



**POLICY PAPER FOR
ANTI-RACISM IN
CANADIAN HOCKEY**



BACKGROUND & PURPOSE

In order to foster “a culture of inclusion and acceptance” in hockey, it is crucial that we cease treating instances of racism in the sport as isolated incidents. Rather, we must address racism as a systemic issue that pervades hockey culture. This move from a reactive to a proactive posture requires an integrated and holistic series of anti-racism strategies from hiring and training to oversight and enforcement. We argue in what follows that it is incumbent upon Hockey Canada, the national governing body for hockey in Canada, to lead the way in implementing anti-racism policies, practices, and protocols at every level of the sport. This policy paper—developed from a Roundtable on Racism in Hockey hosted at Queen’s University on March 30th, 2019—is designed (1) to advocate for policy changes, (2) to invigorate the need for re-education of coaches, parents, players, and officials on the importance of anti-racism, and (3) to promote strategies for making hockey culture safer, more inclusive, and accountable for its practices.





CALLS TO ACTION

1. SETTLER COLONIALISM & RECONCILIATION

a. We call upon all levels of government and hockey administrative bodies to publicly adopt and enforce Calls to Action 87 to 91 of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.¹

2. TRAINING AND CERTIFICATION

a. We call upon Hockey Canada to implement modules addressing intercultural competency, conflict resolution, and anti-racism in sport to be included in certification processes for all coaches, administrators, billets, and officials.

b. We call upon Hockey Canada to appoint/elect anti-racism champions to ensure that compliance with anti-racism policies and promotion of anti-racism initiatives are embedded in the portfolio of paid staff at all levels of participation.

3. CONSISTENCY OF ENFORCEMENT

a. We call upon Hockey Canada to institute a “duty to report” policy with relation to all incidents of suspected racism in the sport.

b. We call upon Hockey Canada to track all such incidents over time, to establish objectives with regards

to the elimination of such incidents, and to develop metrics for assessing the success of anti-racism initiatives.

c. We call upon Hockey Canada to develop a “zero tolerance” policy with relation to racism in the sport and to institute clear protocols for dealing with racist incidents that will be considered required knowledge for all coaches, administrators, and officials.

4. OVERSIGHT

a. We call upon the Minister of Canadian Heritage to create an external oversight body whose sole purpose is to receive and investigate claims of racial, sexual, homonegative, and gendered abuse/discrimination, and to advocate for claimants.

5. HIRING

a. We call upon Hockey Canada to institute hiring policies that prioritize racialized candidates once all job requirements have been met.

b. We call upon Hockey Canada to prevent nepotism in hiring practices by instituting blind review processes.

¹ Please see Page 4 for a list of these Calls to Action.

6. DATA COLLECTION

a. We call upon Hockey Canada to implement a system to collect ongoing information on the participation of racialized groups in hockey in order to monitor demographic changes and trends.

7. PROMOTION OF DIVERSITY

a. We call upon Hockey Canada to celebrate the diverse history of hockey in Canada by disseminating knowledge about Indigenous and racialized players, teams, leagues, and experiences.

8. FINANCIAL ACCESS

a. We call upon Hockey Canada and the Minister of Canadian Heritage to subsidize public high school hockey programs to foster more equitable access to all Canadians.

b. "We call upon retail outlets (e.g., Sportchek and Canadian tire) and hockey equipment manufacturers (e.g., Bauer, CCM, True etc.) to assist in establishing and supporting hockey equipment libraries to help mitigate the rising costs of participation.

9. GEOGRAPHICAL ACCESS

a. We call upon Hockey Canada to acknowledge how the lack of Indigenous representation in Canadian hockey is disproportionately affected by the geographical remoteness of many communities.

b. We call upon Hockey Canada, and others invested in growing the game (i.e., National Hockey League, Canadian Hockey League etc.), to allocate a percentage of its annual budget to supporting Indigenous hockey in Canada (urban, reserve-based, and remote).

10. MEDIA

a. We call upon members of the media to work to illustrate the pattern of racism experienced by racialized players, rather than treating examples of racism as isolated incidents.

b. We call upon members of the media to use the terms "racist" and "racism" to address incidents of racism in the sport rather than applying such hedged terms as "racially motivated" or "racially charged."

FROM the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action

Sports and Reconciliation

87. We call upon all levels of government, in collaboration with Aboriginal peoples, sports halls of fame, and other relevant organizations, to provide public education that tells the national story of Aboriginal athletes in history.

88. We call upon all levels of government to take action to ensure long-term Aboriginal athlete development and growth, and continued support for the North American Indigenous Games, including funding to host the games and for provincial and territorial team preparation and travel.

89. We call upon the federal government to amend the Physical Activity and Sport Act to support reconciliation by ensuring that policies to promote physical activity as a fundamental element of health and well-being, reduce barriers to sports participation, increase the pursuit of excellence in sport, and build capacity in the Canadian sport system, are inclusive of Aboriginal peoples.

90. We call upon the federal government to ensure that national sports policies, programs, and initiatives are inclusive of Aboriginal peoples, including, but not limited to, establishing:

- i. In collaboration with provincial and territorial governments, stable funding for, and access to, community sports programs that reflect the diverse cultures and traditional sporting activities of Aboriginal peoples.
- ii. An elite athlete development program for Aboriginal athletes.
- iii. Programs for coaches, trainers, and sports officials that are culturally relevant for Aboriginal peoples.
- iv. Anti-racism awareness and training programs.

91. We call upon the officials and host countries of international sporting events such as the Olympics, Pan Am, and Commonwealth games to ensure that Indigenous peoples' territorial protocols are respected, and local Indigenous communities are engaged in all aspects of planning and participating in such events.



