UNDERSTANDING EXCLUSION IN CANADIAN SPORT

A HISTORY OF THREE DIFFERENT SPORTING SYSTEMS

Dr. Lisa Tink
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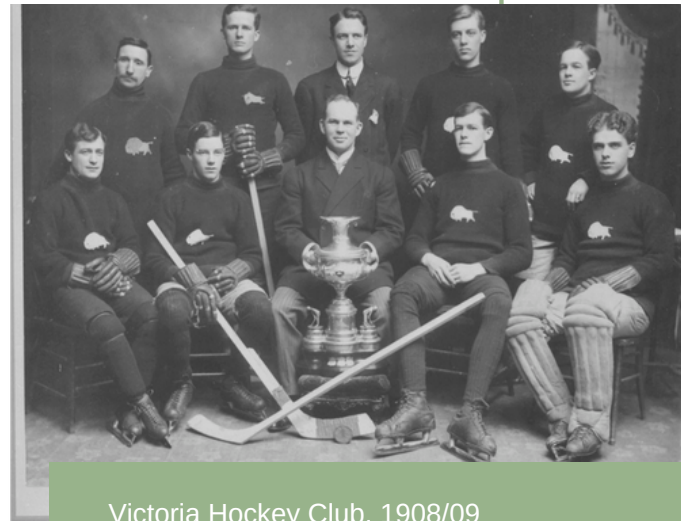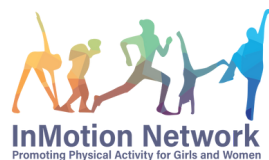

Men's Cricket Team, 1885
Government of Canada Library Archives

DOCUMENT OVERVIEW

Victoria Hockey Club, 1908/09
Government of Canada Library and Archives

The purpose of this document is to assist sport professionals as they develop more equitable and meaningful sporting experiences. By demonstrating how our current systems continue to reinforce many of the philosophies and structures of the 18th and 19th centuries, the information in this document is intended to challenge sport professionals to reimagine our contemporary sporting systems and structures.

DOCUMENT LAYOUT

The document has been divided into five sections. The first section provides a brief overview of some of the contemporary issues in sport and highlights the need to begin to imagine and create new sporting structures. Sections two, three and four offer three separate histories of three separate sporting systems. Within each section, the information is intended to not only challenge our assumptions of the past, but also demonstrate how many of the logics and practices that were used in the past are reinforced today. Finally, the last section offers some concluding thoughts about the need to move beyond a hierarchical sporting model and develop new, more just opportunities for participation.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

InMotion Network
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INTRODUCTION

A common saying in the healthcare literature is, "*every system is perfectly designed to get the results it gets.*" This is especially true for Canadian sport systems. While COVID- 19 has indeed exacerbated many of the issues associated with recreational and competitive sport, concerns in this area are not new. As noted by Canadian sport scholars Peter Donnelly and Bruce Kid, *"most of the problems with youth sport…have been well documented since the 1960s and numerous reports, many with positive and constructive recommendations are gathering dust on the shelves in professor's offices and in public and voluntary sports organizations."* Therefore, while issues such as exclusion and unsafe environments are often understood as contemporary issues to be addressed by equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) committees, the reality is that sport has always been a reflection of, and a response to, a number of social, political, and economic injustices.

What this means for Canada's sporting system — despite the commonly repeated narrative that we must return to some version of an inclusive past — is that there is no 'golden era' to return to. Instead, there are only a number of interconnected moments, decisions, policies, and programs that we can learn about and build upon. Therefore, rather than romanticizing the policies and practices of the past, it is our responsibility to engage with their complexities in such a way that we might begin to imagine new sporting futures. This not only requires that we challenge our assumptions about the inherent 'goodness' of sport, it also requires that we understand the knowledges and structures that have created the conditions for the issues we face today.

The timelines in this document are intended to do just that. By providing three separate histories of three separate sporting systems, this document is meant to challenge our assumptions about the sporting practices of the past and, in doing so, act as a starting point for imagining and creating new sporting futures.

Recognizing the information presented in each timeline does not offer a complete or definitive history (as this is never possible), each curated collection does represent a constellation of moments that are intended to tell a story. Collectively, these stories are intended to demonstrate that the meaning of sport is neither universal nor static. As a cultural practice, sport has served a number of different social, economic, and political agendas over time. And while some of these agendas have indeed been harmful, knowing how sport has been positioned and/or leveraged in the past is central to any transformation of our sporting system. In other words, if we know our past sporting structures and outcomes are simply a reflection of social, political, and economic priorities, there is no reason to think that, with new social, political, and economic priorities, alternative structures and outcomes can not be imagined in the future.

