing categories*

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Defining:

Communication: The Why & How to Stay in Touch

Relationships: Relying on Partners New & Old to ‘Have Your Back’

Discovering:

A Want to Succeed: Motivation for the Present

Working with Obstacles: Optimistically Negotiating Forward

Dreaming:

Healthy, Active Kids: Motivation for the Future

Support: Human, Financial & In-Kind Assistance

Designing:

The Leader: Traits, Characteristics & Personality

The Volunteer Cohort: A Necessity in Program Delivery

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### 3.7 Trustworthiness

“A study is trustworthy if and only if the reader of the research report judges it to be so”

(Gunawan, 2015. p. 10). A lofty bar to reach, particularly as one’s audience generally has access to research only after publication. Like Gunawan (2015), Lincoln and Guba (2002) argue that the burden of proof, so to speak, lies with the researcher. Regardless of data collection and data analysis methodology, academic findings lose merit if they cannot be trusted (Lincoln & Guba, 2002).

For my research, I chose to gather and examine data through a realist model that seeks to establish quality via a demonstration of trustworthiness (Noble & Smith, 2015). This is a popular standard in fields that studies people, their feelings, and attitudes. It generally holds that, due to subjectivity inherent in harvesting qualitative data from people, philosophical and theoretical paradigms are categorically different than those associated with quantitative data (Noble &

Smith, 2015). As such, it is difficult, if not impossible, to demonstrate true ‘rigor’ in the data, as would be the aim during quantitative research.

Qualitative research can be challenging to work with. By its nature, the process by which data is gathered, analyzed, and concluded upon can be flexible, non-linear, and even ‘messy’ (Sinkovics & Alfoldi, 2012). In order to increase the opportunity for the appearance of integrity, it is important that a researcher proficiently demonstrate their data to be able to stand up to external scrutiny.

As such, researchers such as Lincoln, Guba (2002), Hadi and Closs (2016) and Gunawan (2015) assert that four components must be demonstrated in order to satisfy trustworthiness: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. It should be noted that of these four conditions, it is generally, though not universally, held that qualitative research must above all else be credible in order to be trustworthy, and that perhaps the single greatest way to achieve credibility is to perform ‘member checks’ throughout one’s data analysis (Gunawan, 2015; Hadi & Closs, 2016; Kornbluh, 2015; Lincoln & Guba, 2002; Sinkovics & Alfoldi, 2012). It is important to raise this distinction as these components can, at times, contest one another; that is to say, in order to demonstrate one, another may be called into question (Gunawan, 2016). What follows is an outline of how I attempted to best manage and satisfy these sometimes-competing demands within the context of my research. Special attention is given to credibility, and in particular, how the concept of ‘member checks’ was attended to.

### ***3.7.1 Credibility***

When attempting to ensure trustworthiness, I aimed to ensure credibility in my research by utilizing my own prior knowledge in the area (Lincoln & Guba, 2002). While I was unable to predict with certainty what the data would reveal, I knew that as a teacher, a volleyball coach,

and a league administrator, I had some understanding of the context in which I worked. Data that surprised me served as an alarm for rich and interesting revelations. For example, I underestimated the role that success played in motivation throughout the program. I imagined that this ‘want’ would be an end; however, it was very much a means, motivating those in charge to succeed, not unlike providing youth with healthy, physical opportunities motivated them. I was pushed to investigate these surprises further, and with great care. By analyzing data from multiple stakeholders (i.e., validating the inputs from program administrators using other interested parties via email threads) and by using multiple data collection tools (i.e., semi-structured interviews, self-completed appreciative questionnaire, and pertinent email threads), I determined that I was more likely to see the emergence of key themes than I would have been had I collected data from a single group, or used a single tool. This, Creswell (2014) points out, is the process of triangulation, and is invaluable when confirming credibility. I sought to establish credibility by ensuring that I had enough breadth and depth in my data, in terms of the quantity of interviews that I conducted. All three administrative personnel charged with the execution of the program (myself, the university coordinator and the program coordinator) were questioned until I was satisfied that the relative tenants of Appreciative Inquiry (defining, discovering, dreaming, designing and delivery) had been appropriately framed and explored. I practiced reflexivity (reflective journaling) throughout the season and research process. The benefits of this show themselves in my findings.

Lastly, I discuss the problematic nature of the member check, and how I sought to safely use them without diminishing my ability to make sense of my data as the researcher. It has been said that member checking – also known as respondent validation – has the distinction of being the best and most significant technique a researcher may use to demonstrate credibility in any

research (Lincoln & Guba, 2002). The idea behind this technique is straightforward: by involving the people who have contributed data at various stages throughout the data analysis, a researcher can test for assumptions, clarify intentions, and otherwise seek clarification. While a worthwhile pursuit at first blush, this technique has had limitations – and even hazards – associated with it:

[S]ome methodologists have raised concerns about the usefulness of member checking as qualitative data do not only consist of interview/observational data but also include field notes, the author's reflective journal and non-verbal signs which the respondents may not own as their personal views. Furthermore, study results are often synthesized from data obtained from interviewing/observing a number of participants, making it difficult for individuals to recognize his/her own view. Any forced attempt to accommodate respondents' concerns may make the results more descriptive and close to data, an undesired outcome in almost all of the qualitative research designs. (Hadi & Closs, 2016. p. 643)

This could have been a liability in my study. A strong subset of my data came from the views and opinions of other people; however, a lot of my research data was created by me, through my field notes and my own journaling. The competing interests between participant (data creator) and researcher (data organizer) are as real as they are obvious. I attempted to limit this exposure by completing my work in phases. While Saskapalooza was being carried out, the only data I was keeping was in the form of a journal. Once the project was complete, I shifted my attention to interviews. Aside from looking over data in between interviews to determine new or important questions, and occasionally asking both research participants to confirm the basic premise of several key interpretations, I did not make an attempt at thematically organizing data, nor did I attempt to draw conclusions, until interviews had been completed. The research participants have not had a chance to see my findings ahead of this document's publication, and as such, were in no position to colour findings beyond their interview contributions.

### ***3.7.2 Transferability***

According to Lincoln and Guba (2002), transferability can be ensured by carefully documenting context. Locations, time frames, and time periods are all critical where transferability is concerned. Future researchers must be able to assess how my findings can – and cannot – relate to their unique situations (Lincoln & Guba, 2002). By describing the context throughout my thesis, as well as recording critical information as the league unfolded, I believe that I guaranteed an acceptable measure of transferability.

### ***3.7.3 Dependability***

In order to ensure dependability, my data must yield results similar to what would be expected if this study was carried out at a different time, in a dissimilar place, or by another researcher (Lincoln & Guba, 2002). Although I am the singular researcher and author of this study, I would be remiss if I did not mention that both of the other program facilitators were consulted on a regular basis, both throughout the league's creation and administration, and following the conclusion of the inaugural season by way of semi-structured interviews. I did not expect dependability to be a problem. Additionally, there was a demonstrated sense of dependability through detailed coding, and recoding, prior to arriving at any themes.

### ***3.7.4 Confirmability***

Can my findings be easily legitimized? That is the question that Lincoln and Guba (2002) argue must be answered in the affirmative, before a researcher can claim to have demonstrated confirmability in qualitative research. My data collection methods yield many original data samples, as well as the opportunity to triangulate these data by way of emails from multiple stakeholders. Imbedded in the data about to be discussed are excerpts from interviews, emails, and journals. These passages have been carefully chosen to reinforce or outline a particular

finding that the greater data was able to demonstrate. These selections help to show that an analysis of the data was done authentically and accurately. I included pieces of my raw data – in the form of quotes and recurring themes – in the analysis of the data. These data were left unchanged, so that they may substantiate claims made.

### **3.8 Conclusion**

Appreciative Inquiry is an academic tool that is best used when practical research aims to engage in a positive reimagining (Watkins et al., 2011). Given the scope of this work, it was the ideal methodological approach to be utilized to harvest and analyze all relevant data.

In the *Findings* section that follows, I use this framework to thematically present the findings. I demonstrate that, while this project and other work like it is ambitious, the people working to make it happen are driven by a future, a collaborative, innovative tomorrow that they wish to turn from dream to reality.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This section presents these themes and categories in a relatively straightforward manner, by using the substance of the interviews to articulate how – and why – people came together to create a new opportunity for youth to be active in contextually-appropriate ways. The themes presented are explored in their relevant section of the Appreciative Inquiry framework.

### **4.2 Step One: Definition**

As demonstrated by Watkins et al. (2011), the *definition* section of the Appreciative Inquiry framework was purposed for this research as a fact-gathering tool for this work. The questions that were used to begin probing for understanding had to do with identifying the baseline practices, processes, resources, and people that were required to make the work surrounding the Triple-Ball volleyball league a success.

From this inquiry came the emergence of two categories: first, having a well-established protocol around communication and second, the importance of relying on personal and professional relationships, while quickly determining ‘who has your back.’

#### **4.2.1 Communication: The Why & How to Stay in Touch**

From the data obtained via interviews, and the emails that were issued from May to December of 2014, it becomes clear that communication between all partners and stakeholders was central to the success of the Triple-Ball volleyball league. Communication was established and maintained throughout the process for a variety of different reasons. Sometimes, keeping in touch was done to confirm availability or scheduling. Other times, messaging was crafted and sent out for advocacy or lobbying. Regardless of the reason behind each announcement,

statement, letter, or email, it is clear that making – and keeping – open lines of communication was essential to the delivery of this program.

The data demonstrates that communication was used, at times, primarily as a strategic tool to achieve partnership and sponsorship. Several carefully crafted and individually tailored letters of request or correspondence were sent to various people and organizations, each petitioning their recipient towards a very direct and individualized outcome. Whether the ask was for money, in-kind services or donations, or a formal interprofessional relationship, every correspondence was done with attention to the audience in mind. Presentation mattered:

*[A] picture [of young active students] says a thousand words. And it's knowing, when I... ask for sponsorship[s, that] they are going to see that first. It's 'Oh yeah, I get it.' ... So part of this [work] is building a communication strategy that people can understand very quickly about the whole project. And that is positive.*  
(University coordinator; semi-structured interview)

Pictures alone were not sent to do the job of a properly worded explanation of why the administrative leadership team was aiming to do what it was that was being purported. These explanations usually included the mission, vision, and goals, so that those with a stake in these efforts could see the obvious alignment of their work with the program at large.

Effective communication was more than a sales pitch for money, time, and partnerships. Sometimes, the opportunity to deliver the message afforded the administrative team a sales pitch opportunity for Triple-Ball volleyball itself. Depending on the particular audience, the need to explain the basics and merits of Triple-Ball volleyball was relevant. People – especially potential partners and advocates – needed to be educated (and occasionally convinced) on the benefits of this modification:

*[We told schools] that it was a modified form of volleyball. There, we walked a sort offine line: we wanted them to understand that it was modified, but we wanted them to understand that it was also volleyball. So, for the traditionalists, they didn't 'poo-poo' it right away because it wasn't 'volleyball', it was a modified format of*

*volleyball. We sold it as volleyball... I'll just summarize it as 'selling'... selling it like, here's what it is. Here's what Triple-Ball really is. It's not exactly what many people thought it was, or what their first reaction was, 'oh, that's not volleyball'. Well, yeah it is, if you'll just give us the chance to explain what it is, have a look at it, see what it is, and have a look at it.* (Program coordinator; semi-structured interview)

Much of the time, pre-established relationships brought with them credibility and trust:

*Looking at... emails that come in every day... even knowing a name [attached to the email], there's a kind of heightened awareness: you prepare your brain for what it will be about. I guess when it's coming from me people will assume that it's likely going to be... about volleyball work. That might help to increase the chance that it gets read, and then the chance that it gets received.* (Researcher; self-completed appreciative questionnaire)

Consistent, regular communication with the volunteer cohort was also central to the overall success of the Triple-Ball volleyball program's delivery:

*[I]t's absolutely critical: that class environment is needed to make this happen... Could Saskapalooza happen without that? I guess it could but you would need a tremendous amount of volunteers. And the other part of it that lends itself to the organization is because of the fact that it is a group of people that meet on a regular basis. So, you can always touch base with them... [Y]ou're constantly communicating with one another and that is absolutely critical. And it's not even a case that you have to set up a meeting time, it's set aside for you, so that's really, really significant.* (Program coordinator; semi-structured interview)

At times, communicating with stakeholders and partners had little to do with the moment or task at hand. There was an admission that much of what was being done was for the sake of tomorrow, to create opportunities for building the future, both in terms of Triple-Ball volleyball awareness, and with regards to building capacity to deliver service at an effective level:

*I saw some parents, probably grandparents, and some classmates, in the stands watching this Triple-Ball... I had a chance to talk to 130... [university] students... at the university about [Triple-Ball volleyball], so I got a chance to quote, 'sell my program.'... That's tough for me to find 130 people all at once that I can talk to about these programs.* (Program coordinator; semi-structured interview)

Along with,

*[A] hard nut to crack... is being able to have teachers as an audience. [With this program], I got to talk to [teachers] about... Triple-Ball... [T]hat's the big thing, to have the opportunity, to meet with people and talk to them, here's what Triple-Ball is... so they can [hear] for themselves... from someone who has some street cred.* (Program coordinator; semi-structured interview)

Finally, the data demonstrated an importance of being able to communicate with stakeholders and partners from a place or position of authority. Knowing who the target or intended audience of communication was helped to determine who would communicate with them:

*[W]e had someone [with each team who had seen Triple-Ball volleyball] to quell those self-imposed rumors, and have them say, 'Well actually, it really wasn't that bad. We worked it with the university where they came in... and we had another coach who we had come in and watch...' That help[ed]... [having] someone with street cred, someone living the experience, [to] sell that experience.* (Researcher; self-completed appreciative questionnaire)

The benefit of having someone who is well-regarded or well-respected deliver a message was seen as being just as important as the message itself, in terms of its reception:

*A coach [who] had a really competitive [18U] team... said, 'You know what? Next year, I am going to strongly suggest that we run [Triple-Ball volleyball], at least with our developmental leagues.' Now, there's someone who has some street cred, he's a volleyball guy. So, when he talks, other people are going to listen. And I think that's part of it as well, is having the opportunity to explain it to... members of the volleyball community.* (Program coordinator; semi-structured interview)

#### **4.2.2 Relationships: Relying on Partners New and Old to 'Have your Back'**

One of the most evident areas of data as discussed in the interviews was in regards to the power and importance of relationships within the framework of the league. The data told of a story where new relationships were key in advancing the cause and goals of the project. Far more often, those interviewed spoke in detail and at length of the necessity of personal connectivity throughout the network. New partnerships in areas of need were seen as necessary, but it was time-tested relationships that program leaders utilized and leaned on wherever possible.