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POLICY PAPER FOR ANTI-RACISM IN CANADIAN HOCKEY

(Prepared by Courtney Szto, PhD., Sam McKegey PhD., Mike Auksi, and Bob Dawson)

"The health and sustainability of hockey will depend on the sport's current guard to effectively design and implement a culture of inclusion and acceptance."

-NHL Policy Brief: Shifting demographics and hockey's future

On March 30th, 2019, Queen's University's School of Kinesiology and Health Studies, Department of English Language and Literature, Athletics and Recreation Division, and student group QMix, with additional support from the National Hockey League, held a Roundtable on Racism in Hockey to address the consistent failure of administrative bodies, associations, and teams to deal with racism in the sport in a systemic and sustained manner. At the event, we purposefully avoided the language of "diversity" and "inclusion" because we consider lack of diversity and inclusion to be symptomatic of institutionalized racism in and around the game. It is important to recognize that hockey is no more or less racist than any

other sport; rather it is symptomatic of a society in which whiteness is assumed as a universal cultural reference point.² In order for hockey to "implement a culture of inclusion and acceptance," an organized and intentional shift towards anti-racism practices is required by those in power.

The purpose of this document is (1) to advocate for policy changes, (2) to invigorate the need for re-education of coaches, parents, players, and officials on the importance of anti-racism, and (3) to promote strategies for making hockey culture safer, more inclusive, and more accountable for its practices.

Following a brief background section, the policy paper's recommendations are presented in three parts to address the main components of racialized inequality: power, privilege, and access.

² Snelgrove, R. and V. Kabetu. (2019, November 13) "Don Cherry debacle highlights the whiteness of hockey." *The Conversation*. <https://theconversation.com/don-cherry-debacle-highlights-the-whiteness-of-hockey-126972>

BACKGROUND

Hockey is often referred to in Canada as “our game.” In the opening montage of the documentary series *Hockey, A People’s History*, for instance, Wayne Gretzky states, “Are we going to have challenges? Absolutely. But nobody’s going to take away the fact that it’s our game. That’ll never be taken away.” The problem with conceptualizing hockey as a Canadian birthright, however, is that in a racist society this can be interpreted as meaning the game belongs to a certain type of Canadian, while positioning others as outsiders. Hockey as “our game” can imply it belongs naturally to white (generally male) Canadians, while racialized and Indigenous players, fans, coaches, and officials are positioned as outsiders—outsiders who should be grateful to have been granted access to the sport. As the Anishinaabe author Richard Wagamese writes in the novel *Indian Horse*, “White ice, white players”: “The white people thought it was their game. They thought it was their world” (149, 136). To truly work toward the elimination of racism in hockey requires addressing the normalization of white privilege in the sport. It requires awareness of and active responses to the culture of white entitlement that pervades Canadian society.

Generally, the hockey establishment and the media have treated acts of racism in the sport as isolated incidents between individuals rather than as symptomatic of systemic racism and therefore requiring a capacious structural and institutional response. Treating racism strictly at the individual level has meant that the burden of addressing it has fallen disproportionately on the shoulders of racialized players, coaches, officials, and their families, and that the structures that enable racist behaviour remain intact. It has allowed commentators to describe incidents like the harassment of Jonathan Diaby and his family in Saint-Jérôme, Québec in February 2019 as racism ‘seeping into the arena,’ rather than as manifestations of the racism that already persists—and has been allowed to persist—there.

To illustrate the prevalence of racist attitudes and behaviours in hockey culture, sport historian and the first Black player to play for St. Mary’s University’s varsity hockey team in 1967, Bob Dawson compiled the following chronicle of recent racist incidents at different levels of hockey in his article “Racism in Hockey: A Cause for Concern and Action.”³

³ Dawson, B. “Racism in Hockey: A Cause for Concern and Action.” *Boxscore Sports Newswire* <http://boxscorenews.com/racism-in-hockey-a-cause-for-concern-and-action-p153565-68.html>

PROFESSIONAL HOCKEY

2019 – Jonathan Diaby, a 24-year-old black defenseman playing with the Marquis de Jonquiere of the Ligue Nord-Américaine de Hockey (a Quebec-based semi-professional league) in a game against the Petroliers du Nord, endured racial slurs while sitting in the penalty box. Fans in the stands also harassed Diaby's father and girlfriend.

2018 – During the Chicago Blackhawks-Washington Capitals game Devante Smith-Pelly of the Capitals, who is Black, was sitting in the penalty box when 4 Blackhawks fans began provoking him with chants of "basketball, basketball, basketball". It clearly inferred Smith-Pelly was playing the wrong sport because of his colour. While playing junior hockey, he also heard similar comments.

2010 – While discussing Montreal's P. K. Subban (then of the Montreal Canadiens), NHL analyst Darren Pang painted a picture of the rookie as a young player who is "full of life" and explained that "the more gregarious he got, the more full of life he got, the more everybody wants to settle him down." Pang stated that Subban should look to St. Louis Blues defenseman Alex Pietrangelo and "maybe try to duplicate him." Pang continued, saying that Pietrangelo "does everything on the ice, off the ice, the white way." He immediately tried to correct himself by saying he meant "the right way." Try as he did, the damage had already been done.

JUNIOR HOCKEY

2019 – Whenever Roshaun Brown-Hall, an 18-year old African American on the Amherst N.Y.'s youth team, touched the puck members of the opposing team from Cheektowaga, N.Y. made monkey sounds and hurled racial slurs at him.