Women's Basketball Team The Edmonton Grads, 1930
City of Edmonton Archives EA-715-88

TIMELINE # 1
Amateur Sport Organizations

> **"Of course, sport was initially developed as an exclusive form of socialization and affirmation for British, middle-class boys and men"**
> Peter Donnelly & Bruce Kidd, Youth, *Character and Community in Canadian Sport*

Early to Mid 1800s

- Amateur sport began as an activity for the aristocratic elite. Acting as a cultural bond between Britain and its translated people of the new (Canadian) colony, sport clubs were a place for the 'gentlemen' of the era. [2][3][4]

- Like other business clubs in the early to mid-1800s, they were part of a larger network of exclusive institutions where British settlers could discuss the colony's political, business and class issues. [2][3][4]

- 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-middle class. [2][3][4]

Late 1800s

- After confederation, interest in 'Canadian' sports such as hockey, basketball and lacrosse increased, weakening the "aristocratic stranglehold on sport." [3] Rather than focusing solely on the interests of the British elite, new sport clubs were developed by, and for, the emerging professional class. [3]

- Using their corporate leadership and managerial skills, members of the emerging middle- to upper-class developed a network of provincial and national regulating bodies. The purpose of these bodies was to define the rules and regulations of each game and detail specific eligibility criteria. [3]

- During this time, only 'amateurs' could be a member of these provincial and national organizations or even compete in matches hosted by them. The definition of an amateur, although it varied slightly across clubs, was *"one who had never 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."* [3] 'Amateurism' was, therefore a tidy method by which to legitimize racial and class discrimination.

- It was during the late 1800s that sports clubs also began to introduce a number of affiliated ladies clubs.[5] These clubs catered to the wives and daughters of their male members. However, only 'lady-like' sports were made available to women during this time. 'Manly' sports that required speed, strength and physical contact, such as cricket, rugby, hockey, lacrosse, football, and baseball, were considered unacceptable and thus remained unavailable to women. Golf, curling, skating, tennis, and badminton, on the other hand, were suggested to be 'acceptable' activities due to their allowances for 'femininity,' 'grace,' and 'dignity.'[5]

1900s to 1920s

- During the first two decades of the 20th century, 'amateur codes' continued to limit participation on the basis of gender, class, and race by reinforcing the ideals of Muscular Christianity.[3][5]

- According to the ideals of 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, intense, competitive sporting activities were meant to be 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 men's *"claim to the greater share of the social surplus."* [3]

Lacrosse Canadian Sports Championship Winners, 1918
Government of Canada Library and Archives

- Despite being a system that was primarily intended for white, urban males, throughout the first two decades of the 20th century, middle and upper-class white women (those who were able to attend university) were provided with new sporting opportunities through sports clubs and post-secondary institutions.[5] Opportunities for lower-class women were, however, still extremely rare.

- Very few racialized men and even fewer racialized women had access to sport during this time. Not only did the amateur rules explicitly ban the participation of *"labourers"* and *"Indians,"*[3] Black athletes were excluded based on a racist assumption that they were too 'primitive' to participate in such 'civilized' activities. When Black 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."*[6]

1930s to Early 1940s

- The economic consequences of the Great Depression upset the ideological conditions of amateurism. Many athletes were forced to find an income anywhere they could, which meant *"abiding by the amateur code became a luxury many could not afford."*[3] As a result, it soon became acceptable for amateurs, as well as professionals, to be compensated for their athletic talent.[3]

- It was this narrowing of the ideological distance between amateurism and professionalism that resulted in a new ideology of excellence. More specifically, it was during this time that amateurism and professionalism merged in a way that allowed a new high-performance sporting ethos to emerge.[7]

- Despite this new ideology, however, the growing network of national and provincial sport organizations continued to serve and be run by middle to upper-class white men and women (but to a much lesser degree).[3][5][7]

