



FIT TO BE CANADIAN?

Understanding EDI Through an Exploration of the Past

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Some Context

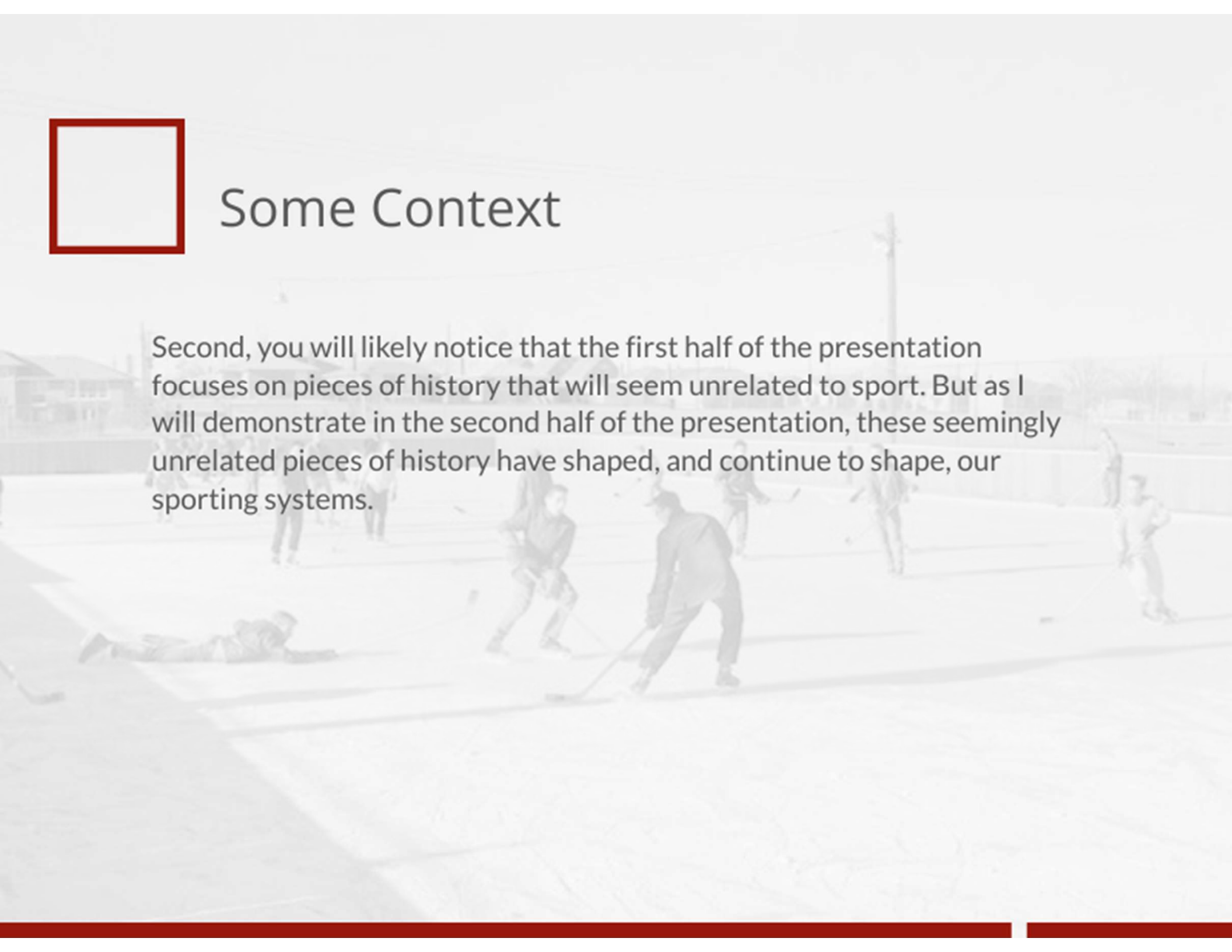
Before we get into the actual presentation, I'm going to set the stage with a bit of context.

First, you will notice that my slides are captioned and I am reading from them. This is intentional. It is intended to make the presentation more accessible to anyone who might benefit from having the words available to them while I speak. It also ensures that the full presentation can be accessed online at a later date.



Some Context

Second, you will likely notice that the first half of the presentation focuses on pieces of history that will seem unrelated to sport. But as I will demonstrate in the second half of the presentation, these seemingly unrelated pieces of history have shaped, and continue to shape, our sporting systems.





Some Context

Third, given the nature of the information I'm going to be presenting, it is likely that some of you will have an emotional response. This is a common reaction to my work. Therefore, if you find yourself feeling defensive, frustrated, or angry, I ask that you do some self-reflection and examine why you might be feeling this way.





Some Context

Lastly, I would like to emphasize that this type of historical work is intended to be hopeful. As the historian Robin Kelley wrote in *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination*,

“Social movements do not simply produce statistics and narratives of oppression; rather, the best ones do what great poetry always does: transport us to another place, compel us to re-live horrors and, more importantly, enable us to imagine a new society.”

It is, therefore, at this intersection of hope and resistance that I offer this re-reading of sport history, which begins with a passage from the Canadian Sport Policy.



Canadian Sport Policy

2002

In the 2002 Canadian Sport Policy, there is a section that reads:

The Canadian Sport Policy calls for barriers to participation in sport to be identified and eliminated, making sport more accessible to all.

The barriers to participation can be social, linguistic, cultural, and economic. Certain groups such as girls and women, people with a disability, Aboriginal peoples, and visible minorities continue to be under-represented in the Canadian sport system as athletes/participants and as leaders. (p. 8)



Canadian Sport Policy

2012

Similarly, in 2012 an updated version of the policy read:

The federal government is committed to...the inclusion of traditionally marginalized groups in sport.

Provincial/territorial governments are committed to enhancing access for traditionally underrepresented and/or marginalized populations. (p. 8)

As we can see from these statements, governments recognize that sporting environments are **exclusionary spaces**.