2013 – Malcolm Subban's selection as a goaltender for Team Canada in the 2013 World Junior Championship in Ufa, Russia generated some hostile public reaction. The player for the OHL's Belleville Bulls and brother of the Canadiens' P. K. Subban was the target of racist tweets on social media – "Kay Malcolm Subban's TRASH. f...ing monkey", "Team Canada has a black goalie...Wtf is going on here?", "Subban stick to something your color knows kicking rocks in the plain field in Africa", etc.

2005 – Coach Ted Nolan of the Moncton Wildcats of the Quebec Major Junior Hockey League (QMJHL), who is of Aboriginal descent, was the victim of racial harassment during a Wildcats road game against the Chicoutimi Saguenéens. Fans in the stands shouted racial slurs at him and directed gestures such as the "tomahawk chop" and shooting a bow and arrow towards him as he stood behind his team's bench. It did not stop there. Fans continued to taunt Nolan outside the arena after the game as he boarded the team bus with his players.

MINOR HOCKEY

2019 – Divyne Apollon II, a 13-year old African-American member of the Maryland-based Metro Maple Leafs hockey team, was playing in a hockey tournament in Maryland (United States) against a team from Pennsylvania when their players taunted him with monkey sounds. When the team's coach and referees did nothing, Divyne's teammates, who heard the taunts, rallied behind him when a fight broke out at the end of the game.

2016 – Hockey parent Al Merali, an Ismaili Muslim, said that his 16-year old son had been subjected to regular racial slurs while playing in the Calgary minor hockey system. He said that his son was called a "brown terrorist" by an opposing player, during a hockey game. According to the father, his son has been subjected for 3 years to such racial slurs as carpet rider, curry master, and Paki.

2015 – First Nations teenagers in the Regina Minor Hockey League were the targets of racial slurs and taunting during separate hockey games. One of the players was told "Go back to the rez" and called "a dirty Indian". In another game, a First Nations player, after delivering a clean body check on an opposing player, was chased, crossed-checked from behind and threatened with the words "I kill you, you stupid Indian."



According to Dawson, "hockey can choose to be affected by racism or hockey can choose to affect racism." In order for the latter to become possible, "members of the hockey establishment must first acknowledge the 'uncomfortable truth' that racism in hockey exists and is a serious issue that must be addressed head on in a collaborative, holistic and sustained manner." The purpose of this policy paper is to foster such reckoning and to provide practical, actionable strategies to make hockey culture safer, more inclusive, and more diverse in this country. We desire hockey to become a site of possibility for anti-racist social change, which will require energy, institutional will, and vision.

1. POWER

The power to influence who enters the game of hockey has traditionally been consolidated in the hands of wealthy, white men. Hockey is no longer a segregated sport but the history of its segregation casts a long shadow⁴, and it requires effort to re-distribute this power into new hands; power does not re-distribute itself, which is why racism does not self-correct. We have identified three significant areas where power relations continue to uphold a racist culture: hiring practices, the media, and oversight.

1A. RECRUITMENT AND HIRING PRACTICES

Hockey organizations hold a lot of power in their recruitment and hiring practices when selecting volunteers, board members, or paid employees. It is also not the only sport grappling with over-representative whiteness in its gate keeping roles. For example, in baseball it has been acknowledged that when hiring the “best people” for the job, “those best people are all suspiciously similar.”⁵ At the end of the 2016-2017 NHL season, racialized people made up approximately 1.6% of coaches and 0.6% of NHL scouts.⁶ Racialized players make up

approximately 3-5% of NHL rosters in any given year, with similar representation at the feeder levels. The NHL has also been called out for “recycling” coaches more than any other men’s professional league, with 34% of coaches receiving second and third opportunities.⁷

In order to change the culture of hockey, as an institution, the people within that institution must change, not just the players. Coaches, training staff, scouts, officials, and office management must reflect the diversity that hockey wishes to see on the ice and in the stands. This is necessary not only to promote equity, but also for the long-term “health and sustainability” of the game. Such change will require active recruitment outside of traditional pipelines for new hires, volunteers, and board members. It will involve taking a chance on new people and providing meaningful mentorship opportunities to those with strong profiles coming from diverse backgrounds.

⁴ Fosty, D. & Fosty, G. (2008). *Black ice: The Lost history of the Colored Hockey League of the Maritimes, 1895-1925*. Halifax, Canada: Nimbus.

⁵ Carleton, R. & Morrison, K. (2016, November 22). “MLB’s ongoing search for front office diversity.” *Baseball Prospectus*. <https://www.baseballprospectus.com/news/article/30742/prospectus-feature-mlbs-ongoing-search-for-front-office-diversity/>

⁶ Szto, C. (2018). “Changing on fly: Situating multiculturalism, citizenship, and hockey through the voices of South Asian Canadians” [Doctoral Thesis]. Simon Fraser University.

⁷ Gretz, A. (2018, November 21). “NHL’s head coaching recycling bin is alive and well.” *NBC Sports*.



Figure 1
Hockey Canada's 2019
Board of Directors

We recommend instituting hiring policies that prioritize Indigenous and racialized candidates once all job requirements are met. We also recommend hiring policies designed to prevent nepotism, including blind review processes. In the case of officials, we recommend Hockey Canada provide resources and training to provincial referee associations with the specific mandate to increase the participation of Indigenous, racialized, and women officials at all levels.