Specifically, knowing ‘who has your back’ emerged as a key to the successful delivery of the project.

Knowing who to recruit to key positions was seen as integral to the partnership-building process. Making sure that the leadership table had a cast of overseers that was diverse in skillset, reputation, and contacts was crucial in getting the foundational relationships piece correct, particularly where the administrative team itself was concerned. Throughout the interviews with the administrative leaders, a familiar theme arose that saw each one pointing out how critical the others’ capacities and already-existing relationships were to the operation as a whole:

*[W]ould we have done it without [the program coordinator]? ...I don't know whether I would have had the confidence to do it, without having that program coordinator with his years and years of experience, with the Triple-Ball.*  
(University coordinator, semi-structured interview)

Similarly,

*[B]ottom line is, if [the university coordinator] isn't on board with this, it isn't happening like this... Without [her] it doesn't happen. With [her]... providing that support... [it] is absolutely central to getting [Saskapalooza] to happen. Could Saskapalooza happen without [her]? I guess it could but you would need a tremendous amount of volunteers.*  
(Program coordinator, semi-structured interview)

Just as it was essential that the administrative leadership team be made up of people comprised of differing abilities and reputations, it was equally vital that those people knew who to reach out to in order to form the interprofessional collaborative partnerships that would be necessary to deliver on the objectives of the programming. Our university coordinator was a proven leader, a professor in the Faculty of Kinesiology & Health Studies known within academic and inter-organizational communities as someone who had the ability, drive, and determination to set goals, keep her word, and finish what she started. Our program coordinator had built up similar character references over the course of a more than thirty-year teaching and

coaching career at both the elementary and high school levels. Both administrators' personal and professional standings within the educational, academic, research, and athletic communities served as a bureaucratic lubricant on more than one occasion.

The forming of these partnerships was made easier due to the fact that those on the administrative leadership team exercised the relationships that existed between one another, and were able to identify key vulnerabilities and missing expertise or capacities:

*[Our administrative team] were [collectively] employees of the Regina Public School Division, the University of Regina, and SaskVolleyball, and as such, came to the process with a certain amount of authority, prior to the process even taking off... We knew early in the process that we would need the buy-in of several schools and teacher-volunteers, dozens of university students, and a handful of community organizations to see this program off to a successful start. Getting to that point was, actually, rather smooth. Asking for support and permission took planning, but the answers were all affirmative, positive, and generally pleased to be supporting what was perceived to be a worthwhile cause. (Researcher; self-completed appreciative questionnaire)*

The importance of utilizing pre-existing relationships was seen as imperative in delivering on the goals of the program. The administrative leadership team knew early on that these relationships could be fostered and harnessed to provide expedient expertise during a tight timeline, or at a time when a certain skillset was needed to move the project's mandate forward: The trust that was manifest in these already-existing relationships led to opportunity out of dead ends, and success where it may not have otherwise been experienced. This is the essence of 'having your back':

*[Y]ou establish the league, you go to provide the support system to the coaches. [Supporting coaches in Triple-Ball means showing them what it looks like, so I call out to a coach working with a high school with which I am familiar to inquire about the possibility of using the team as exemplars and making videos of it] and that was a connection. [She didn't] say, 'No, no, no, we can't do it. No, [you don't] have the media release forms for that team.' I called [their coach] and she said, 'Sure,' partially because of the university, partly because I am a professor, but the other part was because I was a parent [of an athlete on the team]. And she said, 'For sure, come on over [to film].' [She] really trusted me, [and knew] that it would be*

*helpful to volleyball, it would be helpful to teachers... Who has your back that you can call and [say] you know, 'I'm overwhelmed. This is something I need you to deal with,' and they say, 'Yes, I'll do it.'* (University coordinator, semi-structured interview)

Further example,

*Sponsorship logos were just one more challenge that we needed, and did, with [a known graphic designer]'s help, work our way through. Yeah!!* (University coordinator, email, 18 November, 2014)

With regards to the aforementioned, it is important to note that the university-coordinator was well-connected within the University of Regina. Her ability to organize others and appeal for assistance successfully would likely not have been able to be emulated by another, newer person in a similar position. This speaks to the overwhelming power that these pre-existing relationships hold, as well as their role in helping to achieve successful outcomes during an interprofessional collaborative exercise.

Communication with pre-established contacts was central to success throughout the creation and delivery of the Triple-Ball volleyball league, especially during early work with interprofessional collaborative partner organizations:

*[C]ertainly we used our contacts... contacts with the schools... contacts at the university... [university] students... [university] faculty, and contacts... within the school division... I think that was important; there's a familiarity there. So, when you or I talk to someone that we know and say, 'Hey, here's a program that you should look at,' they trust our judgment, they trust our experience there... I think that just the personal contact, it makes a huge difference. It absolutely does, there's no question about it whatsoever.* (Program coordinator, semi-structured interview)

Additionally,

*[R]elationship[s] meant trust, and a mutual understanding that problems could be solved, sometimes with minimal effort. Necessary? Certainly communication, yes, definitely. Relationships, where non-existent, [were] built, but they needed work. I will say that familiarity and trust between people within different organizations meant faster troubleshooting and longer leashes for conceptualizing ideas into practice.* (Researcher, self-completed appreciative questionnaire)

The importance of the utilization of pre-existing relationships and partnerships was of no small significance. Generally, it meant expedience, trust, and quality:

*Looking back, it is probably worth mentioning that, with few exceptions... all partnerships were solicited and made based on, and because of, pre-existing relationships. I am sure that the success we experienced within these circles, in terms of collaboration, could have been done without the pre-existing relationships, but it would have been more challenging, time-consuming, and the end result may not have been as robust an accomplishment... troubleshooting was made easier, as well, as a result of well laid-out [personal] relationships.*

Further,

*Relationship[s] meant trust and a mutual understanding that problems could be solved, sometimes with minimal effort... Relationships, where non-existent, could be built, but they needed work. Familiarity and trust between people within different organizations meant faster troubleshooting and longer leashes for conceptualizing ideas into practice. (Researcher, self-completed appreciative questionnaire.)*

As important as it was to identify and recruit interprofessional collaborative partners early in the process, it was equally critical that these partners were relied on to do their specific job when the time came. Knowing that, as a team, the group has the capacity on board to accomplish a certain function was as important as having trust that the function in question will actually be delivered on:

*[W]e ha[d] the coaches. And that's part of, I think, what made it appealing for the schools. [T]here're resources in place, there are people who are going to come in to coach [the students], there are people who are looking after scheduling, there are people who are looking after getting them from point A to point B, there are people who are looking after providing them with t-shirts, and training... financial resources, human resources... so that... made it easier for [the schools] to say, 'Hey, really, what have we got to lose?' Here we have an opportunity for [dozens of] kids from your school to participate in a program, where they're getting instruction, they're having fun, they're learning.*

Along the same vein,

*[T]he structure. I mean, with [the university coordinator] and her class, they provide a structure, to be able to organize this even. Without that, I don't think that*

*this flies. [S]omebody has to be there to be the champion of [the program].*  
(Program coordinator, semi-structured interview)

It is these relationships that can sometimes serve to champion individuals and partners through difficulties or differences of opinions. Where or when a feature of the project might have been at risk of falling into disarray, strong, trusting, mutually beneficial relationships created the space for reconciliation and mediation:

*I am comfortable saying that without the leg work to build trusting, collaborative relationships prior to dilemma[s]... ‘meet in the middle’ arrangement[s] would not have been met, and extremely difficult decisions would have had to have been made... [some of these were] ‘win-win’ for all of us, and it came about as a result of discussions and advocacy work, all in the best interest of our student-participants.* (Researcher, self-completed appreciative questionnaire)

#### **4.3 Step Two: Discovery**

The probing queries that were utilized at the *discovery* stage aimed to unearth deeper thinking. Questions here had to do with positive takeaways and the memories or moments that stood out in the minds of those who led programming. Here, the interviewees were asked to discuss their perceptions of innovation made possible by collaborative involvement between people and organizations. It also aimed to learn about motivation and inspiration, asking those who worked to make the league a success to elaborate on where they drew their own power to keep going, in an effort to see an ambitious project through to a successful conclusion.

In the end, two groupings were identified: first, *A Want to Succeed: Motivation for the Present*, motivation to realize the league’s potential came more from a desire to win and succeed than it did from a fear of failure; second, *Working with Obstacles: Optimistically Negotiating Forward*, working with, through, and around obstacles was made easier due to the presence of an optimistic personality that made negotiating difficulties easier and more bearable.

#### **4.3.1 A Want to Succeed: Motivation for the Present**

An interesting subject is the role that wanting to succeed, win, or avoid failure played in focusing and motivating those responsible for the actualization of the mission.

There was a demonstrable sense of responsibility to the mandate and to those who had already committed to help. It is clear that a healthy amount of nervous energy was at play for many that were looking for motivation in their work:

*[Part] of this is the responsibility, because it was several projects, it was the league, it was the tournament, it was my class, moving this class forward in a project that I have never done before... not something this big. So, there were certain pressures, I felt. It's not just about... me here. (University coordinator, semi-structured interview)*

On the opposite side, a fear of failure played a role in helping to carry the project's mission through to a successful conclusion. It appears as though this fear was, for the most part, healthy, and contributed to instilling a helpful amount of anxiety:

*A fear of failure and not living up to the expectations of all of the partners involved, and to keep that rolling, and massaging it all the way through... some people wouldn't suggest that that's a source of inspiration, but if I can overcome all of those little obstacles, I take pride in that. (University coordinator, semi-structured interview)*

While wanting to do one's job competently was a motivator in its own right, achieving results together as a team was seen to be another stimulus in and of itself. Having contributed appropriately to the collective was viewed as a positive, value-added addition that was cause for celebration:

*[T]he sense of accomplishment as a team. Our three-person administrative committee put hundreds of hours into something that we believed in. We are competitive people who like to win and succeed... That was fun to be a part of, no question... That sense of 'team' played into it, too. Everyone had their job based on their position and competencies... So doing one's job was a big motivator. At least it was for me. (Researcher, self-completed appreciative questionnaire)*

*Everyone worked to get the day done, because that was what the goal was.*  
(University coordinator, Semi-structured interview)

#### **4.3.2 Working with Obstacles: Optimistically Negotiating Forward**

The data gathered through interviews tells a trying tale, one that took countless hours and energy to take an idea and successfully develop it from conceptualization through to actualization. Much of this success is attributed to the positive mindset that leaders brought to their work with them every day, in the hopes of creating fun, healthy opportunities for youth. They fought through the difficulties associated with the work by remaining optimistic, negotiating a way forward through tribulations, and seeking innovative ways to bypass any and all obstacles that they encountered.