Late 1940s to 1950s

- After World War II, the state began to take more responsibility for the institutional expansion of organized sport.[3] During this time, however, it was commonly understood that neither citizens nor sport were to be directly controlled. Instead, the state was meant to create the conditions for citizens to 'voluntarily participate.'[8] This resulted in a number of state-funded pay-per-use facilities as well as a movement towards community-based sports leagues (e.g., minor hockey, little league baseball) for (primarily white) children and youth.[7][8]

- Despite this growth in our sport and recreation facilities, the racialized and classed hierarchy still existed in public sport settings. For example, because most public sporting facilities (e.g., hockey rinks, swimming pools, tennis courts) were located in suburban neighbourhoods, they facilitated the exclusion of most non-white and lower-class people simply by virtue of their social-economic geography. [8] Furthermore, many of these facilities catered to sports clubs (e.g., clubs whose members were predominantly white, middle to upper-class individuals) because they were able to bring in significantly more revenue renting space to these clubs than when they offered public access opportunities. [8]

- Gender was also still a major factor during this time. There was still a prevalent belief that female bodies were unfit for intense, competitive, 'masculine' activities such as hockey.[5,8] Furthermore, the sporting opportunities of boys and men were valued more than the activities of women and girls.[8,9] The privileging of boys and men was repeatedly demonstrated in facility schedules and financial investments.[8,9]

1960s to 1980s

- It was during the 1960s that the federal government became formally involved in the promotion of sport. Arguing that sport could serve as a powerful source of national unity, Pierre Trudeau established a Task Force on Sport for Canadians in 1968. One year later, this Task Force published *A Report on the Task Force for Sport for Canadians*.[7] The report criticized national and provincial sport organizations for their *"kitchen style"* of operation.[7] In order to address this 'unprofessional' style of leadership, the Federal Government established both Sport Canada and the National Sport and Recreation Centre. Both pieces of infrastructure were intended to ensure national sport organizations had the mandate and budget to drive high-performance sport (which now included increased, but still not equitable, opportunities for women and disabled athletes) in order to achieve international excellence and drive pan-Canadian unity.[7]

Olympic Skiier Nancy Greene, 1968
Government of Canada Library and Archives

- The ever-growing emphasis on high-performance sport also created substantial debate about how to balance expenditures designed to support elite athletes and those designed to provide developmental opportunities.[7] It was often argued that the most logical way forward was to assign National Sport Organizations (funded by Sport Canada) the role of supporting the county's elite athletes and leave the responsibility of mass sport and recreation programs to provincial sport organizations, which were to be funded by their respective provincial governments.[7] However, this balance between national and provincial sport organizations was never realized. Sport sociologists Donald Macintosh and David Whitson emphasized this when they wrote:

  > *…there has been a tendency for some provinces (especially the 'have' provinces) to reproduce the same emphasis on high-performance sport…with the same neglect of community and recreation sport. Provinces compete to place members on the national teams and to place highly in Canada games standings; provincial sport organization staff are under the same sort of performance drive pressures…as the national level.*[7]

- There was a significant increase in expenditures for athlete development and games.[7][10] At the same time, however, expenditures for recreationally oriented sports faced cuts or freezes. For example, from 1981-1987, allocations to Sport Canada increased from $26,414,000 to $50,558,340. Fitness Canada, on the other hand, only saw an increase from $6,580,000 to $7,606,025 – which, when accounting for inflation, is an over 2 million dollar decrease in funding.[7]

- Prioritizing high-performance sport also became common at provincial levels. In Alberta, for example, the primary focus of both the provincial government and their funded sport organizations was competitive games.[11] Similarly, in the early 1980s, the Premier of British Columbia *"increased expenditures on high-performance sport and provided substantial subsidies for the construction of BC Place at the same time that he insisted that his government could not afford social programs."*[7]

1990s to 2020s

- Both provincial/national sport organizations and municipal sporting facilities continue to (primarily) serve the white, able-bodied, middle and upper classes.[8][12]

- National and provincial sport organizations continue to put high-performance programs before mass participation. In other words, they continue to continue to reinforce early specialization and selection, requiring families to make significant investments in coaching, equipment and travel.[12][13] As a result, participation in competitive sport continues to be most strongly predicted by household income.[14]

- Municipalities continue to increase user fees (even during budget cycles when transfers from provincial governments increase). The sport sociologist David Whitson, articulated the impact of these trends in Alberta when he wrote:

