3-Year UNDRIP Alignment Strategic Plan for NASSS

Background Context:

In November 2022, NASSS president Michelle Richardson created an Ad Hoc committee to explore the alignment of NASSS practices with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). NASSS' *NASSS resolution to Commit to the UNDRIP Aim of Respecting Indigenous Peoples' Rights* was passed unanimously by our membership in November 2023. The next year, a bylaw establishing the UNDRIP Alignment Committee as a standing committee of NASSS was passed by our membership to operationalize this NASSS resolution. The Committee was then directed to draft both Terms of Reference for said committee, which was completed in November 2024, and develop a Strategic Plan.

The Committee completed an initial draft of a three-year Strategic Plan. As a part of ethics guiding this Committee's actions, we then reached out to the membership to assist in co-creating this Plan in the following ways: (1) peer review and (2) solicit feedback on the four elements we are recommending, along with potential ways that we can together be accountable in working towards a collective vision of NASSS: ***an academic organization aligned with UNDRIP by November 2028***, as laid out in the NASSS resolution.

We requested anonymous feedback on our draft over a two-week period. Seven responses were received, and the feedback was appreciated and taken into consideration in the next draft we generated, which we are now putting to the NASSS membership for a vote of adoption. Feedback was largely supportive of the draft Strategic Plan's four elements, with more comments/concern raised over the annual goals that would address each element. We are thus asking for **approval of the four elements** by the membership, and we have provided lists of potential/possible ways that each element could be addressed (see Appendix), recognizing there are many ways to contribute towards each element.

Implementation:

Each year (for the next three years) the UNDRIP Alignment Committee will, as its first item of business, identify at least one goal for that year that they will tackle for each of the approved four elements, and construct a timeline for completion. They will report on their progress to the Board and to the NASSS Membership as part of their committee's Final Report, and the same process will begin again with the next Committee. We feel this process ensures that the broad framework of the Strategic Plan remains in place (i.e., the elements), and that maximum flexibility is accorded to each new Committee, so that they can select preferred actions that align with their interests/strengths to contribute towards each element. This process also ensures that accountability occurs annually to both the Board and the NASSS membership, thereby detailing our efforts in moving towards the realization of our 2023 *NASSS Resolution to Commit to the UNDRIP Aim of Respecting Indigenous Peoples' Rights*. We recognize that the Strategic Plan needs to be able to adapt and grow as needs, desires, and potential new challenges emerge, which will remain an option available for consideration by the UNDRIP Alignment Committee. We also acknowledge that efforts to align NASSS practices with UNDRIP may require additional labour from NASSS members. UNDRIP Alignment Committee members will need to take that possibility into consideration as part of their engagement in this process and be transparent about such implications.

Four Key Elements of the 3-Year Strategic Plan (approved by the NASSS Board)

1. ***Creating safe and ethical spaces in NASSS*:**

NASSS recognizes the unique challenges faced by Indigenous peoples in the realms of sports and academia and the need for specific measures to ensure their full and equitable participation (NASSS resolution); and sports as a platform for promoting cultural understanding, mutual respect, and peace among different peoples (NASSS resolution). Hence, NASSS commits to fostering an inclusive environment in sports that respects and celebrates the cultural diversity and heritage of all its members (NASSS resolution), having access to fair procedures for conflict resolution and effective remedies for infringements of rights. This requires the construction of an ethical and safe space where we work to listen, repair, pay attention, and maintain relationships to develop trust, safety, and care. In doing so, NASSS will ensure that its activities and initiatives are inclusive of Indigenous peoples and reflect the diverse cultures and the physical and sporting activities of Indigenous peoples (NASSS resolution), and foster mentoring and belonging for NASSS Indigenous students and professors (UNDRIP Alignment Committee Final Report, 2024).

2. ***Structural alignment of NASSS with UNDRIP*:**

NASSS commits to aligning its constitution, bylaws, and policies and procedures manual with the principles and articles of UNDRIP (NASSS resolution).

3. ***Enhancing awareness of Indigenous histories and cultural practices within NASSS and within sport practices more broadly:***

UNDRIP underscores the importance of Indigenous peoples' right to learn about/tell/share/ construct/record their histories and the necessity for non-Indigenous peoples to learn about Indigenous histories/cultures/ways of knowing and being (NASSS resolution); NASSS is an organization committed to the communication and application of accurate knowledge about sport and society through teaching, research, and social action; and to promote the value of Indigenous peoples' participation, and ways of knowing/being/doing (NASSS resolution).

