

*Hockey: Challenging Canada's Game; Au-delà du sport national* edited by Jenny Ellison and Jennifer Anderson

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cords. Later, Freeman illuminates Martha's perspective by including a few of her spoken phrases, such as "Shub up kib!" Martha spoke few phrases, but her inner word was communicated through the manifestations of Freeman's physical pain. These discussions would be of interest to historians to interpret the spoken and unspoken word of historical actors.

Freeman's book is meant for the families and siblings of Down Syndrome youth that were in care. However, it will also appeal a wider popular audience interested

in disability and disability history, as well as to historians of Ontario more generally. Freeman's ability to vulnerably share her own trauma and guilt opens discussion to the silence and shame faced by her parents. Freeman carefully explains the historical context of children with disabilities in the 1960s while shedding light on the long-term effects of families who sent their children into provincial care.

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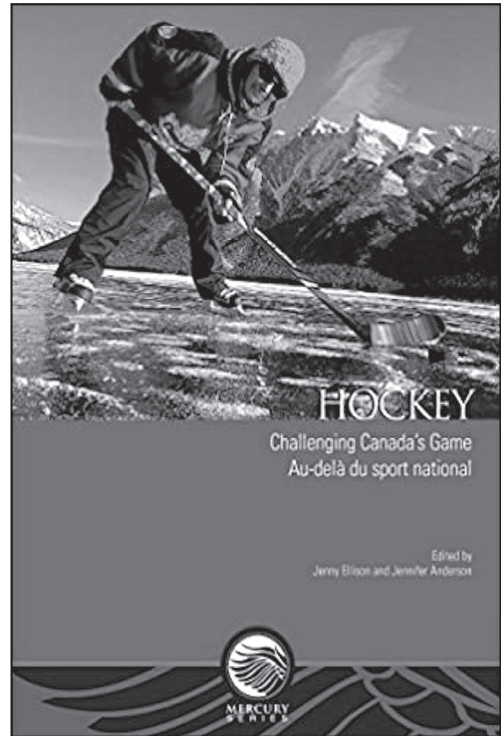
## *Hockey*

### *Challenging Canada's Game; Au-delà du sport national*

Edited by Jenny Ellison and Jennifer Anderson

Ottawa: The Canadian Museum of History and the University of Ottawa Press, 2018. 313 pages. \$49.95 softcover. ISBN 978-0-7766-2599-7. \$39.99 eBook ISBN 978-0-7766-2771-7 (<https://press.uottawa.ca/>)

If a history of hockey is a history of Canada, then *Hockey: Challenging Canada's Game; Au-delà du sport national* has done an excellent job at showing the diversity of experiences of the sport in Canada, from its complex origins to its play in residential schools, from the experience of previously-excluded women to hockey as a part of Canadian childhood. It covers aspects of professional and amateur hockey in Canadian life, including play, fandom, sports broadcasting and activism, and uses the lenses of gender, race/ethnicity, sexuality, ability, business, and geography to analyse the sport so often touted as Canada's game. The sport has been defined as a masculine



and white sport, but the goal of the exhibit and the book is to tell the true, diverse story of the history of the sport. This beautiful interdisciplinary book is an extension of the Canadian Museum of History exhibit,

titled *Hockey: More than Just a Game*, and includes a section of colour images from the exhibition. The quality of the photos and the paper elevates this section, and it is a wonderful addition to a book that is an extension of the original exhibit. The book will interest lovers of the game, as well as historians of Canada and of sport, in particular.

In their introduction to the book, curators Jenny Ellison and Jennifer Anderson explain how hockey has been studied in relation to national identity but for this exhibit and the book, they are interested in how diverse Canadian identities are evident in the history of the sport. The introduction adeptly takes us through the historiography of hockey history and also gives an overview history of the sport. As the editors note, scholars have looked at how hockey is both an example of an imagined community, an invented tradition wherein those who play and watch the game might feel a sense of unity and nationalism. But exclusion has been a part of hockey's history too. The introduction described the plights of girls such as Abby Hoffman who disguised herself to play hockey on a boys' team in the 1950s, Gail Cummings who unsuccessfully filed a human rights complain in order to join a boys team in the 1970s, and Justine Blaney who was successful in her own challenge at the Ontario Human Rights Tribunal in 1986, which finally allowed girls to join with boys. (10)