    …even though provincial transfers to municipalities have risen again in the last few years (2005-2010) in Alberta, this has not been accompanied by any noticeable drop in user fees. New money has been directed into capital projects and special events (provincial and national Games) while operating budgets have continued to rely on higher user fee levels that are now widely accepted. Once increased, in other words, the revenues from these new levels of user fees are now seen as a predictable source of income in municipal recreation budgets, while the costs associated with them are also seen as a normal and predictable expense in the personal and family budgets of those who can afford them.[15]

- Racism, ableism, and (hetero)sexism are still very prevalent in our contemporary sporting systems. A 2021 study conducted in Ontario found that more than 1 out of every 3 Black youth, 1 of 4 Indigenous youth, and 1 of 5 radicalized youth directly experienced racism in sport. The number of youth who had experiences with other forms of discrimination was significantly higher. [16]

Youth Football Player
Canva Photos

TIMELINE # 2
Sport Development Programs

> **"The Victorian British did not introduce cricket to their Empire solely because they enjoyed the game. They took it with them because they felt they had a duty to do so. Just as it taught discipline and honour to their young officer cadets, it was believed those qualities might rub off on to some of the subject peoples"**
> Roger Hutchinson, *Empire Games: The British Invention of Twentieth-Century Sport*

Mid to Late 1800s

- As demonstrated in the previous timeline, throughout the 19th century, sporting clubs were sites for the British elite. This did not mean, that the lower classes did not participate in sporting activities. Because sport was seen to be a key technique in combatting a number of social and political anxieties, the British elite used philanthropic sporting activities as a cost-effective intervention for the lower classes.[2][3]

- Part of a broader rational recreation program, 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 athletic competitions, and factory games.[2] All three sites were funded and controlled by British elites and were seen are productive ways to regulate the leisure time of lower-class men.[2][3]

Women's ProRec Demonstration, 1930s
City of Vancouver Archives

- During this time, women from the lower classes also required rational amusements capable of channelling their interests into a value system that aligned more closely with the ruling elite. However, it wasn't until the last decade of the nineteenth century that women's clubs and societies focused on anything other than proper habits of domesticity and Christian purity.[5] Historian Hugh Cunningham has suggested the reason that early forms of rational recreation can be described as *"almost exclusively…men dealing with men"* was because, up until the end of the nineteenth century, women's activities were largely confined to the private sphere.[17] It was, therefore, considered futile for philanthropists to invest in improving the intellectual, physical, or political competencies of a segment of the population that had little to no public value.
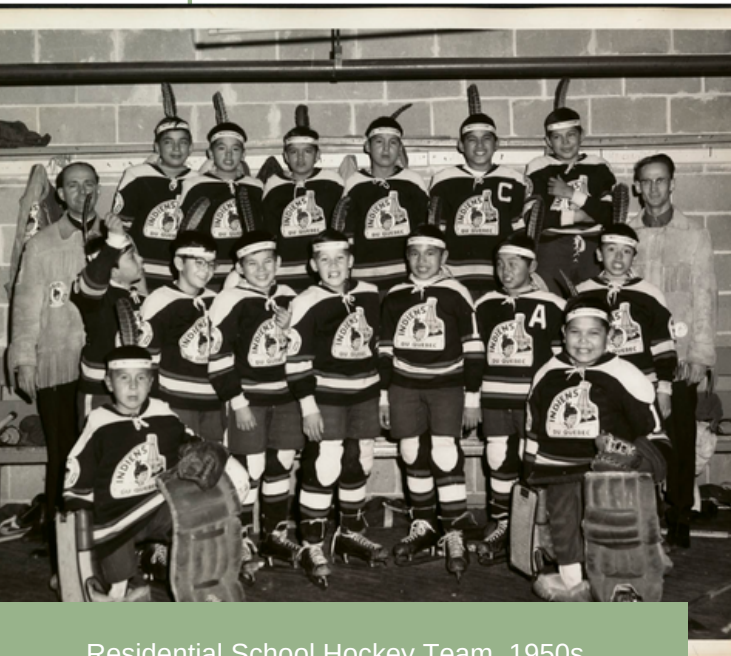
Late 1800s to 1930s

- Toward the end of the 19th century, the social reform movement emerged. 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 moment was a vigorous campaign intended to *"raise the moral tone of Canadian society, and in particular urban, working-class children and youth."*[18] Sport was one of many activities used by Canada's social reformers.

