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Variations in Race Relations: Sporting Events for Native Peoples in Canada

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Four native sporting practices from different parts of Canada—the Arctic Winter Games and the Northern Games from northern Canada, and the Native Sport and Recreation Program and the All-Indian Sport System from southern Canada—are analyzed within the broader context of race relations in Canada (which differentially shape, and are shaped by, the “practical consciousness” of native peoples). Within these race relations, native participants are facilitated to different degrees in sport. The Inuit and Dene of northern Canada demonstrate an ability to reshape opportunities for sport in ways which address their needs, even when they are not directly in control of the event. Meanwhile, native peoples¹ in southern Canada, even when they are directly in control of the event, tend to largely reproduce the dominant eurocanadian-derived system of sport, along with government-created definitions of race.

Quatre pratiques sportives autochtones provenant de différentes régions canadiennes (les Jeux de l'Hiver Arctique, les Jeux du Nord, le Programme de Sport et Loisir Autochtone, et le Système Sportif Tout-Indien) sont analysés au sein du contexte plus large des relations raciales au Canada: des relations qui façonnent différemment et sont façonnées par la “conscience pratique” des Autochtones. Au sein de ces relations raciales, les participants et participantes autochtones reprennent le sport à des niveaux différents. Les Inuits et les Dénés du nord canadien démontrent une habileté pour refaçonner les événements sportifs de manière à répondre à leurs besoins et ceci, même lorsqu'ils et elles n'ont pas le contrôle direct de l'événement. Par ailleurs, les Autochtones du sud du Canada, même lorsqu'ils et elles ont le contrôle direct de l'événement, tendent à reproduire largement le système sportif eurocanadien dominant, de même que les définitions de la race telles que créées par le gouvernement.

Power relations are integral to understanding sport as a social practice.² These relations illuminate the relative access to power which groups have in any given situation: for example, their varying abilities to self-define life possibilities, or to access societal resources in the pursuit of such possibilities. Groups, and individuals within these groups, may differ according to socially ascribed characteristics such as race, class, gender, and sexual preference. Race relations, for example, form a context wherein individuals have a differential ability, by race, to create and play adequately funded sport in their preferred manner.

Native peoples in Canada (and, more broadly, in North America) live life and play sport within a context of unequal race relations. Often, sport has been used as an assimilative practice by eurocanadians (e.g., government bureaucrats,

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educators) trying to “civilize” native peoples. Administrators at Carlisle and Haskell Indian residential schools, for example, from their position of power relative to the native students, “sought to extinguish those experiences and behaviors (including sports) that were traditionally ‘Indian’” (Oxendine, 1988, p. 178) and, instead, introduced students to “non-Indian” sports such as football, baseball, or basketball. Native athletes, for the most part, “welcomed these new sports and performed them exceedingly well” (p. 178).

However, assimilation should not be considered a “natural” outcome of contact between ethnic groups and mainstream culture (Allison, 1982). After surveying current ethnic data, Allison concluded that minority cultures within the United States often transform the nature of typically “American” sport forms to fit their own cultural schema—and that the context (mainstream culture or minority culture) was a significant variable in this process. hooks (1990) provides a glimpse into why this process may occur, noting that spaces at the margins of mainstream practices can become “both sites of repression and sites of resistance” (p. 151).³

Blanchard (1983) and Fox (1983) documented the introduction of basketball into Navajo society and the introduction of baseball into Pueblo society. They found that the introduction of nonnative sports did not lead to native incorporation of nonnative values. The Navajo, for example, adopted the mandatory requisites of the game (e.g., essential rules and equipment), but then “developed a type of basketball that is conveniently consistent with traditional values and styles of play” (Blanchard, 1983, p. 480). Could the native context within which the Navajo and Pueblo peoples learned sport (and, by extension, the accompanying dynamical race relations) help to explain this outcome?

Race—and race relations—are not monolithic constructs. At any point in time, differing race relations are constructed, maintained and/or changed by the groups involved through their social practices. Hegemonic analyses tend to focus on the differing power relations between “power blocs” or dominant groups, and subordinate groups in society (e.g., Paraschak, 1991). This paper, however, focuses on the differences between subordinate groups’ relationships with, and responses to the dominant group(s).

In order to examine these differences, I draw on Giddens’ (1984) concept of “practical consciousness,” which “consists of all the things which actors know tacitly about how to ‘go on’ in the contexts of social life without being able to give them direct discursive expression” (p. xxiii). These day-to-day practices provide the material grounding for what Giddens calls the “recursive nature of social life” (p. xxiii), whereby the structured properties of social life constitute, and at the same time are constituted by, the actions of agents via the duality of structure. Consistent with this framework, I am suggesting that differences in the lived experiences of groups, including but not confined to sport, lead to naturalized beliefs about reality which differentially “structure” the possibilities those groups imagine for sport (i.e., their agency)—whether or not they are in control of the sporting experience.

What factor(s) lead native athletes to adopt—even welcome—eurocanadian sporting practices in one situation, and yet challenge and/or modify them on another occasion? When marginalized groups find themselves in control of the construction of social practices, why do some continue to reproduce structures and/or activities of the dominant group,⁴ while others construct social practices which look quite different? In other words, why does an increase in power by the

“marginalized” sometimes, but not always, translate into a continuation of the social practices of the “dominant”?