They have acknowledged that girls and women, disabled folks, Indigenous peoples, racialized folks, as well as other marginalized groups such as LGBTQ2SAI+ are *"under-represented in the Canadian sport system as athletes/participants and as leaders."*





So why, after 20 years of claiming to value inclusion and accessibility, has Canada's sporting system been unable to translate these policy statements into experiences of greater inclusion for a more diverse group of people?

As I will demonstrate, the primary reason that these policy statements have not resulted in any substantial changes is because -- like most other institutions that were formed during late 18th and early 19th century -- Canada's sporting system was not only intended to be an exclusionary site, it was founded upon, and continues to reinforce, five interrelated logics of white supremacy:

- 1.. Settler colonialism
- 2.. Racism
3. (Hetero)sexism
4. Capitalism
5. Ableism



I recognize that this claim might feel a bit extreme at the moment, so in order to demonstrate exactly how a **benevolent institution** like sport has been, and continues to be, linked to such harmful logics, I am going to begin by providing a very brief overview of **four seemingly unrelated threads** of Canadian history:



**INDIGENOUS
LEGISLATION**



**IMMIGRATION
POLICIES**



**CITIZEN
RIGHTS &
SOCIAL
PROGRAMS**



**SCIENTIFIC
KNOWLEDGES**



Indigenous Legislation

As most of you likely already know, Canadian sovereignty, like other settler colonial states, was accomplished and sustained through a series of struggles between **colonizers** (the British and to a lesser degree the French) and the **colonized** (Indigenous peoples).

And despite what many traditional histories tell us, settler colonialism was **neither** a **peaceful nor** an **orderly** process.

As I will demonstrate on the next slide, Canadian governments **legislated** and **institutionalized** various forms of **violence** in order to establish and maintain the racial, economic, political, and cultural **dominance** required to develop a **settler society** on Indigenous territories.

**1749
Scalping
Proclamation**

A piece of legislation that gave the government of Nova Scotia the ability to provide financial rewards for the scalps and bodies of Indigenous people.

Legalized murder.

Indian Act

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**1850
Act for the
Better
Protection of
Lands and
Property**

Gave a (British) Commissioner of Indian Lands the power to determine who had Indigenous 'status' and what crown lands (i.e., reserves) they were able to live on, hunt, farm, etc.

A form of segregation that separated Indigenous people from European settlers

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1876 Indian Act

This Act consolidated all existing Indigenous legislation into one very comprehensive document.

In doing so, Indigenous peoples who had not assimilated ('Status Indians') were deemed wards of the state (meaning they weren't legal citizens). Their cultures were erased and their day-to-day activities were managed and controlled.

- All Indigenous peoples needed a permit to sell grain (settlers did not) and settlers were prohibited from buying grain from Indigenous peoples.
- Cultural practices were banned. In 1876, the potlatch ceremony was banned, in 1914 all off-reserve dancing was banned, and in 1925 Indigenous dancing was banned all together.

The Indian Act was 'modernized' in 1951 and 1985 but is still in effect today.

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1884 - 1940 Pass System

A federal policy that kept Indigenous peoples confined to reserves by requiring them to obtain a pass from a Federal Indian Agent in order to leave and return.

For approximately 60 years, this policy controlled the movement of Indigenous peoples, with the goal of keeping them on reserves and away from settlers.

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1883 - 1996 Residential Schools

Mandatory government run schools where thousands of Indigenous youth died from abuse, starvation, and treatable illnesses.

The last school was only closed in 1996. I was 13 years old.



Indigenous Legislation

As we can see from just these few examples, it was through 'legal' forms of **bodily, cultural, and administrative violence** that the Canadian state was able to secure **control** over Indigenous lands, **eliminate** claims of Indigenous sovereignty, and **absorb** Indigenous people into the colonial regime that sought to **erase** their entire culture.



Immigration Policies

Immigration policies, on the other hand, operated very differently.

Unlike Indigenous peoples, immigrants were constituted by the British (and later the Canadian) government as an **external**, rather than an **internal threat**.

It is for this reason that Indigenous people and immigrants were **governed** (that is, **eliminated and controlled**) in very different ways.

In an immigration context, the first exclusions were **economic exclusions** and focused on limiting the landing of those individuals considered "*diseased, worn out and unprofitable*" making them incapable of "*useful labour and honest industry.*"

This resulted in legislation that was intended to limit the landing of individuals considered to be "*incapable of supporting themselves*" in a capitalist society.

According to the 1848 *Emigration Act*, this included:

- anyone deemed too **diseased** to work,
- **children** without parents,
- anyone over **60**,
- **unwed** mothers,
- anyone the government labelled a **lunatic, idiot, deaf, dumb, or blind.**



Montreal Emigration Society, 1847; Emigration Act, 1848



Toward the end of the 19th century, however, **racialized exclusions** became just as important as economic exclusions.

Prior to this, pretty much any immigrant who could be **put to work** was treated as a **tolerable asset** in Canadian nation-building (e.g., 'healthy' Chinese men were given immigrant status to build the railway).

But as the racist and ableist discourses of
eugenics...

EUGENICS

A 'pseudo-scientific' program that sought to increase the number of Canadians considered physically, mentally, and morally '**fit**' (meaning white, straight, cisgendered, able-bodied, Christians) while eliminating those considered '**unfit**' (meaning anyone who was non-white, disabled, gay, transgendered, or non-Christian).

...became more popular, so too did the programs and policies that sought to eliminate all '**degenerates**' from the population.

This resulted in a number of **immigration policies** that were intended to secure what John A. Macdonald described as "*the Aryan character of the future British America.*"





**1885
Chinese
Immigration Act**

Introduced a head tax of \$50 (~\$1,500 today) in an attempt to reduce the number of Chinese immigrants coming to Canada.

The logic behind this Act was that Chinese individuals (especially those that could not afford the tax) were not 'evolved' enough to achieve the intellectual and moral expectations of superior, white civilizations.



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**1910
Immigration Act**

Prohibited the landing of "immigrants belonging to any race deemed unsuited to the climate or requirements of Canada."