Being able to quickly move past setbacks and embrace a forward-thinking mentality meant that time that might otherwise have been consumed worrying, lamenting, or assigning blame was instead spent determining remedies to potential or actual problems, and then applying that remedy:

*We could spend time [looking at] who's at fault, who's at fault, who's at fault... we could have gone over and over about that. But... I will fix it... You've got to move past [problems], fix what you can, adapt, and move forward... you step up. You get it done... I think [there are] people who are willing to figure a way out... It is again [an] example of negotiating to get where you need to go.* (University coordinator, semi-structured interview)

Similarly,

*You don't put a lot of time into the things that can go wrong or the hang-ups. You don't focus on that, you overshoot them and go onto the solution.* (Researcher, self-completed appreciative questionnaire)

Likewise,

*FYI – There are [four] teams at [a participant school] and only [three] student-coaches now... [A student] has dropped the class. While practices are easy enough to coordinate having two coaches at the games has been a challenge for this week.*

*[I have made it so that t]hey are managing with the help of a [t]eacher-[c]hampion and other student-coaches. (University coordinator, email, 22 October 2014)*

Sometimes, this meant renegotiating the means through which one used to move through these problems or setbacks. Speaking specifically to this group of project administrators, redefining the plan of attack was always at the top of mind in the event of a potential, perceived, or actual impediment to success. Admittedly, this was not always easy, but as a rule, those placed in charge of delivering this program were of positive mind, and approached issues from a commitment-first perspective:

*I have a path, and sometimes it's not rock-hard, the map is not solid. You're going from here, to here, to here, to here, but I have an idea...[A]nything in life, you expect that there are going to be little detours... I get over that, and think, how do I fix it? I want to be somewhere over here, we're here, and there's a pothole. What are we going to do to get around it[?] (University coordinator, semi-structured interview)*

Sometimes, it meant doing a job by oneself, or taking matters into one's own hands, regardless of how small or trivial the job may have seemed:

*There was obstacle after obstacle after obstacle, little barriers, things that came up that we would never have thought of, because it's the real world and an authentic learning experience, and some of the people were a bit surprised I think, that as the instructor I was willing to help with some of the schools, help negotiate our way through to get to the other side. (University coordinator, semi-structured interview)*

This 'jumping in' to get the job done, whatever it took, certainly had a contagious effect. The work of one begot the work of the other. This motivating effect also came with injections of optimism, and gave other administrative team members and volunteers who may have needed it a push to thrive in their work:

*[The] willingness to go above and beyond. Like, the people that [were] talked to, phoned, drove to see... going out to referee... taking [the] van to drive kids... like, I mean, it's really difficult to watch someone... invest themselves so heavily in a project, and not feel, 'Hey, you know what? I'm going to do whatever I can do just as a support. (Program coordinator, semi-structured interview)*

The ability to remain optimistic and of positive mind in the face of deadlines and fatigue can be attributed to an absolute dedication to planning, a commitment to refining process, and a belief that hard work at the front end would save time throughout and yield better results:

*The meetings, I mean, we had a number of meetings, we had to sit down and talk about the logistics of this: how many teams do we want to get in here? How many crews do we want to manage?... Okay, how many coaches do we need? How do we schedule it so we match up coaches and schools? So I mean that was an interesting part of the whole process: the energy that goes into any kind of a new enterprise like that.* (Program coordinator, semi-structured interview)

As well,

*The value of forward planning contingency planning, and sometimes, refusing to take ‘no’ for an answer, cannot be overstated.* (Researcher, self-completed appreciative questionnaire)

Additionally,

*[A participant school] only has [two] functioning volleyballs – sad but true – made the [T]ripple-[B]all game on Monday REALLY slow. The student-participants, with the assistance of the student-coaches and [c]hampion[-]teacher, are having a bake sale at the school today to raise funds to purchase more volleyballs. I donated \$28 cash yesterday towards this effort.* (University coordinator, email, 22 October 2014)

Lastly, the phenomenon of negotiating one's way through problems and working through and around barriers did not end simply in troubleshooting issues that were effecting the here and now. The same leaders who saw the value in remaining optimistic while working through adversity to solve immediate issues also held the belief that the big-picture items – the hurdles that were going to interfere with future success – needed to be accounted for and worked on. Particularly when it came to removing the stigmatization around the Triple-Ball volleyball format as ‘less-than’ its traditional counterpart, the data painted a picture of a cohort of leaders who were unwilling to focus only on success in the present:

*[T]he opportunity to overcome the psychological, I'll call it ‘barrier’, with people who are convinced that they know what volleyball is... I think that once we can*

*overcome those challenges, they will start to see the merit of Triple-Ball... [and] somebody needs to be there to be the champion of that.* (Program coordinator, semi-structured interview)

#### **4.4 Step Three: Dream**

*Ultimately, it's active healthy lifestyles for kids.* (University coordinator, semi-structured interview)

Within the *dream* phase, respondents answered specific questions around real, perceived, and potential mission, vision, and goal statements for the Saskapalooza Triple-Ball volleyball league. Those probed about their feelings during this stage were asked to respond with what these statements were during the implementation of the league, as well as what they would ideally be (the dream), should the league continue to thrive and adapt.

Asking respondents about their opinions on the league's mission, vision, and goals turned out to be an efficient jumping-off board; after rich discussion and probing questions, two sorts rose to the top: first, administrative leaders were motivated at the time, and indeed, into the future, by the notion that the league existed in order to help kids have fun, get active, be active, and stay active; second, from the perspective of those who led the league, there is no such thing as 'too much' support, be it financial, human, infrastructure, in-kind, or other. The more there is, the more that can be done.

Prior to delving into this section's findings, it is important to note that for the purposes of this study, the *dream* and *design* phases of the data collection and analysis shared many similarities. Both were approached from an idealistic perspective, as the Appreciative Inquiry methodology often allows. Both asked interviewees to determine those items that they viewed as essential to the success of Saskapalooza. The difference was in the scope of their examination: where the *dream* phase was concerned with those items that would be considered big-picture, executive, and foundational in nature (strategy, mission, vision, and values), the *design* phase

concerned itself with pieces that were part of the administrative landscape (human resources, financial and infrastructural capital, and day-to-day operations). While both are imperative, they are different enough in scope to warrant a different investigative lens. Questions were asked in such a way that purposefully kept these two organizational components separate as they were two distinct branches of Saskapalooza.

#### **4.4.1 Healthy Active Kids: Motivation for the Future**

For this program, there exists an obvious and inextricable link between those working in the best interest of youth, and that which motivates and entices them to keep going. The pursuit of quality and quantity programming available for youth, so that they may be healthy and active, was the primary driver for those who were tasked with organizing the Triple-Ball volleyball league:

*The kids. At the end of the day, this was for our kids... I know that I kept going because we had a mandate in mind that was centred on the service of a group of young people, many of whom may never have had a positive experience like this before.* (Researcher, self-completed appreciative questionnaire)

In speaking about the program's mission, vision, and goals, the administrative leadership team was unabashed in their conviction that this work was built and maintained for the betterment of young people:

*Saskapalooza is growing a movement of leaders who work to provide free, active, healthy-living opportunities for elementary school kids... [W]e're [also] developing those leaders, to work with the kids, in a free, active-living context.* (University coordinator, semi-structured interview)

Also,

*[U]ltimately [it's] about getting kids involved, and getting them active... [T]he goal is to get kids active...[The mission is] to provide an opportunity for kids... in all of our schools... an opportunity to participate.* (Program coordinator, semi-structured interview)

*[The mission is t]o engage the community in the endeavour to provide youth with developmentally appropriate opportunities to access volleyball... [T]o provide a quality, developmentally appropriate opportunity for young people to play volleyball, with a focus on those who may not otherwise have it. (Researcher, self-completed appreciative questionnaire)*

In much the same way,

*Our goal for the ‘tournament’/celebration is to provide these athletes with an opportunity that they might not otherwise experience. With their involvement in the league and the season-ending tournament we are optimistic that many of them will continue to pursue a healthy, active life style. (Researcher, email, 22 October 2014)*

Other organizational senior administrators who worked as interprofessional collaborative partners remarked in much the same fashion:

*I’m a big supporter of volleyball development, but more importantly, a supporter of active, healthy lifestyles for students. As a division, we do certainly appreciate all that has been done for our students! (Interprofessional collaborative partner, email, 28 October 2014)*

One specific subset of the collective dream was the notion to build capacity, both towards the Triple-Ball volleyball adaptation, and in the number of young athletes in the volleyball pipeline. These two sentiments seemed to connect well, as there was a belief in the connection between the number of athletes that could be exposed to Triple-Ball volleyball at a developmentally-appropriate age, and the number of young athletes that would remain committed to the sport in an organized way for longer periods of their teenage life, as they moved through the middle years and into high school:

*You know, we only have two 18U [girls’] teams in Regina right now, in the whole population for girls. No boys’ teams. That only changes if we increase the masses at the younger ages... In terms of... volleyball, this [program] is advantageous because it increases the grassroots. (University coordinator, semi-structured interview)*

Similarly,

*[M]y dream is for these [leagues] to include kids that are there to play six-on-six, but also open it up to kids, where it's four-on-four volleyball. So it's [elementary volleyball skills] that leads into the six-on-six triple-ball... that format works so well.* (Program coordinator, semi-structured interview)

Additionally,

*[The Triple-Ball format] builds from within, when you have a small catalyst of kids wanting to try it, it just explodes from there.* (Researcher, self-completed appreciative questionnaire)

The administrative leadership team largely felt that they had delivered on their original mission.

While they pointed out adaptations that they felt would improve the direction and impact of Saskapalooza, there was an admission that the job, as it had been set out, had been accomplished:

*At the end of the day, the big deal was this: here is an excellent opportunity for students to participate in developmentally, socially appropriate sport, for free. These are kids who would likely not have had similar experiences afforded to them, had their community not galvanized around them and their success in the way it did... [Y]ou saw happiness in those gyms. You saw enjoyment, budding confidence, and teamwork. Demographically, we know that many of our young participants simply would not have had those opportunities elsewhere... It's why we do the work we do. We want to see kids succeed in their communities. Period.* (Researcher, self-completed appreciative questionnaire)

#### **4.4.2 Support: Human, Financial, and In-kind Assistance**

There was a recognition that much of what the administrative leadership team envisioned for the Triple-Ball volleyball league would not have been able to come to fruition, were it not for the eager help and generous support it received from the business, educational, and volleyball communities. At the core of this work was the notion that the leadership team wanted this active, developmentally-appropriate initiative to be associated with friendship and fun, insofar as the youth that were involved were concerned.

The importance of securing basic organizational support through people and funding was a sentiment shared among the administrative leadership team. Before there was a focus on any extra initiatives or incentives that would likely improve the quality of the experience for those

involved, there was work done around guaranteeing the absolute ‘must-haves’ that would need to be delivered on. Particularly where a people-base and organizational capacity was concerned, the administrative leadership team needed to secure the partnerships that could deliver the required capacities:

*With regards to specific organizations, our ‘Big Three’ – Regina Public Schools, the University of Regina, and SaskVolleyball – provided us with the people, infrastructure, and talent that we needed to make sure that our league, at its base, likely to be successful in carrying out its mandate... You can’t do much without human and financial resources. What was so positive was how willing so many people and organizations were to step up however they could, in order to help us deliver a solid product to our young people.* (Researcher, self-completed appreciative questionnaire)

Also,

*[T]here’s resources in place... in terms of financial resources, human resources... [W]hat ha[s] [a school willing to sign its students up for this program] got to lose?*  
(Program coordinator, semi-structured interview)

This concept seemed especially important where and when organizational capacity was tested past its expected limits. The essential partnerships that had been established needed to be able to be called on when required:

*In the end it was SaskVolleyball who balanced the books to make it work for the tournament because we weren’t expecting one hundred and eighty kids in the league.* (University coordinator, semi-structured interview)

Likewise,

*I just spoke to my SaskSport contact. Although as a last resort we do have permission to use some of the research grant funding for sub release time for our champion teachers.* (University coordinator, email, 22 October 2014)

Corporate connections were seen as quality-enhancing partnerships. These connections enabled the administrative leadership team to go above the base mandate of the program, and offer creative enhancements that would serve to improve the experiences of those that it was designed to work for:

*The sponsorship from the community was important. It enabled us to offer the kids things like the t-shirts, the volleyballs, the beach balls, which, it's a way to make it more appealing to the kids, I guess. Now... I am able to put [our] resources somewhere else. The corporate piece, I think, can't be overlooked. We had fun, but we had a variety of activities, and it was because of our corporate sponsors that that happened.* (Program coordinator, semi-structured interview)

In much the same way,

*I'm glad that we were able to [financially] support this endeavour – it is my hope that we can expand the Triple Ball Program in the elementary schools next season!* (Volleyball club president, email, 5 November 2014)

These partnerships tended to direct funds, people, or in-kind services to the program that were to be applied to a certain feature, such as shirts/jerseys, food, or memorabilia. This allowed the administration to allocate funds to additional services, such as the creation of professionally-edited Triple-Ball volleyball explanation and coaching videos.

The data showed that much of this theme was generated by looking forward. There was a general allusion to the fact that more could have been done during the 2014 Triple-Ball volleyball season had there been a greater capacity to serve. This generalization was not specific to one facet of the complement of supports that were already in place. It was agreed that more people, money, buildings and spaces would have led to improved outcomes, and that this would best be accomplished through establishing and maintaining partnerships:

*The first goal would be to increase the number of coaches and admin types in support of children's active living opportunities, so that they have experience... [I]ncrease the support networks, and fundraising, in order to provide the program... Objectives, I guess, would be to enlist a miracle number, I'll say, twenty coaches a year that will go on and do something.* (University coordinator, semi-structured interview)

#### **4.5 Step Four: Design**

During the *design* stage of the interview, the interviewees were asked to share their perspectives on the people, processes, policies, and resources that they felt were integral to the

success and stability of the Saskapalooza Triple-Ball volleyball league. They were also asked what components they would like to see integrated in the future, should the league go forward.