- From the late 1880s until the mid-1920s, supervised playgrounds, the YMCA, YWCA, Cadets, Girl Guides, and other philanthropic institutions all ran 'gender appropriate' games (i.e., games that would prepare boys for manual labour and military service for boys while preparing girls for maternal labour and domestic service) in an attempt to increase the physical and moral health of children from the white, working class.[8]

- The emphasis on the white working class is important to note. By the mid-1800s, almost all Indigenous people were confined to reserves or residential schools. Additionally, due to the use of a number of racist immigration policies implemented during the first half of the 20th century, very few non-white immigrants were admitted into Canada. Therefore, while social reformers openly used sport as a site of cultural assimilation, the immigrants that were targeted by mainstream institutions such as playgrounds, the YMCA or YWCA were primarily white immigrants from countries in Western Europe.[8]

- In some areas, practices of racial segregation were also used to ensure these spaces remained largely white. For example, it was common for swimming pools and beaches to ban Black Canadians due to fears that they would transmit diseases to white individuals in the water.[8]

1940s to 1970s

- After World War II, all levels of government adopted a social welfare ideology and increased investments in sport and recreation. It was also during this time that a new sport and recreation profession emerged.[8] [10] Abandoning the concept of social reform, this new municipal recreation professional was not interested in eliminating societal problems such as juvenile delinquency and ill health (as that was now the responsibility of social workers and non-profit organizations).[8] Instead, this new profession developed a network of municipal facilities (e.g., swimming pools, ice rinks, baseball diamonds, tennis courts) that served individual and organizational consumers using a pay-per-use business model (see the previous timeline for more details). [8]

- Despite implementing new pay-per-use recreation facilities, governments did not stop investing in 'developmental' programs intended to intervene in the lives and behaviours of those considered 'dangerous,' 'disadvantaged,' or 'at-risk' (e.g., youth from low-income families, Indigenous youth, racialized youth, disabled youth). All levels of government still provided some level of assistance to voluntary organizations (e.g., YMCA, YWCA) and other state-run agencies (e.g., residential schools, correctional facilities) for sport development programs.[8]

Residential School Hockey Team, 1950s
Government of Canada Library and Archives

- During this time, the goal of these sport development 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.[8] 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 government's concern for physical fitness and health among the Indians, while simultaneously facilitating their assimilation into white society."* [19]

1980s to 2020s

- Sport development programs received a boost in the 1980s. There were two major reasons for this boost. The first was the increase in political discourses surrounding morally suspect trends related to drugs, rising crime rates, and teen pregnancy.[20] The second was the emergence of a new strength-based model of positive youth development.[20] Within this model, youth that were deemed 'dangerous,' 'disadvantaged,' or 'at-risk' were no longer positioned as 'problems to be managed.' Instead, these individual youth were now seen as 'resources to be developed.' In a sporting context, the emergence of this new strength-based model gave rise to a new area of research/practice titled positive youth development [20] through sport.

- Throughout the early 2000s, positive youth development through sport grew both globally and domestically. For example, in 2003, the United Nations adopted resolution 58/5, which positioned *"Sport as a means to promote education, health, development and peace."* [21] Today, there are over 1,000 organizations registered with the International Platform on Sport and Development.[22] Furthermore, it was in 2008 that the frequently cited book Positive Youth Development through Sport called for more *"discussion about the best ways to integrate PYD into existing organized sport programs."* [23]

- Despite the undeniable growth of discourses and practices promoting positive youth development through sport, a number of critiques have been offered in recent years. For example, a number of researchers have noted that the majority of sport development programs still focus on deficit reduction and social control.[24][25] A primary reason for this, as stated by sport sociologist Jay Coakley, is that *"decision-makers in governments, NGOs, and corporate responsibility departments have favoured programs with underlying evaluative and corrective agendas built into selection, delivery and implementation processes."* [25]

- Other critiques have highlighted the Eurocentric paradigm from which positive youth development through sport and sport for development and peace have both emerged. For example, the sport historian Janice Forsyth recently wrote, *"the problem is that sport for development and peace, in the context of 'underprivileged' groups, is embedded in the same unequal power relations that have shaped settler colonialism in Canada."* [24]