In other words this clause, restricted immigration from warmer (non-white) countries in Africa, South Asia, and Southern Europe without using explicitly racist language.



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1919 Act to Amend the Immigration Act

Anyone "deemed undesirable" because of "customs, habits, or modes of life" was now prohibited from immigrating to Canada.

In other words, anyone who threatened the purity of the population due to a lack of whiteness, Christianity, or capitalist lifestyle could be labelled being 'unCanadian' by the government and denied entry.

This version of the Immigration Act remained relatively unchanged until 1976.

Citizen Rights & Programs

In addition to developing this comprehensive system of immigration legislation that was intended to "**keep Canada white**," the colonial state also used a number of laws and programs to reinforce both the **superiority**, and the **security**, of white, heterosexual, able-bodied men.

the Liberal Government declared. "The family and the home are the foundation of the national life. To aid in insuring a maximum of well being to the children of the nation and to help gain for them a closer approach to equality of opportunity in the battle of life, you will be asked to approve a measure making provision for family allowances."

Performance:

Here is Section 3 of the government's Bill 161:
"... There may be paid ... in respect of each child resident in Canada maintained by a parent, the following monthly allowance:

- in the case of a child less than six years of age, five dollars per month;
- in the case of a child six or more years of age, but less than ten years of age, six dollars per month;

(c) in the case of a child ten or more years of age, but less than thirteen years of age, seven dollars per month;

(d) in the case of a child thirteen or more years of age but less than sixteen years of age, eight dollars per month;

Provided that the allowance payable shall, in respect of a fifth child maintained by the parent, be reduced by one dollar; and in respect of a sixth child and a seventh child respectively so maintained, by two dollars; and in respect of an eighth child and each additional child respectively so maintained, by three dollars.

(Note: Official minutes show that 85 out of every 100 children in Canada are in families having less than five children, and will, therefore, receive the full amount of the monthly allowance. Experience shows, also, that while the cost of maintaining a child increases as the child grows, the cost per child becomes less as the family increases in numbers. Both these facts have been given careful consideration in working out the allowance payable to various age-groups and families of varying sizes.)

Discussion in the House of Commons:

The Conservative party at first opposed the Bill. Here are some of their objections:

- "It is unconstitutional."
- "It seriously endangers the setting up of minimum wage standards in Canada."
- "It adds a further strain on our national credit."
- "It disregards the whole question of need in family life and child welfare ..."
- "It denies the basic principles of social justice. ... This scheme lumps them all together and gives the same grant to all. Could the injustice be more patently apparent?"

Liberal members of the House, led by Mackenzie King, laid down a barrage of facts, arguments and sound sense based on long and careful study. On the day of the vote, in spite of all the half-hearted objections which had been presented to the measure, the Conservatives approved the Bill without a single dissenting vote. And so did the C.C.F., Social Creditors and Independents.

It was a complete surrender on the part of all those who had previously opposed the Bill.



BUT WHY

WASN'T IT DONE SO

This is a natural question. The Co-operative Commonwealth Party asked it in the House during debate on the Bill. Mr. King's reply: "Perhaps a word of thanks to my hon. friend for what he has just said. He is pleased to give him an answer if carried unanimously. I only wish that that shows how effective years has been the education has gone on from this side of the Liberal Party. My friend says that we have had all along. But to use power to bring public opinion with you, the best method of procedure quite contrary to the spirit of the Party of the art of government knowing when it is best when it is when to leave a fore the war the country was in the mood it is in today."

"We have been going along. People have had sayings of it would then to see the new changes. This is the opposite of doing this measure and we are easy for the hand, which was of proceeding. We have ten years it was. If I had any sense of this kind of it, we would not only have been to meet of the measure itself, it do would also have been given by the people of Canada. Even if we are now in the world measure, and I am happy and you is going to be so great years of Canada."



1885 Electoral Franchise Act

Disenfranchised women, Indigenous peoples, and people of Chinese heritage. It also required people to earn a certain annual income and own or rent a house of a specific value, which indirectly disenfranchised a number of Black migrants, French settlers, and Irish immigrants.

It is worth noting, this version of the act was repealed in 1898. However, women still didn't get the federal vote until 1919 (and in many provinces the provincial vote came a lot later).

Racialized exclusions were only removed in 1948, with the exception of Indigenous peoples who couldn't vote until 1960.

Property based qualifications for voting were not completely removed until 1948.

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FAMILY ALLOWANCES

are the BIGGEST step forward in our POST WAR PROSPERITY!!

Family Allowances will not only raise the standard of living of the Canadian common man — it will keep thousands of workers in all ranks of life permanently busy supplying the things which he can now afford to buy.

Family Allowances are an essential part — but *only* a part — of the whole courageous, far-reaching program of social legislation being carried through by your Liberal government to assure a busy, prosperous Canada after the war.

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1890 Criminal Code

Male homosexuality was illegal. It remained illegal until 1969.

In 1953 the prohibition was extended to women, meaning being a lesbian was also illegal from 1953 - 1969.

- in the case of a child less than seven years of age, but less than ten years of age, seven dollars per month;
 - in the case of a child seven or more years of age but less than ten years of age, eight dollars per month;
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1944 Unemployment Insurance Act

Intended to provide financial assistance to unemployed persons.

However, those who were ill, injured, pregnant, too old to work, fired, left without just cause, refused any type of employment (regardless of the conditions), participated in strikes or work stoppages, or weren't previously employed full-time were all ineligible for support.

What this meant was that in addition to denying assistance to people who were sick, old or pregnant, this so-called 'universal' welfare program also excluded most women and racialized people because they tended to lack full-time employment opportunities.

It also excluded gay people who were fired because of their 'illegal' sexuality, and anyone who was against exploitative labour practices and publicly supported unions.

This Act remained largely unchanged until 1971

It was a complete surrender on the part of all those who had previously opposed the bill.