This section yielded a relatively high volume of data throughout the interviews, emails, and journals. The findings clearly led to two groupings: first, *The Leader: Traits, Characteristics & Personality*, the program would not have run like it did if it had not had one single lead administrator at its helm, championing and overseeing all aspects of the endeavor; second, *The Volunteer Cohort: A Necessity in Program Delivery* of equal importance are the quality and quantity of the volunteers that served in the many capacities required to make the league and its work a success.

#### ***4.5.1 The Leader: Traits, Characteristics, and Personality***

By far and away, all data harvested via interviews – and indeed any data that was examined via email threads produced throughout the league’s creation, implementation, and review – pointed to the reality that the composition and characteristics of the leader of the entire program was the single-most important feature to the success of the Triple-Ball volleyball league. While leadership responsibilities were purposefully shared among the interprofessional collaborative organizations, and although the administrative leadership team of the league counted three members, that team itself identified one among them as the overseer of the entire mandate: the university coordinator.

The findings presented below explore the type of abilities, skills, and character that those interviewed felt should be looked for in a champion leader. The competencies required of the person serving in the champion administrator role could be seen at work throughout the league’s progression, as evidenced in the email threads, and was punctuated throughout the semi-structured interviews that followed. Empathy, critical analysis, problem-solving abilities,

communicative strengths, vision, loyalty, commitment, follow-through, negotiation, patience, energy, a bent towards self-improvement, and the ability to inspire others were all seen as attributes that were compulsory – not merely beneficial – of the person assuming this role. It is not an overstatement to suggest that the success of the program depended on this person's ability to remain attentive to the 'big picture', even where and when getting involved appropriately on an operational level. Finding a person with these qualities is difficult enough, much less in a volunteer position. Once this character has been identified, it does not go unnoticed by those that work with, under, or around this person:

*I have a little bit of everything... I have the critical analysis. I have the compassion and the empathy and the loyalty to see the big picture and make sure the institution is okay. I've taken on [several] roles... I had a person... say to me... "You're able to corral fog." And I thought about that and it could be a positive point. When you are looking for people to do these things, they have those traits. They are able to move things forward.* (University coordinator, semi-structured interview)

Furthermore,

*I am not convinced that someone without her unique combination of character, competency, and compassion could have seen this league through the hurdles that it faced in its infancy, certainly not with the success that we experienced throughout.* (Researcher, self-completed appreciative questionnaire)

Along that same line,

*Your students (many of them) have really engaged in this project. I'm wondering how much of an influence the enthusiasm and 'buy-in' of their instructor has to do with that.[...] We all know how powerful a good role-model can be.* (Program Coordinator, email, 22 October 2014)

The interview respondents felt that the ability to positively problem-solve was essential to the success of a program such as the Triple-Ball volleyball initiative. There is no better example of this than in the case of the champion administrative leader. The language of working through difficulties and troubleshooting through to a successful conclusion was prevalent in the data, in

phrases such as, “You get it done”, “I...bypass obstacle[s]” and, “we’ll figure out a way” (University coordinator, semi-structured interview).

The concept of an energetic, self-motivated individual leading the program shone through the findings. A person intending to champion a program, usher a mandate through a plethora of hurdles and motivate others needs to be seen as tireless, inspired, and tenacious in belief of their work, according to those interviewed for the purpose of this study. Energy carried people through difficult conversations and heavy workloads, as is evidenced with admissions such as, “[I]t’s my patience, and my energy level, that win out the day. Because it’s got to get done”, and “The inspiration is to make it work for the kids.” (University coordinator, semi-structured interview). It motivated others to contribute to the collective cause when they, too, were feeling fatigued. It was seen as an integral part of an effective leader’s character. In the case of this particular administrative team, the University coordinator’s efforts were noticed and appreciated, with her counterparts commenting that,

*[I]t was just [her] energy. She was so enthusiastic about it... her willingness to go above and beyond”, “[She’s] pulling, she’s sometimes pushing. She’s a lead in that. Her energy, her enthusiasm, her belief that, ‘Hey, this is a good thing for these kids’.* (Program coordinator, semi-structured interview)

The idea of a personal or professional challenge was seen as incentive to take on a task of this size, scope, and magnitude. It served as a motivator to accept the mantle of leader, and to carry the mandate through to a successful conclusion:

*What I look for is going outside of my comfort zone sometimes, with either my teaching, or my volunteering, or whatever, and I’ve done a lot of different things that way, and some were better experiences than others. But I always learn from all of them. I take something away from it.* (University coordinator, semi-structured interview)

The leader of this program was perceived as having the responsibility to ensure that the program would be successful, both in the short-to-immediate term, and looking forward out into the future

of the landscape. As such, this person needed to keep both the present context and future vision in mind. It was imperative that the champion administrator knew how to allocate their resources – human and otherwise – in the most prudent and effective places. This was accomplished through a combination of cultivating new and pre-existing relationships, an understanding of what jobs needed to be accomplished, and an intuitive sense of who would succeed and thrive doing each task, or looking after each area of the program. As was alluded to in an earlier part of the *Findings* section, knowing who ‘has your back’ is imperative to success when dealing with people.

With respect to forward-looking capacities, this individual was someone who had a mind for what would be learned as a result of the work that was being undertaken, or what types of critical infrastructure or resources would be able to be offered up to the community in the future, as a result of the initiatives at hand. While this was not the primary concern, it was seen to play a role in the thinking, planning, and decision-making on the part of the champion administrative lead:

*Ultimately, the goal was to get [the instructional videos] done for the students who were going to be coaches. [Now], SaskVolleyball has these videos so that all the coaches who are the moms and dads [that] have to step up and coach the 13U kid[s] have somewhere hopefully to go. (University coordinator, semi-structured interview)*

Personal conviction, and a belief that what one is doing will make a difference, was seen as vital in carrying the champion administrative leader through moments of doubt or personal questioning. This was viewed as a measure of personality or character more than ability, but was seen as an asset of importance nonetheless:

*“You miss a hundred percent of the shots you don’t take.” And I guess I’m one of those people who take that [approach]. It’s here to here... [J]ust adapt and move forward because I am willing to take the shots knowing that yeah, you’re going to miss a percentage of them, but some of them are going to work... you’ve got to*

*move past those things, fix what you can, adapt, and move forward.* (University coordinator, semi-structured interview)

While not the intention at the outset of the program, a look at the data suggests that it was important to have a clear leader overseeing the mandate in its entirety. One person needed to be willing and able to serve as the touchstone, the overseer of the program, so that no details were overlooked, and in order to ensure that scarce resources were being most appropriately allocated across the scope of the project:

*[T]his entire endeavour needed one single champion... to make sure that all matters were being attended to. [The university coordinator] was our champion. She delegated where and when she could. Where she could not, she took matters into her own hands. It is interesting that in an arena where relationships, teamwork, and collaboration were extremely crucial, the reality was that this project needed one leader.* (Researcher, self-completed appreciative questionnaire)

Sometimes, making it all come together meant personal sacrifice and uncomfortable moments and days over the short-term:

*...and sending emails out at 4:30 in the morning! You are working extremely hard for this program and these kids... [d]on't burn out on us.* (Researcher, email, 6 November 2014)

For these reasons, interview respondents maintained that it was critical to ensure that this leader was available and in place early on in the sequence of planning. While this person did not need to be chosen by any set standard of principals, this role needed to exist, and its duties had to be executed with a high degree of excellence, as seen in statements such as, “[B]ottom line is, if [the university coordinator] isn’t one board with this, it isn’t happening.” (Program coordinator, semi-structured interview), and “I’d like to think that we could have managed without [the university coordinator], with another committed [leader] in her spot, but that may not [have been] the case.” (Researcher, self-completed appreciative questionnaire)

#### **4.5.2 The Volunteer Cohort: a Necessity in Program Delivery**

The concept of the importance of volunteers to the Saskapalooza Triple-Ball volleyball program was one that emerged repeatedly throughout the data. These volunteers differed from those serving on the administrative team; while the three-person committee oversaw the overall decision-making associated with the program, these volunteers were the people who were utilized to actualize the strategic plan. During the 2014 league, the vast majority of volunteers took the form of university students enrolled in a first-year kinesiology class. These students received course credit for their work, and while they were compelled to participate in some capacity in order to receive the credit, the term ‘volunteer’ is most closely aligned to the role that they were viewed as having played, and is used here to capture the nature of the role that they played in actualizing the program.

The time that these volunteers invested in the program was essential to its success. While the offerings and contributions that other partners made through their gifts of financial contributions, facilities, and in-kind donations were helpful, the investment that these volunteers made in this program were viewed as a non-negotiable to the success and viability of the Triple-Ball volleyball league:

*If [Saskapalooza is] in this format... if it's running in an academic class, the students need to be engaged in it, somehow, to make it work... SaskVolleyball could not go and run Saskapalooza without a whack of people stepping up to volunteer. My concern are the students... [if] no one would volunteer for Saskapalooza... then I don't have my human resource base to run the program. (University coordinator, semi-structured interview)*

Additionally,

*[L]et's face it: [the university coordinator] had 100 students in her class that she had to organize into this, I mean that's incredible, that she had to organize into videotaping and analysis and the festival... incredible. I mean... it's absolutely crucial: that class environment is needed to make this happen. (Program coordinator, semi-structured interview)*

Sometimes, having access to dozens of willing and able volunteers made for easy work on otherwise long jobs:

*I've already assigned th[e] task [of preparing thank-you notes to the interprofessional collaborative partners] to the KIN 180 students... I told them we would like them to hand write a letter of thanks and include it in a package with: a picture of the entire Saskapalooza project group... [a] copy of the tournament brochure, and... [a] Saskapalooza t-shirt.* (University coordinator, email, 6 November 2014)

Quantity of volunteers was seen as only half of the equation to successful outcomes. The quality of the people who filled volunteer roles mattered. As far as the administrative leadership team was concerned, early identification of competent leaders within the volunteer cohort was essential to the delivery of core components of the required work. As the university coordinator noted, “[o]ne [of the] core components to maintain it [is to] recognize early... which [volunteers] get it, and which don’t.” Further, “[Some] students showed initiative, you know, they got it done... and they had more control over [the program].”

An interesting strand of the volunteer theme was discerned through exploring who should be filling each specific role. Most of these positions were elementary school-based positions that saw volunteers working directly with young students. Prior to the volunteers making contact with their school-based champions and starting work with their young students, there was a shared sentiment that those students enrolled in education programs would naturally be among the ‘best fit’. It did not work out this way. In fact, those students enrolled in education programs appeared to be among the least suited to be working with young children in a coaching capacity. One explanation was that the class was a first-year undergraduate one, and some of the students enrolled in the education program may have yet to learn that the teaching profession would not be best suited for their skillset. On the other side was the realization that many of those registered

in the class from which Saskapalooza drew on were taking it as an elective; therefore, they did not have to be there, and were more likely to have been enrolled in the class because they believed in physical pursuits, and active, healthy lifestyles:

*[E]ven though about half of the students in the Growth and Development [class] were Kin[esiology students], I had Business Admin., Social Work, a real mixed bag. I think the ones that weren't Kin[esiology] were probably taking [the class] because they were interested in active, healthy living.* (University coordinator, semi-structured interview)

#### **4.6 Conclusion**

The *definition* section focused on different forms of, and reasons for, communication between interprofessional collaborative partners. It also assisted with making sense of the importance of relying on partnerships throughout the process, establishing early who among the partners would ‘have your back’ during times of difficulty, and the benefits of using pre-existing relationships, and making new ones wherever possible.

The *discovery* segment taught of the administrative leaderships’ want to succeed and win for their community, while at times being motivated by a fear of failure. It also helped in making sense of data having to do with optimistically negotiating forward through difficulties, troubleshooting when needed, and working with – or bypassing – obstacles when necessary.

The *dream* phase saw an obvious motivation emphasized when it came to working for children and youth, and a push to offer them healthy, active lifestyles in a developmentally-appropriate context with their peers. The interviewees also stressed that while they were thrilled and somewhat reliant on financial, human, and in-kind supports from interprofessional collaborative partners – as well as the corporate community – more support through additional partnerships would serve to strengthen the quality and quantity of programming opportunities in the future.

The *design* context offered some of the most significant data, insofar as the research questions are concerned, in offering the importance of having one single, highly competent, committed individual acting as the lead champion administrator. It also pointed out that having a cohort of volunteers deep in numbers and skillsets was of vital importance to the viability of the program.

By examining the context through the methodological lens of Appreciative Inquiry, it is evident that the administrative leadership team shared many observations regarding the success of the program, what worked well, and potential areas where improvement might occur in the future. It also showed a discussion on those features that made individual people and the partner organizations that they represented work effectively together through interprofessional collaborative opportunities. What follows is an interpretive discussion regarding the implications of this data. The research questions are used as a framework to navigate concepts presented in the findings.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION**

### **5.1 Introduction**

In this section, the four research questions are explored using the analysis of the aforementioned thematic framework and the individual categories found within each. The practices, processes, people, and resources required to successfully operationalize an interprofessional collaborative initiative are provided, as are methods that should be utilized for optimal results. The question of stability is explored, and the features that were present within the Saskapalooza Triple-Ball volleyball program that suggest future stability are outlined. These answers are informed by the reintroduction of the current literature on pertinent topics, especially interprofessional collaboration.