1B. MEDIA PRACTICES

The media plays a significant role in how race and racism are constructed, perceived, and received by hockey participants. Too often, stories about racism experienced in the game are written as isolated incidents made possible by individual racists⁸ or downplayed as “bad language.”⁹ Instead, members of the media must work to illustrate the *pattern* of racism experienced by racialized players and divert conversations away from individuals towards institutions and a society that consistently privileges whiteness. Moreover, in accordance

⁸ CTV Montreal. (2019, February 26). “Racist hockey fans taunt black player and family.”

⁹ Baragona, J. (2015, January 28). “Fans toss racial slurs and pour beer on Native American children attending hockey game.” *Politicus Sports*.

with the recent change to the Associated Press's Style Guide, media must write the words racist and racism instead of using hedged terms such as "racially motivated" or "racially charged." According to the Associated Press: "The terms racism and racist can be used in broad references or in quotations to describe the hatred of a race, or assertion of the superiority of one race over others."¹⁰ Not using the appropriate language works to perpetuate racism and racialized oppression because the perpetrators remain unmarked. The media must also make a concerted effort to hire traditionally marginalized people. Different people tell different stories. The dominant hockey narrative has been told primarily through a lens of whiteness, when the reality is that hockey's history has always been multi-cultural. This diversity has been downplayed, erased, and ignored.

1C. OVERSIGHT

Currently, racialized players have no safe place to report experiences of racism (although the NHL has expressed its intention to create a platform "where instances of inappropriate conduct connected to the NHL can be reported").¹¹ As such, anyone willing to bring forth a claim regarding racist behaviour knows it will have to be dealt with internally to the association, league, or team in which it occurred. An external oversight committee

should be established where complaints about racism can be investigated. Racialized players and parents have expressed difficulty knowing whom they can trust. This matter is particularly acute for elite players who run the risk of having their development thwarted if they are labeled as "troublemakers" for reporting on coaches, administrators, or teammates. Players fear retribution from coaches and scouts if they appear to be causing "problems."

In one striking example of flawed oversight, a minor hockey coach in Peterborough, Ontario was handed a season-long suspension in 2010 because he forfeited a game in order to protect his Black players from racist abuse. This decision betrayed a system that functions to protect racist acts and punish those who resist against racism.¹² Even though the suspension was later overturned, the original Ontario Minor Hockey Association (OMHA) decision followed Hockey Canada's guidance, explaining that the forfeiture was disruptive and negatively impacted numerous players. In another example, the arena security personnel addressing the Jonathan Diaby incident removed Diaby's family and friends from their seats rather than the perpetrators of the racism. These kinds of decisions reinforce distrust amongst Indigenous and racialized players toward those stewarding the game.

¹⁰ Evans, E. (2019, March 29). "If it's racist, call it racist: Associated Press Stylebook changes guidelines for journalists." *NBC News*.

¹¹ NHL Public Relations. (2019, December 9). "Commissioner Bettman releases statement on Board of Governors meeting." <https://www.nhl.com/news/commissioner-bettman-releases-statement-on-board-of-governors-meeting/c-312371072>

¹² *City News*. (2010, December 17). "Minor hockey coach suspended for rest of season for protest against racist slur." <https://toronto.citynews.ca/2010/12/17/minor-hockey-coach-suspended-for-rest-of-season-for-protest-against-racist-slur/>

Currently, the burden of dealing with racism falls disproportionately on the shoulders of racialized participants and parents/guardians; however, an anti-racist environment requires allies and support structures that hold people and policies accountable. Simply not saying racist words or excluding racist participants is not enough to foster anti-racism. Prevention and accountability are imperative to achieving the ideals of inclusion and acceptance.

1D. DATA COLLECTION

Currently, Hockey Canada does not track racial demographic data for those who enrol in organized hockey. Conversely, USA Hockey recently began collecting data on the racial identifications of its participants. As Stephen Whyno wrote in his article, "NHL to celebrate Black History Month for the 1st time," "it will take some time to show if the sport that is predominantly white at its highest levels is making inroads."¹³ For its part, Hockey Canada needs to be proactive and implement a system to collect ongoing data on the participation of racialized groups in hockey and to monitor trends and progress to know if, in fact, hockey is for everyone.

¹³ USA Today. (2019, February 1). "NHL to celebrate Black History Month for the 1st time." <https://www.usatoday.com/story/sports/nhl/2019/02/01/nhl-to-celebrate-black-history-month-for-1st-time/38988461/>





2. PRIVILEGE

As Bob Dawson stated during our roundtable, “Changing the face of hockey won’t change the culture of hockey. But changing the culture of hockey will change the face of hockey.” Changing the culture of hockey means working strategically to combat white privilege and to create awareness of and adequate responses to racism. It means working not only to eliminate incidents of racism, but indeed to make hockey culture actively and intentionally *anti-racist*. Three areas we have identified through which to pursue such cultural change include training and certification, consistency of enforcement, and promotion of diversity and inclusion.

2A. TRAINING AND CERTIFICATION

Creating a culture of safety and inclusion for all members of the hockey community requires more than officials, coaches, and administrators who are not themselves actively racist; it requires understandings among those in leadership positions of how racism operates interpersonally and systemically within hockey culture and broader society. Officials, coaches, and administrators deserve to be armed with knowledge of how to identify both passive and overt racism within teams, between

teams, and within the broader hockey environment (for example, involving spectators). And they deserve practical tools for dealing with such incidents efficiently, ethically, and effectively.

As will be discussed in the following section, the rules governing incidents of racism within hockey environments must be clear, must be understood by all officials, coaches, and administrators, and must be enforced strictly to remove perceptions of motivational bias. Such rules cannot be discretionary. Dealing effectively with such situations, however, requires more than just the active implementation of punishment and/or exclusionary action. It requires thoughtful strategies for supporting those affected by racist behaviour, and intentional efforts to debrief with those involved (whether the team community involves the victim or perpetrator or both). Best practices for dealing with such situations are not necessarily intuitive and demand specialized training.