"Keep Canada White"

Returning now to this idea of "*Keeping Canada White*" we can see how, from the mid-1700s until the mid-1970s, the Canadian state used a comprehensive system of legislation that gave priority to:





Scientific Knowledges

It is important to note here, however, that these harmful and oppressive acts of legislation were not simply based on the **beliefs** of a few **racists politicians**.

Science, like the law, was also used to justify these 'legal' acts of elimination and control.

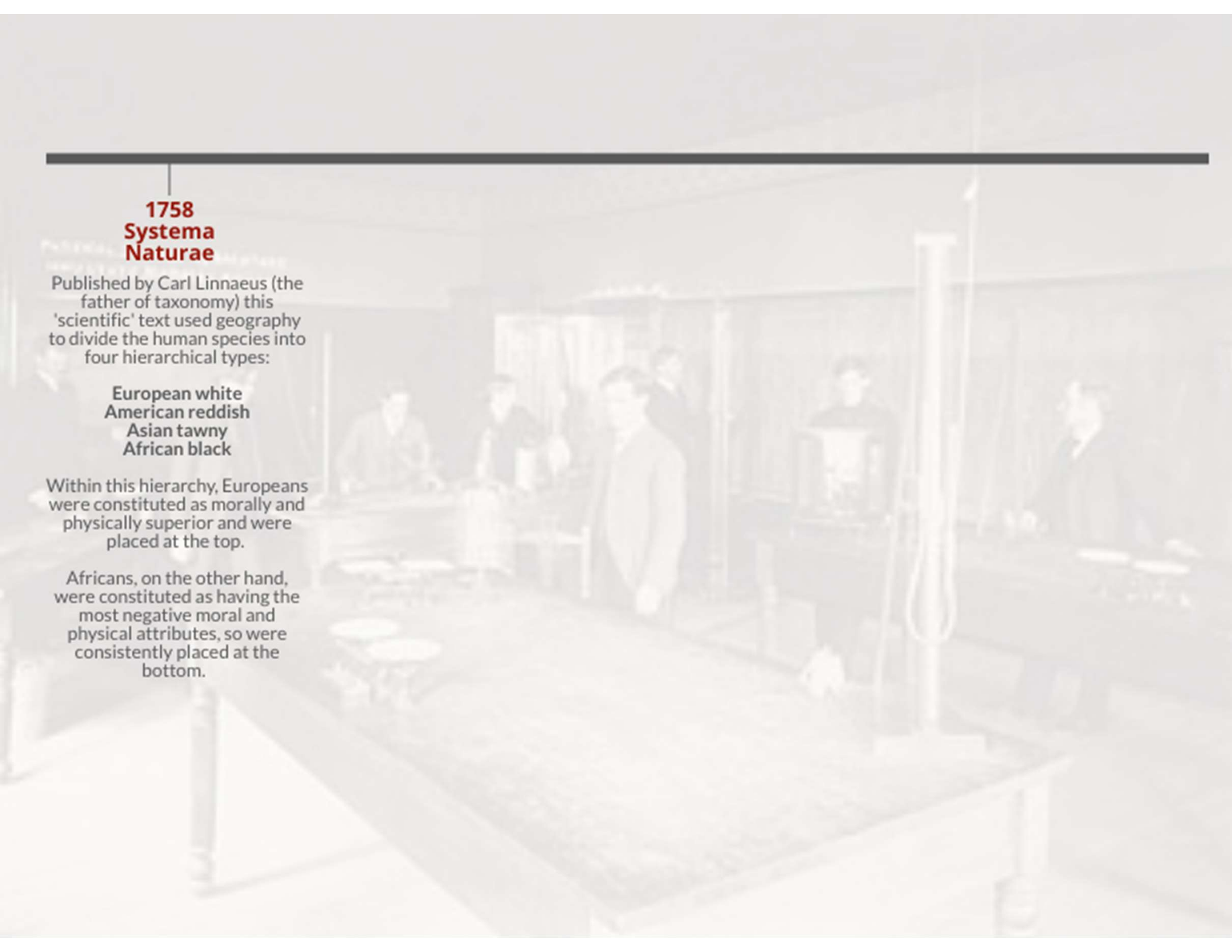
1758
Systema
Naturae

Published by Carl Linnaeus (the father of taxonomy) this 'scientific' text used geography to divide the human species into four hierarchical types:

European white
American reddish
Asian tawny
African black

Within this hierarchy, Europeans were constituted as morally and physically superior and were placed at the top.

Africans, on the other hand, were constituted as having the most negative moral and physical attributes, so were consistently placed at the bottom.



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1799
Human Chart

Published by Charles White, this chart was based on a number of abstract skull measurements that ordered human varieties according to the *Great Chain of Being* (a 'scientific' hierarchy that placed god at the top and progressed downwards to plants and animals).

The chart included the following categories:

Grecian Antique
Roman Painter
European
Asian
American Savage
Negro
Ape

Once again, the order is important to note here.

By situating the "Negro" alongside the "Ape", and "Europeans" alongside the 'god-like' figures of the "Roman Painter" and "Grecian Antique," this chart not only reified the notion that Europeans were the most advanced segment of modern humanity, it reinforced a commonly held belief that Africans were the most 'animalistic' of the human species.

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Ape

Once again, the order is important to note here.

By situating the "Negro" alongside the "Ape", and "Europeans" alongside the 'god-like' figures of the "Roman" painter and "Grecian Antique," this chart not only reified the notion that Europeans were the most advanced segment of modern humanity, it reinforced a commonly held belief that Africans were the most 'animalistic' of the human species.

1871 **The Descent of Man**

In this text, Charles Darwin applied his theory of biological evolution to the human species and suggested that humans, like all other life forms, evolved slowly from one common ancestor.

And while this line of intellectual thinking did a lot to discredit earlier beliefs of religious creationism (i.e., The Great Change of Being), it did nothing to eliminate the notions of white supremacy.

Like earlier scientists, Darwin also believed there were gradations "*between the highest men, the highest races and the lowest savages.*"

Therefore, despite his contribution to the idea that all members of the human race can be traced back to one common ancestor, he still believed in an evolutionary hierarchy that constituted white Europeans as biologically superior to all other races.