The exploration of concepts having to do with people, practices and resources must be done in an effort to adjudicate the likelihood of each one contributing to the overall stability of programming such as this. To this end, a critical view of all contributions was taken, in order to assess the magnitude of each of the program's features to the overall success and viability of the league.

### **5.2 Practices & Policies that Nurture New Extracurricular Programming**

When starting this new extracurricular program by way of interprofessional collaboration, it was determined that the practices and policies that are most aptly utilized and developed have to do with communication, planning, and partnerships. On the surface, this should seem obvious: utilizing interprofessional, collaborative relationships to create something new can be useless at best to disastrous at worse if the process of coming together is not supported methodically (Haythornthwaite et al., 2006; Johnston & Truluck, 2011). The purpose of supporting interprofessional collaboration as a means to achieving successful outcomes must

be kept in mind: by working together with best practice, individuals, groups and organizations have the potential to achieve more than they could as a sum of their parts (Schnobrich-Davis & Terrill, 2010). This belief is supported by Noonan et al. (2008), who stress that there are, in fact, specific best practices rooted in research that, above others, lend themselves to the success of a program such as Saskapalooza. In retrospect, it is clear that this program utilized many of their dimensions on its path to experiencing successful outcomes.

In terms of communication strategies, ongoing communication that all stakeholders and partners could count on was imperative. This messaging was clear, concise and dependable. This included two very deliberate practices that Noonan et al. (2008) promote: disseminating information to a broad audience for maximum uptake and impact, and following up with targeted people or groups to ensure that the intended message had been received and understood. In the case of Saskapalooza, certain information needed to be communicated to large groups of people in short timeframes without sacrificing the intended message's accuracy. For this reason, this broad sharing of information, combined with follow-up, provided for the opportunity to communicate quickly, to many people, without having anything important lost or misinterpreted.

When presenting a new idea, or soliciting support for a component of the project, the message was as important as the messenger. Being able to speak from a place of power, influence, and authority was helpful in securing the result that was planned or hoped for. This is why it was important that the Saskapalooza team utilized another of the strategies that Noonan et al. (2008) provide: specific, deliberate and timely administrative support. Having the key decision-makers and power-holders, as opposed to a part- or first-time volunteer make the first phone call or email when asking for delicate resources or difficult permissions was often the

difference between a ‘yes’ or a ‘no’. Saskapalooza relied on its administrative personnel to make the initial asks and troubleshoot in the event of a difficulty down the road.

These same power-holders should be willing and able to meet everyone involved in the project at least once. It sounds like a large ask; however, every participant, every volunteer, every community partner, and everyone in between should be able to attach a name to a face and a smile. Emails were the main method of messaging in many cases. Without that personal connection, there exists somewhat of a void in the communication. For this reason, as Noonan et al. (2008) assert, administrative leadership must meet with all stakeholders on at least a single occasion. Where this is not possible, at least one member of the leadership team should meet all stakeholders once by committee.

At a deeper level, the closeness of those involved in the loop of communication was a major component of successful outcomes. Where there was familiarity in a pre-existing relationship, there was trust. This was of capital importance when the program was facing tight deadlines, funding shortfalls, or any other items that needed attention. This was the root of the phenomenon associated with ‘having your back.’ This phenomenon associated with the power and potential of the pre-existing relationship in interprofessional collaborative pursuits has not been thoroughly researched within the context of promoting community programming.

Preplanning was essential to the success of the Saskapalooza Triple-Ball volleyball program. This would most certainly hold true if another extracurricular pursuit were to become actualized under similar contexts, as getting all relevant partners to the leadership table early in the development of an interprofessional collaborative project is one trait associated with successful outcomes (Casey et al., 2009). At the core of this planning was early identification. Specifically, the administrative leadership team established the mission and values of

Saskapalooza early in the process; in fact, it was the first matter that was attended to. Soon after that, the requisite capacities that the program would need from its ranks of volunteers and interprofessional collaborative organizations were discussed and created, so that prospective partners could be sought out to fill the requirements. It would have been difficult and inefficient to attempt to determine the ‘why’ Saskapalooza needed to exist, and the ‘what’ was needed for it to be successful after the program had launched. In addition to a general feeling of organization and preparedness, teams that commit to structured pre-planning tend to enjoy saved time, improved quality and economic advantages where purchasing and renting is concerned (Larsen, Lindhard, Brunoe, & Jensen, 2018).

When difficulties or constraints were encountered, the administrative leadership team was quick to troubleshoot the problem. The key in the successful reconciling of these issues could be found in planning to plan. Meetings and ‘check-in’ opportunities were planned, purposeful and frequent, all of which Noonan et al. (2008) argues is a must. Without regular meetings among program administration, successful program outcomes would very much be in jeopardy. In the case of Saskapalooza, small matters were put to rest before they could fester. When a significant impediment was identified, meetings of the administration allowed for effective, timely troubleshooting. Additionally, these meetings allowed for potential conflict to be perceived while still far out on the horizon. This gave the administrative leaders the time required to make informed decisions on how best to handle the impending situations. More often than not, it was a simple adjustment of a schedule, or reassigning a volunteer or partner within the pre-established framework of the league. The key is that the practice of proactivity alleviated the vast majority of potential pitfalls prior to allowing them the opportunity to become real problems. This kept their

attention on growing the league, and attending to the overall mandate in the present, while being able to prepare for future accommodations simultaneously.

In conclusion, effective processes and policies have at their heart robust communication. Information must be distributed to large groups of people, sometimes quickly. Following up with key stakeholders ensures that messaging is received with the intended meaning. Administrative leaders – the power-holders – must be at the front of the heavy lifting as it pertains to making an initial pitch for the recruitment of partners or the raising of capital. The leadership team must make it a priority to meet all stakeholders at least once, preferably early on in the development of the program. Administrative leadership must be prepared to meet frequently – both at scheduled times and ad hoc where needed – in order to ensure that potential or small issues are dealt with in their infancy, and significant concerns receive the time, energy and talent they deserve. Pre-planning prior to all major activities – including the launch of the program itself – must be undertaken at every available and appropriate opportunity for best results. Finally, but perhaps most importantly, the practice of utilizing pre-existing relationships wherever possible is of absolute importance. At the heart of these relationships are trust, respect, and a mutual want to experience success.

### **5.3 Resources that Nurture New Extracurricular Programming**

The Saskapalooza Triple-Ball volleyball program was the beneficiary of several key resources that offered the league a chance to succeed. Early identification of critical resources went a long way in improving future success potential. At the heart of proper, stable resourcing was determining which interprofessional collaborative organizational partners were going to be required to deliver on the mission. This was followed by negotiating with those organizations to secure the people, resources, and in-kind support that was required. This two-fold process of

identification and negotiation is purported by Noonan et al. (2008) to be essential to the overall success of interprofessional collaborative programming. Bringing the right people to the administrative team from the right organizations meant that the program had a strong, committed group of people who were all at the same table, and were able to speak with, and at times for, their employing organizations. It also meant that we were more likely to have a suite of other resources – financial, human, technological, and in-kind – to access, contributions that are as imperative to success as they are difficult to discover without established community connections (Frisby et al., 2004; Cousens et al., 2006; Thibault et al., 2009).

The resources that Regina Public Schools, the University of Regina, and SaskVolleyball were able to offer collectively were of absolute imperative to the success of Saskapalooza. School-based Champion chaperones and university student volunteers were required to run this program. Without the support of these people and the organizations who made their participation possible in a collaborative setting, this work would not have experienced the same success at it might have with partners working in silos (Sheridan et al, 2006). Community organizations are best positioned to make the most out of their available resources when they are applied in conjunction with other organizations who are chasing the same pursuits (Gonzalez & Thomas, 2011). The technical and financial assistance made possible by SaskVolleyball – and its expertise in obtaining other methods of funding via grants – was important. That the university and school board were able to frequently offer gymnasium space in-kind was essential to the Triple-Ball volleyball league. These were all ‘must-haves’. Without the aforementioned resourcing, Saskapalooza does not move forward as a stable model of extracurricular, collaborative success.

Intellectual property and other non-physical resourcing were of paramount success to Saskapalooza. As educational organizations, having leaders from school boards, universities and

community partnerships work together in an interprofessional context offers the opportunity for the sharing of novel ideas, pertinent information, and previously developed, tried-and-true resources (Mosier & Ruxon, 2018). In the case of this Triple-Ball volleyball league, several pieces of intellectual property were conceptualized, developed and shared with stakeholders as a direct result of collaborative work. One excellent example of this was a library of several technical skill videos created using experienced players, cut and mastered professionally after recording.

In general, Saskapalooza made use of various technological capacities that helped to give those it served the best experience possible. Much of this identification may seem obvious; however, that is precisely why it needs to be addressed in the context of resourcing for successful outcomes. Saskapalooza relied on instruments without which it would not have been able to thrive. Email communication between administrative partners, and indeed between all stakeholders was the preferred and utilized method of communication the vast majority of the time. When one considers the ubiquity of digital communication in today's world, one does not usually think of the possibilities that were not present prior to the advent of emailing, text communication and smart phones. Saskapalooza was able to react in real-time (sometimes minutes) to issues of all impacts which meant that troubleshooting was effective. It also meant that clarification on myriad fronts could be offered to anyone who required it. It is why Noonan et al. (2008) and Johnson and Truluck (2011) identify technological advances as a boon to interprofessional collaboration. Technology allows for more, better communication, and frequent updates between stakeholders. In terms of researching interprofessional collaboration as it relates to community endeavours, technology allows for data to be shared, collected and comprehended.

To summarize, resource-based constraints will always be a reality. These constraints can be somewhat mitigated by effectively utilizing interprofessional collaborative partnerships. The early identification of relevant partners, and the subsequent negotiation with them allow for both the increased likelihood of securing various resources, and the power of resource-based synergies that will come as a result of combining organizational talents and capacities. The use and creation of new and existing intellectual property, as well as other non-physical resources is likely where academically-inclined interprofessional partnerships exist. The power and influence of technology cannot be overstated in the context of delivering successful outcomes to a collaborative program.

#### **5.4 People that Nurture New Extracurricular Programming**

Without question, the greatest asset to Saskapalooza were the people that drove the mandate of this league forward. Their donation of time, talent, expertise, commitment, and conviction to a common cause meant successful outcomes that were felt throughout the initiative. These people were able to have their respective organizations take risks and believe in the power of working with others who share common goals: essential to effective interprofessional collaboration (Sheridan et al., 2006).

Chief among these positions was that of the administrative leadership team. A small, dedicated and experienced group of leaders is one of, if not the most important factors that a new program built with community partnerships will rely on (Myende, 2018). Saskapalooza's leadership team was in place early, and began with the end in mind. This group performed two critical initial functions. First, they established a mission, vision, and set of goals for the program. These were adapted throughout the administration of the work; however, this move gave all parties a target at which to aim. Second, they selected one among them to champion the

leadership group, and indeed the program in its entirety. The importance of this step cannot be overstated. Having one competent, forward-looking, energetic, skilled individual in this role helped to ensure that opportunities were not overlooked, and that every resource was assigned to the place where it will have the most effect. This lead possessed the capacity to problem-solve, and had at their disposal a long list of potential and established trusted partners and volunteers who can ‘have their back’ if and when required. Noonan et al. (2008) highlight the need to build relationships throughout an interprofessional collaborative community project. From leadership’s perspective, new relationships establish connections that will pay dividends to current, and perhaps future programming. They do not mention the significance of the pre-existing relationship as key to program success a concept that Saskapalooza demonstrated was crucial.

In the context of this research and its aims, it is important to draw attention to the presence of this role. However apt this person may be, recent literature flags potential drawbacks to the approach of singular leadership. While this person – if competent – is in a fantastic position to execute directives to the benefit of the program, the program is at risk with regards to longevity. Myende (2018) offers that when this person fails to pass the knowledge, information, processes and passion onto a new person or group, the initiative is likely to wither as this person’s presence is removed in whole or in part. This issue will be further discussed in the next section pertaining to program stability.

These two concepts – the singular leader, and the power of the pre-existing relationship – were perhaps two of the most intriguing discoveries of this study, insofar as the original purpose of the research is concerned. Both will be returned to and unpacked during the conclusion of this work.

The people that serve in volunteer capacities create the human infrastructure on which the program relies. Work such as this would be likely to fail if it does not have a stable of people wanting and willing to serve. These people should bring different skills and interests to the mandate. Noonan et al. (2008) draw specific attention to the need for people (quality and quantity) in interprofessional collaborative pursuits. If people drive success, they argue, then people need to be given an opportunity to have their talents and interests utilized. This might be more important where volunteers are concerned, as compensation is not a motivation.

Noonan et al. (2008) offer three significant ways a leadership group can get the most out of its people, while at the same time honouring their time, talents and interests. First, flexible scheduling and numerous positions allows volunteers to see themselves in the success of the program, as they have multiple ways to determine how, when and where their contributions can best support an initiative. Second, by offering training for volunteers (where appropriate), leadership develops competencies on which to draw, and volunteers develop competencies that they can use in future pursuits: a win-win. Third, by continually growing the volunteer base as needs are identified, leadership ensures that it will have the right people on which to draw, without putting unrealistic stresses on an existing volunteer base.