Such specialized training can be readily incorporated into the certification processes for officials, coaches, and administrators. Coaching and administrator cer-

tification procedures in many leagues require gender identity and gender expression training. Similar modules addressing racism in hockey—developed by anti-racism and sport experts in consultation with racialized and Indigenous players, coaches, administrators, and officials—should be required at all levels of the game and should involve **in-person workshops**. These modules must include key units dealing with the specificity of settler-colonial history in Canada and be made available to youth, parents, rink and league operators, and widely referenced in the Canadian Development Model (CDM) Parent Handbook. Furthermore, associations should appoint/elect anti-racism champions tasked with ensuring compliance and promoting the importance of anti-racism initiatives to enhance the experience of all involved in the hockey community. Failure to see the problem of racism in hockey as worthy of attention is symptomatic of white entitlement and the perpetuation of racism in hockey environments.

2B. CONSISTENCY OF ENFORCEMENT

In order for associations, leagues, and teams to be coordinated in their efforts to eliminate racism in the sport and thereby to foster diversity and inclusion, they require a common language and a clear set of rules, regulations, expectations, and consequences when faced

with racist behaviour. Lack of clarity concerning (1) jurisdictional responsibilities, (2) the extent of officials' and coaches' power, and (3) the differences between racist commentary and other forms of on-ice provocation has consistently exacerbated the harm done to the victims of racist incidents in hockey. This has often led to racialized players and their families being forced to ignore the racism to which they have been subjected or to exclude themselves from racist arena spaces. Racism—whether perpetrated by players, spectators, coaches, or officials—needs to be identified and addressed immediately according to clear guidelines that are known by all involved.

Associations should institute a duty to report all incidents of suspected racism, immediately within the game, practice, or other event in which they occur. The NHL has instituted such a policy in response to recent disclosure of racist and abusive incidents involving multiple coaches.¹⁴ All incidents of suspected racism should be reported to Hockey Canada until an appropriate external oversight organization is established. Furthermore, Hockey Canada must be charged with tracking incidents over time, creating policies in relation to such information, and developing strategies to meaningfully assess successes and failures.

¹⁴ NHL Public Relations. (2019, December 9). "Commissioner Bettman releases statement on Board of Governors meeting." <https://www.nhl.com/news/commissioner-bettman-releases-statement-on-board-of-governors-meeting/c-312371072>

Once an incident is identified as potentially racist, there must be clear protocols in place to be implemented by the officials, arena staff, and/or coaches present. An on-ice infraction identified as racist should necessitate immediate expulsion from the game for the perpetrator—flagged not simply as a “gross misconduct” but as “racist”—with follow-up disciplinary action at the league level. An incident involving a coach or staff member should necessitate their immediate removal from the game, a major penalty for their team, and follow-up disciplinary action that could range from suspension and mandatory anti-racism training to being barred from further coaching. An incident involving a fan should necessitate their immediate removal from the arena, with follow-up disciplinary action including the possibility of being barred from spectating at any hockey match. Incidents involving multiple spectators or repeated incidents involving the same team could also elicit temporary bans on spectators from that team’s home games, as has been implemented at the professional level in other sports.¹⁵ Arenas should also boast explicitly anti-racist signage while identifying the consequences for any spectator who engages in racist behaviour.

Officials and coaches who encounter an incident of racism should be empowered to halt a game in progress until such time as that incident has been addressed according to league protocol. If the incident is not addressed appropriately, the coach or official should be empowered to stop the game entirely, especially at the youth level where protecting minors from unnecessary abuse is of utmost importance.

For such initiatives to prove effective, a zero-tolerance policy is essential. Because hockey culture has been shown historically to condone racism and those tasked with officiating or coaching any individual game may themselves harbor racist inclinations, it is crucial that the reactions to incidents identified as racist be automatic. Consequences for any player, coach, staff member, official, or fan engaged in racist behaviour must be non-discretionary.



¹⁵ Field, P. (2019, March 26) “Stadium bans, fines, banners: How Uefa has dealt with racism over the last decade.” *The Telegraph*. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/football/2019/03/26/stadium-bans-fines-banners-uefa-has-dealt-racism-last-decade/>

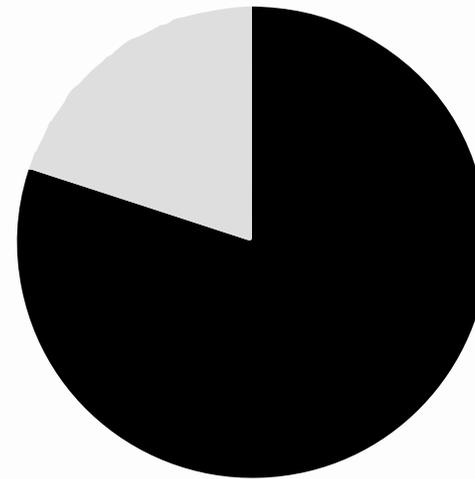


2C. PROMOTION OF DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

A final area for cultural transformation involves the active promotion of hockey's multicultural history and increasingly diverse present. The problem of hockey's dominant perception as a "white" game can be confronted by sharing knowledge about the diverse stars who have played the game over time and the variety of leagues and associations that have been home to racialized and Indigenous players, coaches, and teams. The histories of the Colored Hockey League of the Maritimes, of the Indigenous players of the residential school era, and of racialized stars like Willie O'Ree, Fred Sasakamoose, Brigitte Lacquette, and so many others should be common knowledge to youth playing hockey today. The Indian Residential Schools Truth & Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action exhort "all levels of government, in collaboration with Aboriginal Peoples, sports halls of fame, and other relevant organizations, to provide public education that tells the national story of Aboriginal athletes in history" (Call 87). The hockey community in Canada must take this responsibility seriously and ensure the transmission of such knowledge about hockey's past in efforts to safeguard its present and future.