Scientific Knowledges

As demonstrated by these few examples, white European men used 'science' to position themselves as **politically, culturally, spiritually, and economically superior** to all other races.


That said being said, toward the end of the 1800s, it wasn't just race that was the concern of these scientists.

Beginning around 1885, any form of 'unfitness' or 'abnormality' (conditions we now classify as poverty, same-sex desire, disability, mental illness, the inability to have children) were all to be eliminated from the Canadian population.



Scientific Knowledges

The result was the circulation of a number of new **'scientific' knowledges** that reinforced the development of various **racist, (hetero)sexist, and ableist** programs and policies.



**mid 1800s -
early 1900s
Vitality Theory**

According to this medical theory, women were chronically weak and had only finite mental and physical energy, largely because of menstruation.

As such, they needed to limit both mental and physical activity.

This is why they weren't able to attend universities, work in particular jobs, or participate in competitive sport.



1883 - 1930s Eugenics

Officially defined as *"the study of agencies under social control that may improve or impair the racial qualities of the generations, either physically or mentally."*

So what eugenics did was provide the 'scientific' rationale necessary for an comprehensive network of policies and practices that would *"eliminate the unfit"* while simultaneously *"encouraging the survival and reproduction of the best in all classes."*

In a Canadian context, this meant developing a comprehensive network of laws, policies and practices that supported the health, wealth and security of those deemed **'desirable' or 'fit'** (i.e., white, heterosexual, able-bodied boys/men, and to a lesser degree girls/women).

Some examples include pensions, unemployment insurance, farm settlement programs, and public health campaigns.

At the same time, a different set of laws, policies, and practices were used to eliminate, segregate, and reform those deemed **'undesirable' or 'unfit'** (i.e., racialized, Indigenous, disabled, queer, trans, or people living in poverty).

Examples include mandatory sterilizations, involuntary institutionalizations, racist immigration policies, and residential schools.

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1930s - Today Population-Level Statistics

This scientific method that, in many ways, emerged in response to Hitler's eugenic program and is a method many people still use today.

Unlike eugenics, this type of statistical thinking does not suggest that entire races are unfit or unhealthy.

It does, however, use statistics to suggest that people from a particular race are *probably/likely/maybe* unfit or unhealthy because *most/many/some* of the individuals in that race are.

And the reason this scientific method is dangerous is because it ignores all of the social, economic, and political factors that cause people of particular groups to be less healthy than others (e.g., wealth, neighbourhood, educational inequities).

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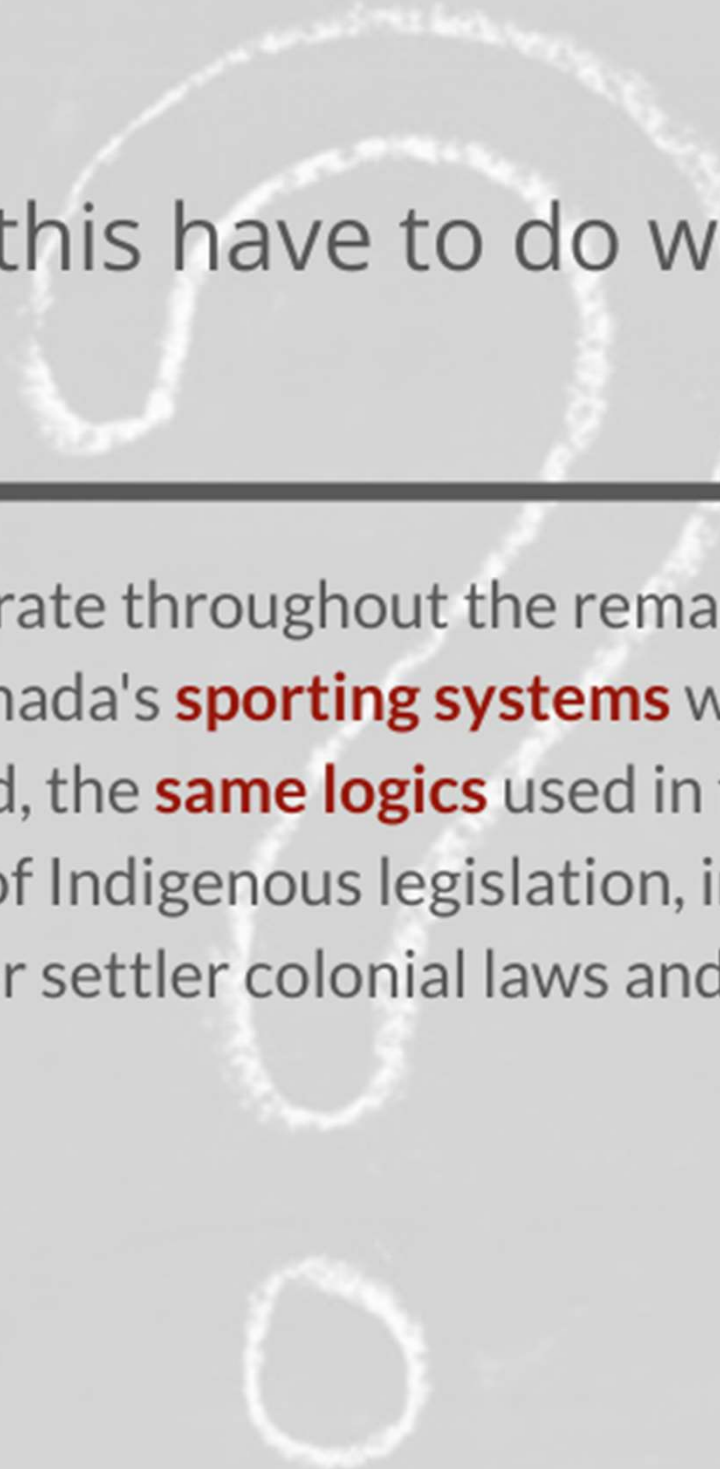
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1930s - Today Conjugal Family Theory

This sociological theory outlined the roles and boundaries of traditional family.