TIMELINE # 3
Sport as a Site of Agency and Resistance

> **"In Canada and in the west at large sport has stood on the pillars of exclusivity and discrimination. Yet white supremacist and masculinist foundations of sport opened up space for oppressed minority groups, such as black Canadians to challenge prejudiced norms and assumptions, as well as to redefine and attempt to emancipate themselves in an unequal society."**
>
> Ornella Nzindukiyimana & Kevin Wamsley, *Black Canadian Sporting Histories in the 19th and 20th Centuries.*

Mid 1800s to Late 1800s

- Throughout the 19th century, commercialized sporting activities such as boxing, wrestling, and billiards were the antithesis of amateur sport.[4] Developed for financial gain and practiced for immediate pleasure, these entrepreneurial ventures not only gave the working class an opportunity to play, fight, drink, and gamble on their one free day from work, they were also a way for the working class to promote independence from the British-elite by actively resisting the rational recreation (now called sport for development).[2][3][4]

- Not all equity-denied groups resisted 'traditional' sporting activities. During this time, members of some equity-denied communities organized their own sporting activities that embraced an amateur ideology while simultaneously reinforcing their self-determination and agency. For example, deaf athletes began organizing their own international sporting events in 1888.[26] Their ability to create their own structured activities, as noted by critical disability scholar Danielle Peers, was *"because both familial inheritance patterns and segregated deaf schooling created strong linguistic, cultural, and social traditions that were passed on through generations often within strongly knit, self-governed communities with strong activist traditions."*[26]

- Another example of sport being positioned as a site of agency can be found in Canada's first Coloured Hockey League. Founded in 1895, members of this league played at local rinks across the Maritimes. However, as noted in Sport and Recreation in Canadian History, it was *"only when the quality of the surface at indoor rinks deteriorated, usually in late February or early March, [that] blacks play[ed] indoors and whites consider[ed] their own hockey season over."* [27] Therefore, despite providing a site for Black athletes to challenge racist norms and assumptions, they were still limited by the class and race hierarchy that defined settler colonial society.

1900s to 1930s

- Much like the 1800s, specific communities still positioned sport as a site of cultural pride, agency, and resistance. For example, the Workers Sport Association of Canada was established in 1924. Its membership was primarily Finnish and Ukrainian immigrants who emphasized the ways the British elite used sports *"for increasing productivity by building stronger bodies"* and *"drawing workers into cadets, preparing them for future wars."* [28] As such, they used sport as a vehicle to empower individuals interested in combatting *"difficult economic conditions, racial prejudice, exploitative employers, and a repressive state in Canada."* [29]

- In addition to creating sporting opportunities that existed outside the dominant structures, equity-denied groups also developed their own mainstream sports teams. One example was the Japanese Canadian Asahi Baseball Club, which was formed in 1914. Winning the league championship in 1926, 1930 and 1933, the team has been described as *"symbolically resisting or challenging the hegemony of white community and fostering a sense of pride and self-respect within their own."* [30] Similarly, the Chatham Coloured All-Stars were formed in 1933, winning the championship that same year. They were the first Black team to do so. [27]

- It was also during the interwar period that women's sporting opportunities became available at a community level. Frustrated by the classed-based restrictions in both educational institutions and elite sporting clubs, (white) working-class women began to gradually organize and promote their own sporting activities. [5][31] For example, in 1922, the Ladies Ontario Hockey Association was formed. [31] It is worth noting, however, that, despite being the first provincial governing body for women's hockey, the organization was denied membership into the Canadian Amateur Hockey Association. It wasn't until 1975 – 53 years after the Ladies Ontario Hockey Association was formed – that the Ontario Women's hockey league was established. [31]

1940s to 1980s

- In 1941, the Canadian government incarcerated over 20,000 Japanese Canadians. Sent to internment camps in Southern Alberta, these Canadian citizens were stripped of all rights in the interests of 'national security.' Despite Prime Minister Mackenzie King acknowledging in 1945 that *"no Japanese was found to be a threat,"* Japanese Canadians did not regain the rights of Canadian citizenship until 1949.[32] After regaining their rights, many of the Japanese Canadians that were forcibly relocated to Alberta decided to stay to rebuild their lives. Sport was one way they attempted to do this. In 1953, the first Japanese Canadian Curling Bonspiel was held. Seen as a way to collectively navigate the *"degradations of war and prewar racist exclusions,"* the bonspiel provided (and still provides) *"a space for expressions of resiliency, agency, and escape through camaraderie and physical movements on the ice."*[32]