The book includes fifteen chapters divided into five sections, along with several sections containing primary documents that add interest and detail to the collection. The first section looks into the origins of hockey, with articles that look at how hockey can be seen as a mirror of Cana-

dian society. Andrew C. Holman's excellent piece looks at the history of hockey, how it can be seen as a metaphor for Canadian history, and how it both unites and divides us: "In a country uniquely divided, an experimental nation, hockey is one of the few cultural constructs that possesses the nostalgic power for Canadians to conjure a better, more harmonious and united past, and project it as a possibility into the future." (26) Paul Bennett's article on the multiple origins and popular mythology of hockey is interesting, and in particular, his argument that when Indigenous origins are considered along with settler origins of the sport, "the origin and evolution of hockey begins to look more like a dynamic process of cultural exchange and transformation." (46) Michel A. Robidaux's chapter examining hockey, lacrosse and Canadian nationalism: "hockey enabled Canadians to display qualities that have been valued in patriarchal relations: stoicism, courage, perseverance, and proficiency. The singularity of the game and the manner in which it was played were critical for a young and disparate nation to have as its own in the face of encroaching social, political, and cultural interests from Europe and the United States." (75) After the first section, there follows a section with excerpts from *The Survivors Speak: Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*, which includes hockey memories from twelve survivors of residential schools, including for some, positive memories of how sport could bring joy in an otherwise very difficult life at school.

The second section examines the role of hockey in Canadian childhoods. Of note is an article by Sam McKegney and Trevor J. Phillips on Richard Wagamese's *Indian Horse*. The authors note: "we seek to un-

derstand and unpack the ambivalence of Wagamese's portrayal of hockey as both confining and liberating, as both a tool of Canadian nationalism and a means of Indigenous self-expression and resilience." (97) The third section was of particular interest to me, with a focus on whose game this sport is, given its long history as a game generally reserved for white men. Hayley Wickenheiser's short piece on her experience as a young female hockey player, growing up facing discrimination because she was a girl in what was seen as a boy's sport, and her efforts as an adult to even the playing field/rink is striking. Denyse LaFrance Horning's chapter on women's recreational hockey was of interest to me as a player myself, and the benefits of the sport (the joy, the fun, the social interaction and health benefits) which come out of her study with Norm O'Reilly were familiar to me. (171) Lastly, Julie Steven's chapter on Canadian women and international hockey is an encyclopedic piece that records the relatively recent history of women participating at the highest level.

Reporting on hockey is the topic of the fourth section of the book, an understudied topic, which includes chapters on representations of Canadian players in the Swedish press, *Hockey Night in Canada's* Punjabi broadcast, a look at hockey masculinity and curling, and homophobia and media amongst major midget AAA players in Canada. The final section of the book asks the reader to rethink the pros, and includes topics related to the National Hockey League. I found the chapter looking at the failure of the first NHL player's association in the 1950s to be an interesting story of athlete activism, bargaining and negotiations, and in the end, failure

for a variety of reasons. Nathan Kalman-Lamb's important article examines the long history of whiteness in hockey, the racism experienced by players and "the tenacity of whiteness as an organizing and dehumanizing category in Canadian hockey culture through the testimony of those who have lived it." (287)

I write this review in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, when the NHL has just restarted its season with an all-Canadian division—for the first time ever—with the seven Canadian teams playing only each other for the regular season, given the current restrictions on cross-border travel. Hockey commentator Ron McLean recently called this season of hockey "war-time entertainment," worth the risks to bring joy to the Canadian people, to whom hockey means so much. McLean suggests that rooting for your city or province's team, especially in regional rivalries, will bring happiness to a nation suffering from the impacts of stay-at-home orders, lockdowns and the loss of so many people to this terrible virus. As a hockey player myself, I write at a time when hockey players in Toronto, where I live, cannot play hockey in any league, and cannot even play shinny on indoor or outdoor city rinks as a result of COVID regulations. If hockey is life in Canada, what does it mean when we can't play? I know I will value the ability to play the sport that much more when I am allowed to once again. In the meantime, Ellison and Anderson's book reminds me both of why I love the game so much, and also the complex and diverse history and culture of the sport in Canada today.

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