"The conjugal family unit of parents and children is one of basic significance...To be the main breadwinner of his family is the primary role of the normal adult man...Consequently, housekeeping and the care of the children is still the primary functional content of the adult feminine role" (Parsons, 1943, p. 34).

As we can see from this passage, the 'normal' family was a heterosexual unit of two parents and their 'healthy' offspring. At the head of the unit was an able-bodied, male capable of success in the labour market, and therefore capable of supporting his wife (who was expected to remain at home) and their children. Families that did not fit this definition were deemed *abnormal* and thus not worthy of state-supports.



What does this have to do with sport?

As I will demonstrate throughout the remainder of the presentation, Canada's **sporting systems** were produced by, and reinforced, the **same logics** used in the creation and implementation of Indigenous legislation, immigration policies, and other settler colonial laws and social programs.



Competitive Sport Clubs





Competitive Sport Clubs

Early to Mid
1800s

Before confederation (1867), sporting clubs were sites of an exclusive form of socialization and affirmation for '**gentlemen**' of **British descent**.

Like other business clubs in the early to mid 1800s, they were part of a larger network where British settlers could discuss the colony's political, business and class issues.

Membership was **exclusive** and conscious decisions were made about who was eligible to participate and what participation looked like. For the most part, clubs were unwilling to accept anyone outside the social circle of the British upper-class.



Competitive Sport Clubs

Late
1800s

After confederation (1867), there was need for the newly formed Canadian colony to distinguish itself from the British motherland.

In a sporting context, this did two things. First, it resulted in an increased interest in '**Canadian**' sports such as hockey, basketball, and lacrosse. Second, it weakened the "*aristocratic stranglehold on sport.*"

Rather than focusing solely on the interests of the British elite, new sport clubs were developed by, and for, the **emerging professional class.**



Using their corporate leadership and managerial skills, members of this emerging middle-class developed a network of new **regulating bodies**.

The purpose of these bodies, which we now call **national / provincial sport organizations**, was to define the rules and regulations of each game and detail specific eligibility criteria.

It is important to note that during this time, only **'amateurs'** could be a member of these organizations, or even compete in matches hosted by them.

And the definition of an amateur, although it varied slightly across clubs, was:

“One who had ever competed in any open competition or for public money, nor has ever, at any period of his life taught or assisted in the pursuit of athletic exercise as a means of livelihood or is a labourer or an Indian.”



Simpson, 1987; Kidd, 1996



If we unpack this quote we can see that amateurism was a tidy method by which to **legitimize racial and class discrimination**.

- "...ever competed in any open competition or for public money" excluded **athletes from working-class sports** like boxing, where prize money was awarded.
- "...taught or assisted in the pursuit of athletic exercise as a means of livelihood" excluded **gym teachers and other public employees**.
- "...is a labourer" excluded **the entire working-class** (which at the time was predominately white, but also included, Black folks, and individuals of Asian descent).
- "or an Indian" excluded **all Indigenous participation**.

So according to this definition only white (primarily British) men from a particular professional / business class were considered amateurs and able to join sporting clubs.

Despite this exclusive definition of amateurism, it is worth noting that it was during the late 1800s, that sports clubs began to introduce a number of **affiliated ladies activities**.

These clubs catered to the wives and daughters of their (white, middle to upper class) male members, but only **'lady-like' sports** were made available to them.

'Manly' sports that required speed, strength and physical contact such as cricket, rugby, lacrosse, football and baseball were considered **unacceptable** and remained unavailable to women.

Golf, curling, skating, tennis and badminton were suggested to be **'acceptable'** activities due to their allowances for **femininity, grace, and dignity**.



Simpson, 1987; Kidd, 1996



Competitive Sport Clubs

1900s -
1920s

Throughout the first few decades of the 20th century, competitive sports clubs changed very little.

'Amateur codes' were still used to **limit participation** on the basis of **class and race**.

And the the Victorian ideals of **Muscular Christianity** were still very popular in Canada.



Within Muscular Christianity, sport was a metaphor for a society run by Victorian (British), upper and middle-class males.

Thus, as was the case in earlier decades the intense, competitive sporting activities largely remained a *“masculine training ground for those qualities of physical artistry and strength, courage and stamina, ingenuity and loyalty”* -- all qualities which were thought to justify boy's/men's *“claim to the greater share of the social surplus.”*

Despite sport clubs continuing to be an exclusive form of socialization and affirmation for white, middle and upper class boys and men, there were some major advancements for **women in sport** during the first part of the 20th century.

The place where this was most obvious was in **universities**.

University athletics were where **white middle and upper class women** (i.e., those that had the class status and financial means to attend university) began to have increased access to some of the competitive sports that had previously been deemed too masculine (e.g., basketball, hockey).



Hall, 2016



This did not mean, however, that women were not longer required to maintain 'lady-like' qualities.

In order to address the fears that female athletes would become too 'manly' (which was described at the time as **heterosexual failure**), all female athletes were expected to maintain an **acceptable level of 'femininity.'**

Furthermore, it was made clear that their participation in sport should in no way undermine the **existing (hetero)sexist hierarchy** by altering the **traditional family structure** or challenging the **division of labour**.

In order to ensure this, coaches and chaperones closely monitored their activities, stressing the importance of **'respectable, lady-like' behaviour**.

Athlete's also actively distanced themselves from 'feminist' causes and always spoke highly of men. For example, during an interview Gladys Ross (an athlete and womens sports journalist) stated, *"I would never go to a female doctor, or vote for a female politician -- I don't think that's what women should be doing."*





Despite these increasing opportunities for women, up until the 1930s organized activities outside universities or member-based sport clubs were still extremely rare. This meant, there were very few opportunities for **lower class women**.

Similarly, few racialized men, and even fewer racialized women, had access to dominant sport systems during this time.