It is appropriate here to draw a certain distinction between all pursuits that utilize interprofessional collaborative community partnerships, and those that do so in the service of children and youth. There does exist a special motivation that drives people to perform volunteer acts of service for young people (McNinch & Schick, 2013). In the case of Saskapalooza, the data tells a story of people that gave of their time and talents because they believed in what the program was doing *specifically* because, in their estimation, it opened doors for young people

who may not otherwise have had a participatory opportunity. This is especially true where educators are concerned (Gehlbach et al., 2012).

Alternatively, it does need to be said that easy generalizations should be avoided. As was previously explained, a large part of the volunteer cohort were university students receiving credit for a class. Additionally, teachers volunteering to chaperone or coach athlete participants could use those volunteer hours to work towards one (1) day off of work with pay. These are very different motivations from those that are purely altruistic. The scope of this study did not seek to disaggregate volunteer motivations.

In the case of Saskapalooza, volunteers were given the opportunity to select from a ‘bank’ of roles and responsibilities. This helped to ensure that everyone was able to envision how their efforts could help the project work towards its goals, without forcing anyone into a place where they might have felt uncomfortable. Highly-skilled volunteers were not generally required; however, wherever a job required a volunteer to perform a complex task, general competencies were checked for, and guidance was offered where necessary.

Saskapalooza details the story of a leader with conviction and leadership group coming together with a large cohort of volunteers and partners to create a program that adapted to changing dynamics or emerging challenges. The people were essential to the ongoing vitality of the program. Problem-solving and troubleshooting took time and energy.

## **5.5 Stability: Elements & Components that Suggest Long-Term Viability**

With regards to Saskapalooza, the prospect of potential stability can be discussed looking at four areas. First, the quality of the administrative leaders championing the entire cause were representative of several crucial elements. Second, the realities of the primary leader that Saskapalooza enjoyed need to be looked at from a benefits and drawbacks perspective. Third, the

stable of partners and volunteers was vast in both quantity and quality. Finally, a priority was placed on effective program planning, initialized early in the process, communicated effectively, and checked in on periodically and methodically.

Prior to delving into a discussion surrounding these four lived realities as they pertain to stability, I return to the work of Noonan et al. (2008), who laid plain several key characteristics that stable interprofessional collaborative programs have present. Flexible scheduling and staffing, continually following-up with stakeholders, providing timely administrative support where needed, securing a variety of funding sources, benefiting from technological advances, frequently updating all stakeholders, building relationships, meeting with all stakeholders, in-person, at least once, training critical stakeholders, growing a network of staff and volunteers, frequent meetings among program administrators and the continuous, reliable dissemination of information have all been identified as of paramount importance. Myende (2018) stresses the significance of leadership, either individual or spread across a group, as the single-most important feature to collaborative programming success and stability. I highlight these attributes in an effort to demonstrate those features that Saskapalooza shared with that which was confirmed by the literature as having to do with stability, as discussed below.

When establishing a new program or initiative, whoever is selected to lead the charge must be of strong resolve. This person needs to be motivated by providing opportunity to the stakeholder group they serve; this is doubly true if they are leading a small group of administrative personnel. They should be energetic, and able to motivate others. Being willing to fix problems of all magnitudes is imperative, as is keeping an eye on future planning. Having access to, and being able to rely and call on a large group of partners, volunteers, and business

associates means more opportunity for this person to successfully troubleshoot controversy, navigate problems, and bypass obstacles, by knowing the people on the team will ‘have your back.’ Getting the appointment of this person right, early in the process, is crucial to stability. If this selection is an appropriate one, this person will lend a steady hand overseeing the entire operation, and will send a sense of calm and control throughout the ranks. They will guide those around them to consider what the decisions made today will mean for tomorrow’s work.

On the opposite side of the same coin, just as placing power within the hands of one competent, morally-charged person can stabilize a program in the short-term, centralizing leadership can have a destabilizing effect on a long-term horizon (Myende, 2018). When this person eventually decides to step back from leading – or being involved with the project in any capacity – there can exist a leadership void. If succession planning was not attended to, organizational problems can emerge, interest can wane, and a once strong, partner-based activity can quickly fall apart (Myende, 2018). Saskapalooza could suffer that fate. These leadership capacities rest primarily with one leader, and secondarily with a small group of three. The literature would tend to bring this into concern as an area where stability might be threatened.

Human power is more than an asset when dealing with the prospect of creating this type of programming from the ground up. Being sure that there is a large volunteer/partner cohort in place prior to the commencement of any work is essential to knowing the program’s capacity to deliver on its mission. This large group of people must come to the mandate from all walks, possessing differing experiences, skills, and comforts, if administrative leadership is going to be able to successfully assign people to best-fit positions. The ability to recruit, train, manage turnover, and keep engaged was an asset for Saskapalooza while it had effective leadership. It

would stand to reason that the strength of a volunteer cohort is a symptom of effective leadership. It may find its fate tied to that of the leadership group.

Finally, the importance of effective pre-planning should not be overlooked. Work of this magnitude requires all parties involved to clearly understand what is attempting to be achieved, and the roadmap looks like that has been put in place in order for the program to experience successful outcomes. The assigning of scarce resources to their most appropriate, powerful place relies on a plan that is flexible, comprehensive, and is strengthened when partners work together (Cousens et al., 2006; Frisby et al., 2004; Thibault et al., 2009). This also sets the groundwork for thorough, timely, effective communication. Saskapalooza benefitted from pre-planning, constant evaluation, and effective communication. There should be no question that these elements were present within the program's framework. Much of its success can be attributed to planning and communication, and is unquestionably indicative of stability.

## **5.6 Conclusion**

The data collected for this study reveals interesting answers. The Appreciative Inquiry framework utilized to investigate the people, processes, and resources used in order to meet the aims and objectives of the Saskapalooza Triple-Ball volleyball league was successful in providing the space for related phenomena to emerge. Additionally, those elements that would suggest stability have become clearer as a result of a careful analysis and discussion of the data, especially when compared to the literature on the topic. Using the conclusions that the aforementioned inferences offered affords the opportunity to answer the original pursuits that this research had hoped to provide insight into. The significance of these findings will be unpacked in the conclusion.

## **CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION**

### **6.1 Introduction**

The concepts revealed through an analysis of the data tell of a project that was driven by people, for people. Whether it was dealing with scheduling, securing funding to provide unique opportunities, communicating with stakeholders and partners, or working to create capacity within the community and system, the strength of this work came down to the power of people, and the relationships that exist, or were made to exist, between them. These people were bolstered by best practice in the form of solid processes that helped allow for the league's goals to come to fruition.

As this study's research questions have now been considered against an analysis through or with the thematic framework, it is important to consider the ramifications of these conclusions. To be sure, this work mattered. Affording opportunities for children and youth to engage in high-quality programming matters to the health of our communities, and every individual therein. As the literature clearly demonstrates, programming becomes stronger and more efficient when interprofessional collaboration is at its best.

The discussion in this chapter answers the question, "So what?" It delves deeply into the implications that the research question's conclusions provide for. The idea of working with others – people, partners, and organizations – are discussed. In a vein perhaps specific to new or emerging programming, this section will give space to develop the methods by which an organization might take to help avoid the stigmatization of a new worthy pursuit. Additionally, the significance of the pre-established relationship are explored. The phenomenon of the power of a galvanizing motivational focus will be examined. Questions will be asked about the partners, and how they served to enhance the mission of the program. Those qualities that surfaced around

the champion administrative leader, and what this person means for the viability of this work, will be discussed.

External implications of this research are elaborated on, as are the potential institutions who may find its conclusions useful. All potential limitations associated with this study are discussed. Finally, potential avenues for future research on the topic of using an interprofessional collaborative approach to design and maintain new community programming will be outlined.

## **6.2 Working with Others**

Once more, I highlight the undeniable reality that is the power of interprofessional collaborative community partnerships: together, we are better than the sum of our parts. We work more efficiently, allocate scarce resources more effectively, and achieve desired outcomes more quickly and thoroughly when we work with others whose aims are similar to our own (Haythornthwaite et al., 2006; Johnston & Truluck, 2011; Mosier & Ruxon, 2018; Schnobrich-Davis & Terrill, 2010; Sheridan et al., 2006). The link between the successful outcomes associated with this work, and the people charged with delivering the program through to a successful conclusion, is inextricable.

A critical look at the data, as well as the answers to the research questions suggests two key reasons for why people were successful in this endeavour, in a context that required so much from each other. First, the value of pre-existing relationships – that is, relationships that existed between the people on the administrative leadership team and those who were called on to serve this program – were realized at their full potential. These relationships were ‘tapped’ to go deeper, marrying organizations together with nothing more than, in some cases, a personal relationship from the past. Second, the responsible use of power, authority and trust, insofar as people in privileged positions are concerned, went a long way in securing a plethora of

resources. This also had some fairly significant unintended consequences, the nature of which will be discussed below.

### ***6.2.1 The Pre-existing Relationship: Where Comfort Meets Efficiency***

Concerning Saskapalooza, all data points to the reality that where people were familiar with and trusted each other, business moved faster, outcomes were successful more often, institutional red tape was slashed, and potential, perceived and actual conflict was handled more fluidly than it may have been where relationships were being newly minted. Of course, this makes sense: when someone trusts and is familiar with another's work ethic, results, and reputation, leeway is afforded more often, fewer questions are asked, and people are more forgiving when things go awry. In the context of this study, it is helpful to argue the specific conditions that need to be in place, in order to have people and organizations comfortable enough with one another to benefit from these relationships.

It is here that the essence of 'having one's back' is important to comprehend. In the stories told within the framework of Appreciative Inquiry, people recognized positivity in partners they trusted and had worked with. Indeed, a majority of all people and organizations utilized for assistance had a pre-existing, first-person connection with at least one member of the administrative leadership team. What is more, they shared a specific set of past experiences that ended positively for both parties, as a result of a reliance on one another. In the past, they counted on one another to do their jobs. This faith was not misplaced, and these partners continue to believe that certain people can be counted on to deliver. In essence, these synergistic relationships served as everything from a lubricant to get administrative process moving quickly, through to backstops during difficult times.

It can be supposed that this shared history creates either a real or perceived sense of trust, accountability, and, perhaps most importantly, comfort, between all parties affected by this phenomenon. The implications to work such as this are significant, as these relationships contributed greatly to both the expedience with which work was attended, and also the success of the outcomes that each partner experienced for the betterment of the entire project. On the other hand, when a shortcoming was experienced, it was these past relationships that championed a quick recovery phase, and the notion that it would be corrected with haste.

Pre-existing relationships directly contributed to the success of the Saskapalooza Triple-Ball volleyball league. Their power and impact should not be overlooked in the context of work such as this. It is an issue of significance to interprofessional collaboration and community partnerships. These relationships are stronger than those newly forged, and their consequences demand more unpacking and understanding.

### ***6.2.2 The Trusted Voice: The Message Matters, the Messenger Matters More***

In much the same way that pre-existing relationships help to bolster the speed and success of interprofessional collaborative outcomes, speaking to an issue or delivering a message by using someone in a position of power, authority, or trust proved to be a method that helped increase the probability that the message was delivered, heard, and listened to. It is one thing to say something; it is quite another to have it received, much less followed. When a new initiative is being attempted, and where early buy-in from stakeholders is necessary for future success, the utilization of a key, trusted messenger is more likely to result in the intended outcome than would be the case if that same message was delivered by a different person or organization. This follows a certain logic; for many of the same reasons that pre-existing relationships are so powerful in this context, it can be argued that people in positions of power, authority, and trust

come to a dialogue commanding a certain respect in a contextual discussion. This might come from the perception that a person has, ‘been there, done that,’ and that by following the advice of one that has earned their stripes, results might be able to be reciprocated, insofar as the audience receiving the message is concerned. Put simply, when an experienced, respected, decorated coach within the community tells a club about the benefits of Triple-Ball volleyball as both a developmental tool, and a fun modification to allow access to the sport at a younger age, people are more likely to listen than when the same message is delivered to the same people by a volunteer who has no contextual rapport with that community. The messaging matters. So, too, does the messenger.

Why does this matter in the context of this research? This is, perhaps, one of the greatest discoveries to be highlighted as a result of this work. This lesson is a fundamental one for any person, group or organization hoping to create novel programming to support an emerging concept. This is particularly true when that concept may be, or is already, met with skepticism, negative bias, or colouring that watermarks it as ‘less-than’.

Is Triple-Ball volleyball *fundamentally* volleyball? Is flag football *fundamentally* football? How about if hockey is played on a court and off of the ice: is it still *fundamentally* hockey? The answer is not an objective one. Even if it were, it would not matter if no one wanted to participate in it. For Triple-Ball volleyball – or any modified sport, for that matter – to be a success, it needs only one thing: buy-in. The community that sees itself as the steward of a particular sport must look upon the adaptation as positive and beneficial.