3. ACCESS

The final factor that greatly hinders hockey from reflecting the broader Canadian populace involves the barriers to accessing the game such as cost and the geographical distribution of rinks. The rising cost of participating in hockey is well documented and is often, but not exclusively, exacerbated along racial lines. Hockey's elite players are increasingly from Canada's white-collar professional demographic that is capable of spending an average of \$3,000 on minor hockey per season (as of 2011-12)¹⁶, and approximately \$15,000 for AAA competition¹⁷. When we incorporate hockey academies into the picture, those costs can push \$30,000 per season.¹⁸ According to research conducted by the *Hamilton Spectator*, 80% of Ontario Hockey League players surveyed in 2016 "came from neighbourhoods with median family incomes above the Ontario average of \$80,987, and 25 players – roughly 15 per cent – came from neighbourhoods with median family incomes at least 50 per cent higher than the norm." This reality counters the humble, small-town, blue-collar façade that the institution of hockey continues to promote as the foundation of hockey culture. Hockey is now determined in the



80%

of OHL players came from neighbourhoods with median family incomes above the Ontario average of \$80,987

suburbs of major Canadian cities, affecting which people are able to enter and stay in the game.

3A. FINANCIAL ACCESS

When the Canadian sport system decided during the 1970s to shift from a broad-based pyramid sporting model to emulate the Soviet system of early talent identification, this set the stage for today's exclusive pay-to-

¹⁶ *Globe and Mail*. (2013, November 8). "The great offside: How Canadian hockey is becoming a game strictly for the rich." <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/time-to-lead/the-great-offside-how-canadian-hockey-is-becoming-a-game-strictly-for-the-rich/article15349723/> ¹⁴ NHL Public Relations. (2019, December 9).

¹⁷ *Hamilton Spectator*. (2016, October 27). "'Pretty good rich kids': Reaching the OHL takes more than talent." <https://www.thespec.com/sports-story/6931904--pretty-good-rich-kids-reaching-the-ohl-takes-more-than-talent/>

¹⁸ *The Province*. (2018, January 29). "The money pit: Why 'professionalization' of youth sports is worrisome." <https://theprovince.com/sports/basketball/the-money-pit-why-professionalization-of-youth-sports-is-worrisome>

play system. Donnelly and Kidd (2015) explain that no longer, would funding:

be 'squandered' on a broad base of athletes in the hope that some of them would eventually become successful. Instead...there were two systems: a poorly funded grass-roots system; and a relatively well-funded high-performance system that drew young athletes at a very early age from the grass-roots system and exposed them to intensive training and competitions, employing the best available resources. (p. 61)¹⁹

Success in international ice hockey was identified as a driving force behind this new bifurcated sports system. The implications of this two-tiered system include a reduced talent pool and increasingly privatized programming that makes access to hockey more difficult than it has ever been. Because hockey requires so much specialized equipment, rinks require more infrastructure than fields and courts, and hockey has created a culture of playing all-year-round, the rising costs of participation are exponentially impacted by the privatization and professionalization of youth hockey.

In order to help make hockey more accessible, we need to shift back towards a sports system that values broad-based, grassroots participation. While 8.8% of the Canadian population falls into the low-income

bracket, Indigenous Peoples and new immigrants are disproportionately represented in these statistics at 18.7% and 20.3% respectively.²⁰ Thus, federal funding should be focused on heavily subsidizing programming in Indigenous communities and to supporting public school hockey programs for players who would otherwise be unable to play for a club or travel team. In order to create more equitable access to Canada's national winter pastime, the public-school system must be part of the larger conversation as a delivery method for hockey as a public good and cultural activity. Moreover, while handing out free equipment and learn-to-play programs may help introduce families to the game, these initiatives will not keep players in the game. Equipment libraries are one option that could help offset the cost of equipment for lower-income players throughout their careers. Much like tool libraries, gear libraries simultaneously reduce the environmental impact of sporting goods consumption and improve access to sport participation by enabling participants to borrow equipment (either for free or a nominal fee) instead of owning it.²¹ Hockey equipment manufacturers such as Bauer, CCM, and Warrior, and companies such as Canadian Tire and Sportchek should be encouraged by Hockey Canada to sponsor equipment for these libraries in efforts to supplement public donations.

¹⁹ Donnelly, P. & Kidd, B (2015). Two solitudes: Grass-roots sport and high-performance sport in Canada. In R. Bailey & M. Talbot (Eds.), *Elite sport and sport-for-all: Bridging the two cultures?* (pp. 57-71). London & New York: Routledge

²⁰ Statistics Canada. *Towards a poverty reduction strategy – A backgrounder on poverty in Canada*. <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/poverty-reduction/backgrounder.html#h2.4-h3.1>

²¹ Sports & Recreation equipment library. Township of Killaloe, Hagarty and Richards. <http://killaloeibrary.ca/programs-services/services/sports-recreation-equipment-library/>

3B. GEOGRAPHICAL ACCESS

While hockey culture in Canada has tended to romanticize the sport's relationship to the northern landscape and rural roots, contemporary opportunities for participation in hockey—particularly at the elite level—diminish in direct correlation to geographical distance from urban centres. Access to reliable ice, to organized programs and leagues, and to qualified instruction and training all decrease for geographically remote individuals and families, a reality that disproportionately impacts Indigenous peoples. Whereas 18.7% of the Canadian population was classified as “rural” according to the 2016 census²², fully 38.9% of Indigenous people in Canada live in rural and remote locations.²³ The farther north one travels in Canada, the higher the proportion of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit inhabitants and the more isolated communities become. Such isolation carries significant implications for hockey development.