Not only did the amateur rules explicitly ban the participation of “labourers” and “Indians,” non-white athletes were also excluded based on a **racist assumption** that they were too ‘**primitive**’ to participate in such ‘**civilized**’ activities.

When these athletes were able to disprove the idea that they were too ‘primitive’ to compete against white athletes, their participation began to be denied on the **racist assumption** that they had an “**unfair animalistic advantage**.”



Competitive Sport Clubs

1930s -
1960s

The landscape of competitive sport changed quite dramatically between the 1930s and 1960s.

First, the Great Depression **upset the ideological conditions of amateurism**. Many athletes were forced to find an income any way they could, so abiding by the amateur code was no longer possible for many.

It was therefore during this time that amateurism and professionalism merged in a way that allowed our **existing high performance sporting ethos to emerge**.

The second thing that happened was that governments started to take more responsibility for sport after World War II.

This resulted in the development of **state-funded sporting facilities** as well as a movement towards **community-based sports leagues** such as minor hockey and little league baseball for (predominately white) children and youth.





The focus on white children and youth is important to note here.

Between the 1930s and the 1960s, **residential schools** were at their peak. Also, the **pass system**, which confined Indigenous people to reserves (meaning there were not living in towns or cities where sporting opportunities were available), was also still enforced until the late 1940s.

Additionally, due to years of racist immigration policy the majority Canada's population was almost entirely from White European Countries.

According to the census, in 1961 Canada's population was:

- 43.8% British
- 30.4% French
- 17.7% Western European = (91.9% White)
- 4.9% Eastern European
- 1.2% Indigenous
- 0.7% Asian
- 0.2% Negro
- 1.1% not stated

Therefore, while our contemporary narratives suggest that publicly funded sporting facilities were available to **all 'the public'**, the racial make-up of our settler colonial towns and cities was one of the major reasons athletes using these facilities were **primarily white**.





It is also worth noting that in addition to having programs that cater to white folks, most public sporting facilities that were developed after World War II excluded lower class and racialized individuals in two other ways:

Location

Predominantly located in suburban neighbourhoods, many sporting facilities excluded many non-white and lower class people simply by virtue of their socio-economic geography.



Lack of Public/Low-Cost Opportunities

Many of these facilities catered to sports clubs (clubs whose members were predominantly white, middle to upper class individuals) because they were able to bring in significantly more revenue than when they offered public access opportunities.



Competitive Sport Clubs & Facilities

1800s -
1960s

What this deeper reading of our earliest competitive sporting environments tell us is that from the 1800s until 1960s, sporting clubs and facilities reinforced white supremacist logics which suggested:

White
people

Men

Heterosexuality

Able
bodies

Non-White
people

Women (and
other genders)

Homosexuality

Disabled
bodies



Recreational Sport



Recreational Sport

Recreational sport wasn't too dissimilar in how it reinforced racism, classism, and (hetero)sexism.

Because sport was positioned as a key technique in combating a number of social and political anxieties, philanthropic sporting activities were seen as cost effective intervention for the lower classes.



Recreational Sport

Mid to
late 1800s

Therefore, while the lower classes were excluded from competitive sporting clubs, the British elite still used a variety of sporting activities as part of a **broader rational recreation program**.

Throughout the 1800s, these sporting opportunities were developed specially for **white working class men** and took place in three primary sites: **working class clubs and societies** (e.g., mechanics institutes), **club sponsored working men's athletic competitions**, and **factory games**.

All three sites were funded and controlled by British elites and were seen as productive ways to **regulate the leisure time** of lower class men and make them **more fit for labour**.



Recreational Sport

Late 1800s -
1930s

Toward the end of the 19th century, rational recreation was no longer simply an activity for the working class men.

This was largely because of the emergence of the **social reform movement**.

Defined as *“a loose network of organizations and individuals, mostly church people, educators, doctors and those we now describe as community or social workers,”* the social reform movement was a vigorous campaign intended to *“raise the moral tone of Canadian society, and in particular urban, working class children and youth.”*



Nellie McClung

It is important to note here that most social reformers were avid supporters of the **eugenics movement**.

Interested in ensuring the '**biological purity**' (read whiteness, straightness, and able-bodiedness) of the Canadian population, these individuals believed a series of '**appropriate**' educational / **physical reforms could inoculate working class children** against a number of 'biologically inherited' pathologies (e.g., poverty, criminality).

The overall goal in eliminating these pathologies was to make lower class children more **fit** for both industrial and domestic **labour** and **less dangerous** to the middle and upper classes.

Sport was one of many activities used by Canada's social reformers.

For example, from the late 1880s until the late 1930s, supervised playgrounds, the YMCA, YWCA, Cadets, Girl Guides, and other philanthropic institutions all ran 'gender appropriate' games for children of from the white, working class.



Once again the focus on the **white, lower class** is important to note here.

1911

97% of Canada's population was of Western European Descent

1921

97.5% of Canada's population was of Western European Descent

Furthermore, by the late 1800s almost all Indigenous peoples were living on reserve.

Therefore, while our contemporary narratives suggest that non-profit organizations such the YMCA, Girl Guides, as were sites for **ALL working class children and youth**, the racial make-up of our settler colonial towns and cities was one of the major reasons lower class, white children were the targets of the organizations.





That being said, the racial make-up of our settler colonial towns and cities was not the only reason racialized children were absent from our earliest recreational sporting environments. **Racist tropes** such as the '**savage Indian**' and '**blackface minstrels**' were also common during games and performances.

Such characters not only **normalized racist attitudes**, they also constructed a **white Canadian identity** that was opposed to the non-white Other.

Therefore, even in the absence of explicit racialized exclusions it can be assumed that non-white children would be hesitant to voluntarily attend programming that suggested they were **inferior or degenerate Others**.

In addition to reinforcing the notion that **white people are superior to non-white people**, these philanthropic organizations also reified the notion that **men are superior to women** and society should be organized as such.





Within this line of thinking, lower class boys were to become **fit** for **wage labour** and/or **military duty**. Team games and sporting competitions were therefore used to teach **physical efficiency**, a **respect for authority**, and a **loyalty to the British crown**.



