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Pathologic Pools: A Post-Colonial Approach to Drowning Prevention in Northern Canada

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**Appendix: Abstracts of Presentations at the Conference with
No Submission of a Formal Manuscript for Publication:**

**Pathologic Pools: A Post-Colonial Approach to Drowning Prevention
in Northern Canada**

by

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Accidental death is a significant cause of death in Aboriginal communities throughout Canada, but in the Northwest Territories (NWT) and Nunavut in particular (NAHO, 2006). One major cause of accidental death in these northern territories is death by drowning. The NWT (and now Nunavut) aquatics program has attempted to address drowning rates among northern Canadians that are ten times the average of southern Canadians (Waldram *et al.*, 2006). Disproportionately high drowning rates in the NWT and Nunavut can be partially explained by a number of factors, including environmental and lifestyle dynamics unique to the Northern Territories. However, the implementation of water safety programs by external administrators (Giles, Baker and Rousell, 2007) and the use of assimilatory and colonial practices in sport and recreation in the north (Paraschak, 1997) suggest that the colonial history of aquatics programming and the associated cultural factors also play a role in the questionable efficacy of current drowning prevention initiatives in Canada's north (Baker and Giles, in press). In order to lower the high rate of drowning in the NWT and Nunavut, aquatics programs must be recognized as existing in a post-colonial environment, which Ashcroft and Tiffin (1989) use to describe peoples and places "affected by imperial process from the moment of colonization to present day" (p. 2). Currently, drowning prevention in the north is limited by curricula, attitudes and approaches to aquatics programs in the NWT and Nunavut, which reflect continued colonial attitudes and relations of power, thus jeopardizing program effectiveness. By taking historical colonial factors into account, we argue that drowning rates in the Northern Territories could be significantly reduced.