Many remote First Nations and Inuit communities lack indoor rink facilities, and others find these facilities in need of infrastructural repair. In communities with adequate arena facilities, opportunities for competitive development can still be hindered by the sparseness of local populations and the prohibitive distance required to face potential opponents. Often

communities have too few players at a given age and skill level to form a team, and if such teams do form there are no other local teams against whom they can play. For example, an Under-13 girls' team from the fly-in community of Eabametoong First Nation had never had the opportunity to play against another female team until they raised the over \$100,000 necessary to travel to a tournament in Ottawa in 2018.²⁴ The exorbitant costs of northern travel necessitate that many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit players only have opportunities to play pick-up or intra-squad games unless they choose to leave their home communities.

Indigenous players from remote communities who are recruited into urban competitive leagues often have to deal not only with geographical distance from family and friends but also with culture shock and anti-Indigenous racism.



²² Statistics Canada. (2017) “Population and Dwelling Count Highlight Tables, 2016 Census.” <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/hltfst/pd-pl/Table.cfm?Lang=Eng&T=703&S=87&O=A>

²³ Statistics Canada. (2017) “Focus on Geography Series, 2016 Census.” <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/as-sa/fogs-spg/Facts-CAN-eng.cfm?Lang=Eng&GK=CAN&GC=01&TOPIC=9>

²⁴ Trinh, J. (2018, March 23) “Rez Girls hockey team pursues reconciliation while chasing victory.” *CBC News*. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/ottawa/rez-girls-hockey-eabametoong-first-nation-reconciliation-ottawa-tourney-1.4589191>



Craig McCallum

Craig McCallum from Canoe Lake Cree Nation in Saskatchewan, for example, reported getting to the point where he “hated hockey” due to the racism he endured while playing for North Battleford’s Midget AAA team in 2006.²⁵ As one of only two Indigenous players on his team, he contemplated quitting the sport due to the team’s unwelcoming culture: “I didn’t want to go to the rink. I didn’t want to hang out with my teammates.” It wasn’t until he was traded to the Beardy’s Blackhawks team and had the opportunity to play with many other First Nations and Métis players on a squad whose culture was inflected by Indigenous values that his love for the game was restored and he emerged as the league’s leading scorer and co-MVP. McCallum’s initial experience of isolation is far from rare; it is alarmingly common among elite Indigenous hockey players who are forced

to leave their home communities in order to pursue elite development in the sport.

In the era of reconciliation in Canada, it is incumbent upon Hockey Canada to actively support Indigenous hockey at all levels. We call upon Hockey Canada to commit to devoting a percentage of its annual operating budget—no less than 5%—to Indigenous hockey in this country, and to work with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities, leagues, and teams to determine how that money will be allocated. Such funding should support infrastructure and access to equipment, training and certification, player development, player and team travel to and from Indigenous communities, and the costs of hosting on-reserve tournaments. Resources must also be devoted to fostering the well-being of Indigenous players who leave their communities to play at elite levels, including but not limited to: cultural safety training for billets, coaches, and staff; funding to support travel for family members and/or player return travel home at strategic points throughout the season; and cultural resources like access to traditional foods and opportunities to liaise with local Indigenous counsellors, teachers, and Elders. Efforts must also be made to hire First Nations, Métis, and Inuit scouts with ties to rural, remote, and reserve-based communities to ensure all players have the opportunity to be seen and to pursue their hockey potential.

²⁵ McKegney, S., R. Henry, and J. Koch. (2019, November 25) “Bring back Beardy’s Blackhawks: Indigenous hockey team eliminated from Sask. league.” *The Conversation*. <https://theconversation.com/bring-back-beardys-blackhawks-indigenous-hockey-team-eliminated-from-sask-league-127597>

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Racism is a reality in Canada that pervades all aspects of life—even the sport of hockey. In recent years, racism has reached disturbing levels both on and off the ice. Without inspired, sustained, and coordinated action across all levels of the game, there is little hope that the problem of racism in hockey is going to disappear any time soon. In fact, as more members of racialized groups participate in hockey at all levels, racism in the game is at risk of proliferating rather than ebbing. To downplay or ignore the seriousness of the problem and its implications places the long-term health and vitality of Canadian hockey at risk.

Hockey Canada has a key “leadership role” to play in not only addressing instances of racism on and off the ice but in steering hockey culture in this country in the direction of **anti-racism**. Hockey Canada, in partnership with the NHL, is ideally positioned to make a difference and to act as an agent of social change in the area of racism not only in hockey, but in the broader society. By first acknowledging the problem and then tackling it head-on in an integrated and holistic manner, Hockey Canada will help make the game we love more just, safe, and inclusive, with wide-ranging effects that will ripple throughout all other facets of Canadian society.

In a racist society it is not enough to be non-racist, we must be anti-racist.

– Angela Davis

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Words in the context of this policy paper matter. The following working definitions enable us to have a common understanding of a word or subject.

ANTI-RACISM is a process, a systematic method of analysis, and a proactive course of action rooted in the recognition of the existence of racism, including systemic racism. Anti-racism actively seeks to identify, remove, prevent, and mitigate racially inequitable outcomes and power imbalances between groups and change the structures that sustain inequities.