Lower class girls, on the other hand, were taught '**proper**' **domestic habits** through instruction in sewing, knitting, and crafts. **Non-strenuous** activities (that is, those believed to be safe for their reproductive systems) such as dance and other 'appropriate' games were also used in an attempt to strengthen their bodies for their **future maternal duties**.



Recreational Sport

Late 1940s -
1970s

After World War II, recreational sport was **no longer simply the responsibly of philanthropic organizations** run by the British elite.

During this time, all levels of government adopted **a social welfare ideology** and increased investments in sport and recreation.



Recreational Sport

Late 1940s -
1970s

Despite this increased government involvement in **recreational sport** (or **sport for development**) the goal of these programs remained the same as they had in previous decades.

Each one was intended to **remedy a number of physical, moral, and/or social issues through individual rather than systemic intervention.**

In other words, rather than addressing **inequities due to excessive capitalism** or the **harms of institutional racism**, the programs were intended to give individuals the **'skills' required to survive in a white, capitalist, settler colonial nation.**



Take as an example, sporting competitions in **residential schools**.

Beginning in the 1940s, athletic competitions became a more pronounced feature of residential schools (primarily for boys).

The general purpose of these athletic competitions, as noted by the sport historian Janice Forsyth was to *“help address the governments concern for physical fitness and health among the Indians, while simultaneously facilitating their assimilation into white society.”*



Recreational Sport

1800s -
1970s

So as was the case with competitive sport clubs, a deeper reading of earliest recreational sporting programs allows us to see how the habits and customs taught by philanthropists and social reformers (i.e., the white upper and middle class) to the working class, racialized folks, and Indigenous peoples also reinforced white supremacist logics which suggested:



□ 1980s - Present

Returning now to the **contemporary discussion about EDI**, we can see that issues related to equity, diversity and inclusivity are not new.

Both competitive and recreational sporting opportunities have always been spaces **white, middle to upper class, cis-gendered, able-bodied, settlers maintain** control of sporting organizations, practices and policies.





As a result, the majority of our current EDI policies and practices have focused on 'welcoming' those who have historically been excluded instead of attempting to address the structural causes of exclusion that stem from the interrelated factors related to settler colonialism, racism, sexism, ableism, and capitalism.

This **simplistic form of inclusion** is problematic for three main reasons:

1. It reinforces **assimilation** into the mainstream sporting system, rather than recognizing that different cultures and identities might prefer **alternative programming**.
2. It ignores the ways these dominant sporting cultures might feel **unsafe for members of non-dominant groups** due to the **historical exclusions** and harms that have occurred in sport (and society more broadly).
3. It **tokenizes** members of non-dominant groups who are willing to "fit into" the mainstream sporting system and **perpetuates the notion that structural changes are not required**.



What do we do with this information?

Recognizing I am not here to offer any prescriptive actions or solutions (as I myself don't have the answers), I would argue that the first thing we need to do is accept that we have a **responsibility** for **writing** the **next chapter of history**.

Yes, you and I are not responsible for the policies and practices of the past. We can't change it. But we also can't continue to **deny** that it happened.

We can't continue to **ignore** the ways **white supremacy** (meaning settler colonialism, racism, (hetero)sexism, ableism, and exploitative capitalism) shaped, and continue to shape, our society (which includes sport).



Three Strategic Starting Points

In closing, I will offer **three strategies** that might act as starting points for creating more **equitable, diverse and inclusive sporting systems.**



Do the Work of Learning and Unlearning

If we are truly interested in creating equitable, diverse and inclusive sporting spaces, those of us in positions of power must undergo an **ongoing process of critical reflection**.

Rather than continually asking, "What action could we take right now?" we need to **slow down and engage** (both individually and collectively) with the many harmful elements of **our nations colonizing and supremacist history**.

But the work does not stop there. Creating more just sporting systems will also require that we understand the ways these harmful **pieces of the past** continue to shape the **policies, practices and people of the present**.



Do the Work of Learning and Unlearning

As the social justice scholar Shawn Ginwright has noted, lasting social change requires that people "not only struggle against existing institutions" but that they also "make a philosophical/spiritual leap to become more 'human' human beings."

In other words, if we want to change/transform our sporting systems, we must also change/transform ourselves.




Address the Myth that Sport is Apolitical

We know two of the biggest factors affecting participation are **money and time**. Yet, as a sector we remain uninvolved in the political efforts that would allow for increases in both of these areas (e.g., **living wage legislation, tax reform, child care legislation**).

Therefore, instead of **addressing the systemic issues** that could actually give people more money and time, we tend to **develop surface level reforms** that attempt to remove barriers at the individual or organizational level.

For example, the two most common interventions are time-consuming **grant programs that cover registration fees** (e.g., programs like KidSport) and investments in activities that provide only **brief moments of participation** (e.g., sport sampling days, short-term program grants for activities that only run for one year).



Address the Myth that Sport is Apolitical

Choosing to focus on these surface level reforms, while avoiding strategic discussions about social justice is **a political statement of its own**.

How, where, when and why we engage in sport has largely been determined by the **structural conditions** that have privileged white, middle to upper class heterosexual men and to a less degree women.

Therefore, if we are truly interested in creating more equitable, diverse and inclusive sporting spaces we need to **acknowledge sport is political** and find **common cause with the agendas** that will contribute to transformation we claim to seek (e.g., living wage legislation, tax reform, child care legislation).



Stop discussing EDI and do something about it

In other words, we must **abandon traditional models** of sport for development or sport for social inclusion (that is, models that attempt to 'fix' particular populations) and replace them with new transformational models of sport for social justice (that is, models that value the **lived experiences** and **agency** of historically excluded groups by giving them **control of their own sporting opportunities**).

This will require organizations and funding bodies to **redistribute resources** in order to make greater investments in the programs and activities that are **organized and led** by those have been, and continue to be, excluded from our traditional sporting systems.

Thank
You!

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