I have outlined the benefits of the Triple-Ball modification using literature and professional input (Dunning, 2010; Reimer, 2014; Shelly, n.d.; Volleyball Canada, 2014a; Volleyball Canada, 2014b). I have made the case for Triple-Ball volleyball as an effective

teaching tool that gets at the heart of why young people play (Chin & Ludwig, 2013; Baldwin et al., 2013; Bergen & Hinshaw, 2013; Bryan, 2018; Colliver & Arguel, 2018). I have purposefully drawn attention to the link between Triple-Ball volleyball as a developmentally-appropriate teaching tool, and the “Train to Train” stage that *Sport for Life’s Long Term Development Model* (2020) uses in its holistic guide to raising Canadians who are ready to compete on the world stage, be healthy and active during the duration of their life, or both. This is important in a research-supported academic exercise such as this; however, little of it will matter if there is no community uptake. When a respected voice within a community talks, people are more likely to listen. It is at this point that research and data matters. When a national champion is willing to espouse the merits of a program, a junior coach might not be so quick to dismiss what it is that they are saying.

In the context of this work, scheduling went smoothly, partnerships and sponsorships were made, and problems were resolved in large part due to how people worked together, and perhaps more importantly, *who* worked together. Pre-existing relationships need to be utilized wherever appropriate. People with strong reputations within a community need to do the talking, as it were. By paying attention to these two suggestions, interprofessional collaborations set in community contexts have an increased chance at success, particularly where new concepts or methods are attempting to take root.

### **6.3 Healthy, Active Kids as Motivation**

It did not matter who was asked. Whether it was the administrative leadership team, corporate sponsors, community groups, volleyball partners, or interprofessional collaborators: everyone who chose to become involved in the work of this project committed to it because of a belief that young people deserve a healthy, active context in which to grow and develop. This

belief turned into a motivation that galvanized a community around a particular set of goals. The reasons for this are likely manifold. It may well be that those who committed themselves to the cause were the benefactors of similar programming in their childhood. It could also be that they knew the values and benefits of exposing youth to appropriate pursuits at a relatively young age. For the corporate community, the rationale may have gone beyond the altruistic justification of lending support. Aligning one's brand with a program that was well-received, and had at its core a physically active component, would surely have been seen as a boon to their business. Insofar as the administrative leadership team was concerned, there was a push to experiment with programming that was rooted in developmentally-sound research, and to refine theory into practice for the benefit of youth in their community.

Regardless of the specifics for each partner's rationale in getting involved, these individual motivators contributed to a climate of success and drive, where the motivation of one begot the motivation of another. The sense of responsibility owed to fellow partners, and the thrill of succeeding as a team that has assembled itself to conquer a community issue, would surely have turned into a motivation in and of itself. These were high-performing people and organizations. Working together would have likely brought out the best in each partner, and in turn, collectively contributed to the common goal.

Any potential interprofessional collaborative efforts whose primary mission it is to get young people involved in a healthy pursuit have an advantage. That definition can be broad; as long as a project can rightfully claim that they are acting in the service of children and/or youth, in an effort to get them involved in physical activities, it may have an easier time receiving support from people and organizations than a group catering to a different age-based demographic, or one looking to offer people access to different pursuits not physically focused.

Simply put, the message that a group is looking at ‘getting kids active’ is an easy sell. It is a focus around which a broad community can galvanize. Future pursuits would be wise to keep this in mind.

#### **6.4 The Anatomy of a Partner**

This work relied on the talents, expertise, and commitment of many people and organizations. Attempting to deliver on the envisioned mission required that which could not be done alone. As the data demonstrated, the number and quality of partners that were relied on was significant. The Latin motto emblazoned upon the armorial bearings for the Province of Saskatchewan, “*Multis e gentibus vires,*” translates to read, “From many peoples’ strength.” No words could more aptly and appropriately be used to answer the question, “How, or why, did Saskapalooza Triple-Ball volleyball succeed?”

*Many people:* the stable of partners required to carry out this work must be abundant. As was the case regarding Saskapalooza, early planning meant having a projected list of tasks that would need to be done before, during, and after the season. Having a number of volunteers to draw on that is somewhat greater than the number of jobs available means that people can be moved around as interests change or become clearer, or as people back away from the project for various reasons. In unpacking the sentiment from those interviewed via the Appreciative Inquiry method, it quickly became clear that there was likely no such a thing as too many partnerships or volunteers. Additional people and organizations meant expanded programming, improving the comprehensive approach that was taken to delivering on the program’s mandate. This demonstrates why forward planning and communication both play such an integral role in this work. The mission, vision, and goals dictate the dream. Communication ensures that the right partners are found, enlisted, and utilized in their most efficient capacity.

*Many strengths:* as important as it is to have a large cohort of partners to draw on, it is equally important that those partners come to the project from a varied background, and bring to the mission a diverse set of interests, skillsets, and means. Individual people can commit the time and talents that are required to coach youth. Corporate partnerships are quality drivers, whose presence tends to bring with it an infusion of in-kind resources and financial contributions required to deliver fun and innovative programming to serve as the backdrop to developmentally-appropriate training. Community partners serving in interprofessional collaborative roles are looked to for leadership during times of conflict or problem. Time and context tend to alter circumstances. These community partners are required to thrive in collaborative capacities at times, and are called upon to go above and beyond that which may have been envisioned at the outset. This is required if the program is to experience successful outcomes, as the potential of problems requiring troubleshooting is not a question of if, but when.

## **6.5 Qualities & Significance of the Champion Leader**

The work associated with the Saskapalooza Triple-Ball volleyball program lived on the back of a single champion leader. The data was unequivocal in this revelation. This person acted in myriad capacities, in order to ensure that the mission was a success, and that all outcomes aimed for were achieved with expedience and excellence. In the case of this work, the three-person administrative team had one among them take the reins, and navigate the program through to its conclusion. In the context of a discussion of the data, the question that remains to be argued has to do with the efficacy of this approach, and if other projects like this would be wise to attempt to follow in its footsteps.

Without question, there are advantages to the chairperson and chief executive titles residing in the same person. Communication is usually clear, timely, and global: when one person has their hand on the entire pulse of the work, nothing is overlooked or minimized. This person sees the interconnectivity of each piece in the operation, and for this reason, is likely in the best position to allocate scarce resources to the place where they will have the most impact. Keeping track of one name is easy, so volunteers, stakeholders, interprofessional collaborative organizations and all partners know who the leader is. This person can either help to solve an issue when one arises, or know who or where to send a problem for expeditious remediation. Assuming that this person possesses the ‘soft skills’ associated with leadership – empathy, influence, problem-solving – they are able to act in the capacity of motivator-in-chief, creating a ripple effect of positivity that reverberates across all ranks associated with the program. When – and more importantly, if – the right person is installed in this position, the benefits will be felt for the duration of the program.

On the other hand, an argument could be made to be wary of the significant risk associated with this leadership model. Most of the potential pitfalls would be realized only in the event that the wrong person was chosen for the position; however, were this to happen, the list of risks that could soon materialize could cascade their way throughout the entire program, leaving volunteers burnt out, interprofessional collaborative partners demoralized, and a community asking difficult questions. Stability would be threatened. An inability to keep an eye on the big picture at all times while managing the mundane and menial could prove to be devastating. Efficient communication would be at risk, resources could be misplaced or wasted, and the outcomes that were envisioned would be threatened.

Then there is the concern around stability through succession: who takes over after the leader is gone, and what does the process look like? When Myende (2018) asserts that leadership is the single most important determinant of both success and stability, this issue of continuity is flagged as a potential drawback of the singular leader model.

How does one reconcile this unfortunate dichotomy? The answer may lie in both the program's mission, as well as its intended duration. If a program is to be initialized quickly, Saskapalooza demonstrated that a centralized power model was efficient in doing just that. Because the league – and the subsequent study – ran for just one season, it is difficult to make definitive claims as to what the 'next steps' may have looked like. One thing is certain: no one lasts forever. At some point, the torch needs to be passed. While Saskapalooza cannot offer insights into what this should look like, it can say this: a singular leader was one of the main reasons why this work succeeded over a relatively short timeframe, given a compact mandate.

The other equally important part of this discussion centres on the 'must-haves': that is, the skills and qualities that must be insisted on when looking for the right candidate to fill this highly important position. Above all, this champion leader needs a high degree of personal conviction in the work that they are attempting to actualize. Being seen as energetic and motivated will help others to rally around the cause. This person should be optimistic, commitment-based, and refrain from spending energy on complaint or pessimism. This would not only waste their own talents and time, but appears to have a devastating effect on those who they have been successful in enlisting for focused or general support. They will spend their time looking forward, navigating their way through obstacles and negotiating the program through potential conflict. A skill that does not come easy for most, but one of imperative in this position, is the ability to be willing and able to manage and attend to issues, conflicts, and problems of all

sizes. Whether managing an interpersonal disagreement between partners, securing funding for a program offering, or driving participants to venues in an emergent situation, the champion leader needs to be on call at all times. An eye for talent is paramount; knowing which people and partners to solicit support from is a critical role played by the champion leader. Finally, and arguably most importantly, having access to a large volunteer base with qualified people is a massive asset that this person can bring to the program.

In the event a community group would like to initiate a program such as Saskapalooza, should that group look for one among itself to take the lead, or do these entrepreneurs present themselves, not waiting for others to ask? Again, this study cannot offer a definitive answer to this question. It would appear that best practice points to value in having all critical leadership positions and responsibilities filled prior to any other work starting, and that the first work they need to assume responsibility over are the development of an action plan. If this person was solicited for a role, it stands to reason that a broad mandate has already been established. Either way, specific mission, vision, value and objective statements need to be looked after early on in the process.

## **6.6 Building Capacity for the Future**

The final offering to explore surrounds the notion of building capacity for the future. It was somewhat surprising to discover this idea weighing so prominently on the minds of the leaders tasked with developing and caring for the Saskapalooza Triple-Ball volleyball league. The plates of the administrative cohort were full throughout their work, yet in the background of all that was done was a belief that in order to introduce stability into the future, aptitude, ability, and infrastructure would need to be identified or created.

It can be argued that forward-thinking and advanced planning played a large role in this. Creating a strategic mission, vision, and set of goals for Saskapalooza gave all partners a benchmark to aim at. It allowed those in charge to have a dashboard of sorts, a touchstone to determine where they were on the right track in the delivery of service. This improved the likelihood of success, which in and of itself was identified as a motivator to improve and continue. In other words, success begot success.

This same planning also allowed the brain trust of Saskapalooza a space – albeit a small one – to keep one eye on the horizon, with a mind towards the issue of the future. A lack of planning, combined with a failure to create and execute a strong strategic plan complete with mission, vision, and program goals, would likely have created an environment where administration was in a constant state of putting things right, trouble shooting at every moment. While this did need to happen, planning meant that there were systems in place to mitigate or control these instances to the point that a focus could be put on tomorrow. It allowed administration to communicate with actual and potential stakeholders about the benefits of the Triple-Ball volleyball modification. It gave them the opportunity to talk with those immersed in the already existing program and determine what was working well, and what areas of the league required attention or improvement. It is unlikely that these types of dialogues and discussions would occur where people find themselves in survival mode. Building for and towards the future was of paramount importance to the ongoing success of this initiative, and has strong visioning and robust planning to thank for the opportunity.

Any groups hoping to replicate the success of Saskapalooza would be wise to maintain a space for generative, constructive, future-focused thinking and work. By purposefully allowing

those tasked with the health of the project the opportunity to brainstorm, imagine and revise plans, interprofessional collaborative endeavours gain the benefit of reflection and forethought.

## **6.7 Knowledge Translation**

Perhaps the most rewarding component of creating literature reflective of a practical pursuit is the informing process that takes place; the project that initially made the research possible will benefit in the future from having the research impressed upon it. The thematic findings of this research may be of interest to any people or organizations who are interested in developing high-performing programming using a community-based, interprofessional collaborative approach. Specifically, those who have limited human and financial resources, and are looking to maximize the impact of programming via partnerships and volunteerism may be most concerned with these findings. Many proponents of the Triple-Ball modification have long been waiting for tangible data to stand behind when they argue that the program should be mandatory for the “Train to Train” age. This research may lend quality data to the debate.

The findings made possible by this research may influence and fortify future Triple-Ball programming at the elementary school level in Regina, and possibly in jurisdictions throughout Canada. In addition to offering concrete recommendations as to how and why Triple-Ball variations should be utilized, Boards of Education might be particularly interested in these findings, as far as the ‘bigger picture’ is concerned. Generally speaking, extracurricular programming has always depended on the voluntary involvement of teaching and other professionals in our school system. It must not simply be assumed that this will continue for perpetuity. If the dynamics of extracurricular programming shifts such that fewer educators are willing and/or able to donate their time to these programs at the rate in which they are now, the

community at-large may need to backfill. This literature could help shape the future of extracurricular pursuits for the better.

## **6.8 Limitations**

As with any study, limitations due to the breadth of the research, the methodology utilized, and the time horizon over which data was gathered are just some of the reasons why conclusions need to be understood in a contextual totality.