- A second example of cultural resurgence and pride can be found in the Native Sport and Recreation Program. Operating from 1972 to 1981, this program increased sport and recreation opportunities for Indigenous peoples through a network of regional organizations that coordinated sporting competitions and events between reserves.[33] Despite losing all funding in 1981 — due to an assumption that *"the Indigenous sport programs would not produce elite-level athletes"*[33] — the success of the program lies in the fact that it resulted in *"a sport system by Indigenous people for Indigenous people — apart from the mainstream — which ran counter to underlying federal assumptions about funding for Indigenous sport."* [33]

1990s to 2020s

- Despite the majority of resources continuing to go to traditional sporting bodies, some members of equity-denied groups have developed alternative programs.

- Excellent examples of alternative sporting structures are the Edmonton area Filipino Basketball Leagues. Developed by communities of Filipino ex-pats, the leagues provide a source of cultural pride and connection. The Philippines Sports Association is Edmonton's largest league, with 68 teams and over a thousand players. As noted in a recent CBC article, the league recently *"added a supermaster 42+ division, which players affectionately call the super-lolo (super-grandpa) division."*[34]
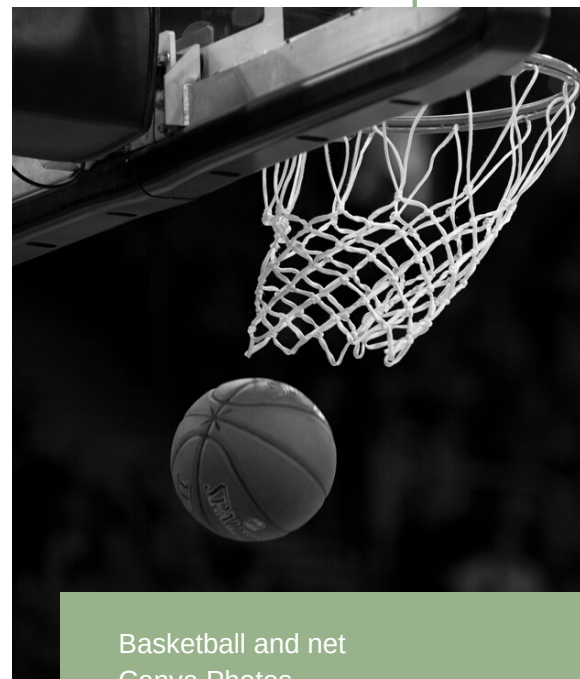
Basketball and net
Canva Photos

REIMAGINING SPORTING STRUCTURES AND OUTCOMES

As demonstrated throughout this document, there are three separate tiers in our current sporting systems. The first tier is made up of a network of traditional sporting organizations and facilities run **by** members of the white, middle and upper class, primarily **for** other members of the white, middle and upper class. Within this tier, the focus is on excellence (e.g., athletic accomplishments, individual fitness benchmarks). It is also the most resourced.

The second tier is made up of a network of philanthropic organizations and sport development programs run by members of the white, middle and upper class for populations that are perceived to be 'problematic,' 'at-risk', or 'disadvantaged' (i.e., equity-denied groups). The programs in this tier claim to fix a number of social or economic issues (e.g., obesity, delinquency) by teaching individual skills in a sports-based setting. Within this tier, funding is largely dependent on the political priorities of the day (e.g., reducing crime, combating obesity).

The last and most underfunded tier includes a collection of independent programs and events developed **by and for** communities that have been historically excluded from our dominant structures. Within this tier, the focus is often cultural pride, agency and self-determination. This tier is also the least resourced because it is only marginally supported (if supported at all) by traditional/dominant funding agencies.

When we think about our sporting systems using this three-tiered hierarchy, it becomes clear how our current systems have undergone minimal changes since the 1800s. As the futurist Richard Lum has stated, *"Today we find ourselves with political systems based on 18th-century philosophy, run with 19th-century administrations, built on 20th-century technologies, attempting to confront 21st-century challenges."*[35] It is therefore essential, for any real transformation to occur, that we reflect upon the ways our current sporting systems reinforce many of the philosophies and structures of the 18th and 19th centuries and begin to acknowledge that the majority of the unequal power relations of the past still define our sporting systems in the present. It is only once we have acknowledged the ways our dominant sport structures privilege some bodies more than others that we might begin to move beyond our tiered sporting model and develop new, more just opportunities for participation.

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