COLONIALISM is the historical practice of European expansion into territories already inhabited by Indigenous peoples for the purposes of acquiring new lands and resources. This expansion is rooted in the violent suppression of Indigenous peoples' governance, legal, social and cultural structures. Colonialism attempts to force Indigenous peoples to accept and integrate into institutions that are designed to force them to conform with the structures of the colonial state. "Colonialism remains an ongoing process, shaping both the structure and the quality of the relationship between settlers and Indigenous peoples." (TRC Final Report, 2016 *What We Have Learned: Principles of Truth and Reconciliation*)

DIVERSITY refers to the presence of a wide range of human qualities and characteristics. The dimensions of diversity may include (but are not limited to) ethnicity, race, colour, religion, age, gender and sexual orientation.

INCLUSION involves bringing together and harnessing the diverse forces and resources in a way that is beneficial. Inclusion puts the concept and practice of diversity into action by creating an environment of involvement and respect where the richness of ideas, backgrounds and perspectives are harnessed and valued.

RACISM is an ideology that either directly or indirectly asserts that one group is inherently superior to others. It is a system of oppression that extends far beyond any one individual's actions or words. It can be openly displayed in racial jokes and slurs or hate crimes, but it can be more deeply rooted in attitudes, values, and stereotypical beliefs. In some cases, these are unconsciously held and have become deeply embedded in systems and institutions that have evolved over time. Racism operates at a number of levels, in particular, individual, systemic, and societal.

RECONCILIATION, in Canada, refers to bringing together Indigenous peoples and Canadian settlers to repair their relationship and come to shared understandings which will make for a better and stronger country.

RESOURCES

Aboriginal Sport Circle	http://www.aboriginalsportcircle.ca
Alysha Bains	alysha_bains@sfu.ca
Apna Hockey	https://apnasportsinternational.com
Black Girl Hockey Club	https://blackgirlhockeyclub.com
Bob Dawson	http://thebobdawsonway.weebly.com
Changing on the Fly Podcast	https://changingonthefly.ca
The Color of Hockey	https://colorofhockey.com
Courtney Szto, PhD.	Queen's University
CrossConnect Media	http://www.crossconnectmedia.ca
Erica Ayala	https://ericalayala.com
Evan Moore	http://www.evanfmoore.com/portfolio/
Good Ally Project	https://truenorthaid.ca/good-ally-project/
Hemal Jhaveri	@hemjhaveri
Hockey Night in Punjabi Broadcast	OMNI Television

RESOURCES CONT'D

Hockey Puerto Rico	Philip Painter
Indigenous Sport History	https://indigenoussporthistory.ca/
Janice Forsyth, PhD.	University of Western Ontario
Jashvina Shah	@icehockeystick
Jenny Lee-Gilmore	@jennyleegilmore
Jordan Koch, PhD.	McGill University
Kristi Allain, PhD.	St. Thomas University
Liz Montroy	https://www.lizmontroy.com
Michael Robidoux, PhD.	University of Ottawa
Native Hockey	http://nativehockey.com
Sam McKegney, PhD.	Queen's University
Saucy Rockets Podcast	https://saucyroockets.com
Shireen Ahmed	http://www.shireenahmed.com
South Asian Studies Institute	We Are Hockey Exhibit
Vicky Paraschak, PhD.	University of Windsor

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES



COURTNEY SZTO is a settler scholar and Assistant Professor in the School of Kinesiology and Health Studies at Queen's University. Her research focuses on the intersections that create social (in)justice as they pertain to sport and physical activity. Courtney's first monograph, "Changing on the Fly: Racism and the challenges of multiculturalism in Canadian hockey" unpacks racialized experiences in hockey as a way to explore notions of citizenship and belonging. It is currently in press with Rutgers University Press. She also helped spearhead the "We Are Hockey" exhibit hosted by the South Asian Studies Institute in Abbotsford, British Columbia. Courtney moonlights as the Senior Editor for Hockey in Society.



SAM MCKEGNEY is a white settler scholar of Indigenous literatures and an Associate Professor in the Department of English Language and Literature at Queen's University. He is a researcher with the Indigenous Hockey Research Network, the Acting President and a founding member of the Indigenous Literary Studies Association, and Co-Chair of the Board for the Indigenous Voices Awards.



MICHAEL MAHKWA (BEAR) AUKSI is a Toronto-born, Anishinaabe-Estonian first year PhD student in Kinesiology Sciences at McGill University. Focusing on Indigenous sport and physical culture, his anticipated dissertation on the hockey history of Lac Seul First Nation will explore the game's importance in the people's lives and celebrate over 70 years of hockey excellence. Mike's playing career took him to the U SPORTS, Allan Cup, and IIHF hockey circles. He is forever thankful to have represented the Lac Seul Eagles in his early twenties, where his life turned on a dime. The Group H Qualifications for the 2018 PyeongChang Olympics with Team Estonia represented his perfect exit from competitive sport. Mike feels strongly that hockey—when played right—has the potential to change lives and nations.



BOB DAWSON, a native of Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, is a senior sportswriter for Boxscore World Sportswire, a Black hockey historian and co-founder of the Black Ice Hockey and Sports Hall of Fame Conference. As a former hockey player, Bob was the first Black to play in the Atlantic Intercollegiate Hockey League with Saint Mary's University as well as a member of the first and only all-Black line in Canadian university hockey history. In his professional life, Bob worked 37 years in human resources management in the areas of recruitment/staffing, equity/diversity, and training/career development.

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justinecrawford.ca