4.***Sharing Truth and Reconciliation activities tied to UNDRIP, including ongoing and historical knowledge about and advocacy related to Indigenous peoples' engagement in sport in mainstream and Indigenous sporting spaces:***

UNDRIP emphasizes the rights of Indigenous peoples to participate fully in mainstream services as distinct peoples, to maintain and strengthen their cultural institutions and traditional physical cultural practices, to be free from discrimination, and to access meaningful physical cultural practices (NASSS resolution); the need for specific measures to ensure their full and equitable participation; advocate for support for Indigenous-led sporting initiatives and for including Indigenous peoples in the planning and participation of international sporting events, respecting Indigenous territorial laws and protocols (NASSS resolution); enhancing education opportunities for NASSS members concerning UNDRIP and Indigenous ways of knowing/being/doing more broadly; acknowledging sovereignty in the realms of sport, recreation and physical culture, and contributing to the broader efforts of reconciliation and respect for Indigenous peoples' rights.

Strategic Plan Appendix: Potential/Possible Actions to Work Towards the Four Elements

1. ***Creating safe and ethical spaces in NASSS:***

- understanding the environment and addressing discriminatory behaviours with a process to address them
- surveying NASSS membership to gain an understanding of the cultural climate
- designing an intervention strategy shaped by NASSS membership perspectives
- developing a protocol for racist treatment, perhaps through an Ombudsperson
- creating practices that strengthen the dignity of all members and their unique identities, both within NASSS and between NASSS and outside Indigenous groups
- addressing settler allyship, including addressing microaggressions, white fragility, and other associated discomforts tied to UNDRIP alignment
- creating a code of conduct that members should agree to when registering for the conference. This would include racist treatment but also other forms of discrimination. A process to address violations is very important as well.
- working with other NASSS committees to construct spaces for knowledge exchange as opposed to knowledge dissemination
- ensuring that arrangements are made for cultural practices, such as smudging, if requested by an Indigenous conference presenter
- creating unique practices within NASSS that specifically acknowledge the sovereignty of Indigenous members
- creating an Indigenous mentorship program
- creating a scholarship for Indigenous graduate students to help them attend NASSS

2. ***Structural alignment of NASSS with UNDRIP:***

- implementing ways that this committee can effectively interface with other NASSS committees in areas of shared concern (e.g., working with Scholars Enlightened Engaged Disrupting Structures (SEEDS), Diversity and Conference Climate Committee (DCCC), etc.).
- examining the NASSS Policies and Procedures Manual (PPM) and recommending, where appropriate, ways the various Board positions and Committee procedures could align with UNDRIP (e.g., incorporating ways that the UNDRIP Alignment committee could work with others in areas of shared concern).
- examining NASSS Board operating codes and recommending, where appropriate, ways they could align with UNDRIP (e.g., formalizing relationships at each conference with the Indigenous peoples of that location).
- examining NASSS bylaws and recommending, where appropriate, bylaw changes to align with UNDRIP

3. ***Enhancing awareness of Indigenous histories and cultural practices within NASSS and within sport practices more broadly:***

- enhancing meaningful NASSS relationships with Indigenous groups linked to the various conference sites and exploring ways to enhance those relationships over time and to direct resources (e.g., financial) to those groups
- formal engagement of local Indigenous groups in conferences as presenters
- considering conference locations tied to Indigenous ownership

- creating and implementing a process for providing NASSS members with updates on historical and current developments in Indigenous sport and traditional activities (e.g., a location tied to the NASSS website that provides resources such as newspaper articles on current developments in Indigenous sport).
- creating a mentorship process to strengthen member engagement (graduate students, faculty, researchers) in Indigenous ways of knowing/being/doing (e.g., as an element within the SEEDS program).

4. ***Sharing Truth and Reconciliation activities tied to UNDRIP, including ongoing and historical knowledge about and advocacy related to Indigenous peoples' engagement in sport in mainstream and Indigenous sporting spaces***:

- highlighting Indigenous-led efforts to decolonize existing setter colonial relations in sport
- highlighting Indigenous-led cultural resurgence activities tied to sport and traditional physical activities
- documenting government commitments/actions (or not) to address reconciliation with Indigenous peoples tied to sport
- continuing to engage local Indigenous communities at the annual conference (e.g., plenary speakers or panels) to deepen NASSS members' awareness of the diversity of Indigenous Peoples on Turtle Island - this will hopefully help strengthen the membership's knowledge of and commitment to processes of reconciliation.
- creating a section in the annual NASSS program in which issues related to reconciliation, sports, and current issues facing Indigenous groups and individuals are addressed.
- drawing on the substantive expertise within NASSS to address the research needs of sport and recreation organizations—especially Indigenous ones, but also settler organizations. This aligns with Veracini's (2024) argument that settler colonial studies can contribute meaningfully to decolonization by working with settler organizations to help undo their coloniality.

The 2025 UNDRIP Alignment Committee includes Miruthula Queen Anbu, Nik Dickerson, Vicky Paraschak, Sean Seiler, and Jennifer Wigglesworth. Indigenous Advisory Council members include Alana Cook, Janice Forsyth, Jeff Montez de Oca and Jaydlin Spooner.