The findings associated with this study come from one program. The scope and impression of the Saskapalooza Triple-Ball volleyball league were relatively immense, and the appropriate people were in the right place to contribute substantive data via Appreciative Inquiry interviews. Using email threads from throughout the process helped to add validity to the findings; however, it is appropriate to stress that these discoveries present data gleaned off the back of one experience.

Although emails were used as part of the process of triangulation, the vast majority of the data was contributed by three people. While these three people were unquestionably the closest to the entire Saskapalooza process, many hands contributed to its creation. As such, the data collection design left voices out. Volunteers with more minor, yet specific roles may have had a different contribution to offer. More people could have been interviewed.

Additionally, the emails and field notes that were used to triangulate interview-based data were not primarily created for the purposes of contributing to this study. Interprofessional collaborative partners used emails for their intended purpose: expedient communication to resolve unsophisticated matters. Many important discussions were held via in-person meetings. While I made record of the content of those meetings, I was not at every one.

As the researcher in this study, I was constantly put in the position of having to look at my data through coloured lens. As I had contributed to the creation of Saskapalooza, and because I was one of the three primary data sources, it was important for me to continually check my subjectivity, as best I could. While I consciously took steps to avoid the unintended consequences that might come as a result of being a biased researcher, it is nevertheless important to admit that this bias can never fully be reconciled.

The Appreciative Inquiry model for collecting and analyzing qualitative data was, I believe, the right fit for this research. That said, it was but one tool, one that comes with its own liabilities and limitations. Appreciative Inquiry purposefully tends away from the exploration of problems (Watkins et al., 2011). This, in theory, allows participants to focus on that which was best, in an effort to emulate and exaggerate perceived advantages. As a result, the process does not align itself well to deal with problem resolution. Deficits can be overlooked as a result of Appreciative Inquiry's methodological design.

Finally, I would offer a note on the duration of the study. This research was conducted based on a snapshot of a school division's attempt to create one new league in one city for one season. As a result, the data gained from its analysis has little peer-based or comparative data from which to examine parallels. Had the same research questions been explored using the same research methods – but over a period of multiple seasons over multiple years – the concept of Saskapalooza would have been able to offer different perspectives. Perhaps most significantly, the question of stability would have been more completely informed. This is an important limitation of this work, and is perhaps its most significant drawback, particularly with regards to the question of ongoing stability, and the factors that may lend themselves most thoroughly to league continuity.

## **6.9 Future Research**

As a result of several key limitations within the context of this study, it is important to discuss several pathways through which new data could be contributed, or different conclusions could be discovered.

I would start this discussion with the question of duration of the study; that is, the idea that additional information might have been available had Saskapalooza been made to be carried out and had its data collected over a longitudinal timeframe. Had this league and its ‘off-season’ been researched over a period of five to ten years, it would most certainly have been able to speak thoroughly to the question of stability. While valuable, the current research draws on assumptions based in the data and existing literature to answer the question of consistency. A longitudinal study would have been able to assert its claims more rigorously.

As a result of analyzing the data so closely, another area that I was able to determine as valuable for future research is that of an analysis of the troubleshooting process that effective interprofessional collaborative partners use. Throughout months’ worth of meetings and email threads, it became evident that many significant roadblocks were encountered by the administrative team. As an Appreciative Inquiry methodology was utilized for this research, a positive, solutions-based approach was used. It did not lend itself to the exploration and dissection of the problems themselves. Had it allowed for it, the research could have analyzed these impediments, looked for commonalities, and offered suggestions for pre-planning ways to avoid these problems before they were to manifest themselves in reality.

Another area that would be interesting to explore would be that of the relationship between administrative leadership and program stability. This work would suggest a double-edged sword: by centralizing power and authority with exemplary people – even if it is one

person – results can be achieved quickly without sacrificing quality. The liability that could emerge as this person or people transition out of the program could call stability into question. Future work could look at examining ways to maximize the upside, while minimizing the potential for brain drain at the program's helm.

Finally, a concept of significant personal curiosity is that of the pre-existing relationship. While literature on pre-existing relationships exists, much of it is unconcerned with interprofessional, collaborative community partnerships involving programming for young people. This work began to hint at the importance of calling on these special, trust-based relationships to achieve results. More work on this front would be valuable to our understanding of how relationships in general, and pre-existing relationships specifically, inform and contribute to the work of partners in interprofessional collaborative settings where community pursuits involving young people are concerned.

## **6.10 Conclusion**

People, partnerships, and planning are the foundation of stability associated with the Saskapalooza Triple-Ball volleyball league. It can be said with some certainty that this would remain true when applied to a different program of similar context. A community-at-large will galvanize itself in the name of effective, developmentally-sound programming built for active, healthy lifestyles for children and youth. By ensuring the right resources are in place at the right time, a committed group of people and organizations have the power to create profoundly effective programming for their community.

## EPILOGUE

Several years have elapsed since Saskapalooza was conceived, administered, and reflected upon. Immediately following the conclusion of its first iteration, Saskapalooza attracted a great deal of attention from teachers and schools that had been affiliated with its first run, as well as many others that had heard about its pursuits.

In 2015, the same university coordinator and program coordinator that ran Saskapalooza's season created two one-day events they called the Saskapalooza 'Jamborees'. While not a traditional league (i.e., practices, regular season, and season-ending tournament), these Jamborees were the spiritual successors of Saskapalooza. These one-day events were open to any interested schools from Regina and the surrounding area. They ran on Friday, March 6, 2015, and Friday, April 10, 2015, dates that were specifically chosen due to student-teacher availability. March 6 was a teacher professional development day for most school divisions, meaning that students had the day off from schools, and teachers had flexibility in their schedules. April 10 was a provincial school holiday. In addition to schools registering teams, individual children grades 5-8 could come to the University of Regina that day and register as an individual. Both days saw all participants engage in Triple-Ball volleyball matches, learn more about the sport in general, engage in several fun, athletic games, and have a meet and greet with several University of Regina athletes. As it was with Saskapalooza 2014, these two days were held in conjunction with a university class, KHS 139, an education class that deals with movement and child development.

Since the conclusion of these events, no other similar Saskapalooza Triple-Ball leagues or tournaments have been carried out in an organized fashion in Regina. Both Regina school divisions' competitive leagues continue to use traditional volleyball rules.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A

*Below is a letter from the University of Regina's Research and Ethics Board, conferring ethical approval, and allowing for the necessary interviews to take place.*

<b>University of Regina</b>	<b>Research Ethics Board Certificate of Approval</b>	
PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR Benjamin Goby  [REDACTED] Regina, SK [REDACTED]	DEPARTMENT Kinesiology & Health Studies	REB# [REDACTED]
SUPERVISOR Dr. Larena Hoeber Dr. Cory Kulczycki		
FUNDER(S) Unfunded		
TITLE Rallying for Change: Engaging Pre-Adolescents, Schools, and Community Partnerships through Triple-Ball Volleyball		
APPROVAL OF Application for Behavioural Ethics Review with revisions outlined in letter of November 12, 2014 Information and Consent for Participants 'Saskapalooza' League Administrator Potential Questions for Semi-Guided Interviews with [REDACTED]  [REDACTED]		APPROVED ON November 20, 2014      RENEWAL DATE November 20, 2015
Full Board Meeting <input type="checkbox"/>		
Delegated Review <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
CERTIFICATION The University of Regina Research Ethics Board has reviewed the above-named research project. The proposal was found to be acceptable on ethical grounds. The principal investigator has the responsibility for any other administrative or regulatory approvals that may pertain to this research project, and for ensuring that the authorized research is carried out according to the conditions outlined in the original protocol submitted for ethics review. This Certificate of Approval is valid for the above time period provided there is no change in experimental protocol, consent process or documents.		
Any significant changes to your proposed method, or your consent and recruitment procedures should be reported to the Chair for Research Ethics Board consideration in advance of its implementation.		
ONGOING REVIEW REQUIREMENTS In order to receive annual renewal, a status report must be submitted to the REB Chair for Board consideration within one month of the current expiry date each year the study remains open, and upon study completion. Please refer to the following website for further instructions: <a href="http://www.uregina.ca/research/REB/main.shtml">http://www.uregina.ca/research/REB/main.shtml</a>		
<hr/> Dr. David Senkow, Acting Chair University of Regina Research Ethics Board		

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## **Appendix B**

*Below is the consent form that was distributed to interview participants. This form was completed prior to any formal engagement with participants for research purposes.*



### **INFORMATION FOR PARTICIPANTS – ‘Saskapalooza’ League Administrator**

**Project Title:** ‘RALLYING’ FOR CHANGE: ENGAGING PRE-ADOLESCENTS, SCHOOLS, AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS THROUGH TRIPLE-BALL VOLLEYBALL

#### **Researcher:**

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#### **Supervisor:**

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#### **What is the purpose of the project?**

The purpose of this work is to identify what practices, resources and people are essential for new, volunteer-driven extracurricular programming to thrive at the elementary school level, specifically as they pertain to the Saskapalooza volleyball league.

#### **What will be expected of me as a participant?**

As a participant in this study, you will be invited to take part in several interviews. The interview process will conclude once both the researcher and interviewee are satisfied. The interviews will take place in a place of mutual agreement, and will likely require more than one meeting.

#### **Potential Risks**

There are no known risks with this study. It should be noted that the primary researcher is also an administrator in the Saskapalooza volleyball league, as well as a teacher in the Regina Public School division.

### **Potential Benefits**

Your will be contributing to valuable knowledge about community engagement & childhood physical opportunities.

### **Confidentiality**

As a targeted stakeholder in this work, and as a member of the administrative team of the Saskapalooza volleyball league, your identity, affiliations, notions, you are being given the option of having your confidentiality revoked, so as to be named within the research (i.e., credit). If you do not wish to have your identity reported, you may choose to have a pseudonym used instead.

### **Storage of Data**

During data collection and analysis, the data will be stored on the researcher's password protected computer. After the findings have been disseminated, the data will be stored in a locked cabinet at the Motivation and Active Living Lab, in the Faculty of Kinesiology & Health Studies, at the University of Regina for five years. At that time data will be destroyed.

### **Right to Withdraw**

Your participation is voluntary and you can answer only those questions that you are comfortable with. You may withdraw from the research project for any reason, at any time without explanation or penalty of any sort. Your right to withdraw data from the study will apply until fourteen (14) days after the conclusion of the interview. Should you wish to withdraw, please contact Ben at [Benjamin.Goby@me.com](mailto:Benjamin.Goby@me.com). After this withdrawal deadline it is possible that some form of research dissemination will have already occurred.

### **Follow up**

As an integral member of this work, you are welcome to attend all formal meetings associated with this work, including the defense of the thesis. You will also have copies of all finished work, including thesis and articles, made available to you.

### **Questions or Concerns**

If you have any questions or concerns about the study, please contact the researcher using the contact information on page 1. This project was approved on ethical grounds by the University of Regina's Research Ethics Board on November 20<sup>th</sup>, 2014 Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to the committee at 585-4775 or [research.ethics@uregina.ca](mailto:research.ethics@uregina.ca). Out of town participants may call collect.

I understand the information given to me about the study '**RALLYING FOR CHANGE: ENGAGING PRE-ADOLESCENTS, SCHOOLS, AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS THROUGH TRIPLE-BALL VOLLEYBALL**'. My questions about the study have been answered to my satisfaction. I am willing to participate in an interview to discuss issues relating to community engagement and childhood physical activity. **I understand that my participation in this study is strictly voluntary. I am aware that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time, or to refuse to answer questions, for any reason.**

I have received a copy of the information sheet and this informed consent form.

- I agree to participate in this study as explained to me.
- I agree to be audio-taped for accuracy.
- I agree to not disclose the content or elements of this interview shared by other participants.
- I agree to take part in this interview.
- I agree to have my interview voice recorded.
- I wish to have my name and affiliation included in the published research.

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Participant Signature

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Date

- I read and explained this Consent Form to the participant before receiving the participants' consent, and the participant had knowledge of its contents and appeared to understand it.

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Research Team Member Signature

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Date

## **Appendix C**

*Below is the list of questions that was used as the starting point for both semi-structured interviews, as well as the self-completed appreciative questionnaire.*

### **Definition**

- What were the origins of Saskapalooza? How was its conception actualized in the early months of the project?
- After the initial buy-in had been received, what practices and processes (e.g. communications, relationships) were important to the management of the Saskapalooza volleyball league once the school year began?
- What resources (e.g., financial, infrastructure) were essential in the creation and maintenance of the Saskapalooza volleyball league?
- What people and organizations were integral in administrating a new extracurricular program?
- What did you learn to appreciate through this process, in terms of who or what you worked with, and how your interactions positively influenced progress through collaboration?

### **Discovery**

- Looking retrospectively at Saskapalooza 2014, what are your most positive takeaways from the experience?
- Tell me about a time where interprofessional collaboration helped to create an innovative pathway for Saskapalooza.
- A lot of work went into the actualization of Saskapalooza. Where did you draw your inspiration to succeed?

### **Dream**

- If you could create a mission statement for Saskapalooza as it moves forward, what might that statement look like?
- What would the goals of Saskapalooza be?

### **Design**

- What core components of this work are essential to maintain and promote as Saskapalooza continues to grow and develop with the community that it serves?
- What additions or adaptations are you excited to make when this league runs again?