Examining the routinized social practices of daily life helps to explain these divergent outcomes. When many aspects of daily life reflect one set of values, it becomes more likely that individuals will naturalize not only such practices but also the underlying values in the process (Whitson, 1984) through what Giddens (1984) calls “practical consciousness.” Accordingly, even when individuals increase their ability to be self-defining, they subsequently generate social practices within the boundaries of what they believe to be possible—a context shaped by existing power relations and the naturalized social practices with which they are familiar.

Race Relations: Southern Canada Versus the Northwest Territories

Current relations of power between native peoples and eurocanadians in Canada emerge historically from federal legislation. The British North America Act, which formed Canada as a country in 1867, identified “Indians” and placed them under federal jurisdiction. The Indian Act of 1876 was a second key piece of legislation, as it defined Indian status and circumscribed virtually every feature of Indian social life. The federal government’s establishment of treaties⁵ for particular Indian groups in Canada was a third factor regulating native life. The premise underlying each of these actions was that native peoples had an “uncivilized nature” which was to be altered before they could enjoy full civil rights (Smith, 1975). Those who lived on Indian reserves (or reservations) had their behavior actively monitored by Indian agents until the 1950s and were surrounded by eurocanadians once they left the reserve. Native peoples in southern Canada, thus, had ongoing exposure to the dominant eurocanadian way of life, with its concomitant social practices. Within this context, where they remain the minority numerically, culturally, and politically, native peoples have consistently been defined as the “other”⁶ in relation to eurocanadians, with legal definitions of native peoples providing a naturalized marker denoting their “otherness.” They also have been widely exposed to eurocanadian social practices and the values imbued within those practices.

While legal definitions of native peoples throughout Canada became a central feature in the distribution of resources generally, the experiences of native peoples—specifically in the Northwest Territories—were different. Native peoples comprise about two percent of the whole of the Canadian population; in contrast to this, the Inuit and Dene form the majority of the population in the Northwest Territories and live largely in isolated communities scattered across a land mass one-third the size of Canada. No treaties were signed in the North (Fumoleau, 1977), and reserves were almost nonexistent.⁷ Northern natives were, thus, able to carry out their daily lives with less eurocanadian scrutiny—and more in keeping with their ancestors—than their native counterparts in southern Canada.⁸ Native peoples form the large majority of the inhabitants in most communities in the North and are likely to view eurocanadians as the “other” who intrude occasionally into their native-derived way of life.

While race relations in southern Canada remained antagonistic overall, the federal government did adopt a more positive attitude toward native rights after World War II. Legislative changes were made to the Indian Act which decreased

government intrusion into cultural affairs in 1951. As well, in 1960, native people were allowed to vote in federal elections for the first time and, thus, be considered both native *and* Canadian. In addition, the government, responding to pressure from Indian groups in 1956, initiated removal of Indian agents who had controlled all government-related aspects of native reserve life. Government bureaucrats replaced agents by implementing social and fiscal accountability measures in order to monitor native services.

During the 1960s, government policy toward native peoples was still one of overt assimilation. The 1969 *White Paper on Indian Policy*⁹ left “a residue of suspicion and negativism that would [subsequently] permeate Indian-government relations” (Weaver, 1981, p. 177). The 1970s were marked by the politicalization of Indians. They united across the country through the National Indian Brotherhood and, as their political skills increased, their concerns were increasingly placed on the Canadian political agenda (Weaver, 1981).

Previous native gains in status and power were curbed in the 1980s. In 1982, politicians acknowledged “existing aboriginal rights” in the Canadian Constitution, but the process set in motion to operationally define this aboriginal rights clause failed.¹⁰ In 1985, Bill C-31 became law, reinstating Indian status to Indian women who married non-Indian men; however, this process pitted native groups against each other¹¹ on its way to being passed by the federal government. In the summer of 1990, fueled by the Oka crisis,¹² there was an increase in native acts of resistance across the country, demonstrating the mounting frustration of native peoples concerning government resistance to their demand for recognition as distinct, sovereign nations, and the settling of land claims. Race relations between native peoples and eurocanadians in southern Canada, thus, have been largely antagonistic over the last two decades.

Race relations in the Northwest Territories developed somewhat differently over the same time period. The government for the Northwest Territories, operating out of Ottawa until 1967, initially devalued traditional economic, social, political, and cultural institutions, replacing them with eurocanadian alternatives. Although the government was relocated to the North in 1967, nonnatives still monopolized political processes until the late 1970s (Dacks, 1981). Native political groups successfully promoted candidates for the Legislative Assembly in 1979, and the elected, pro-native voices on that Assembly linked, for the first time, the territorial government system with native political organizations.

The difference in power between northern natives and nonnatives has continued to narrow since that time, as the two groups united to achieve “northern” government goals. The Dene and Inuit were further empowered in 1979, when elected politicians were put in charge of government departments for the first time (Dacks, 1981). Native politicians were, thus, able to define what they considered to be “legitimate” activities and structures for the North and direct government employees in accordance with that vision. They increasingly demanded that government services address the specific concerns of “native” northerners, which largely had been ignored to that point. Since this time, comprehensive land claims have been successfully negotiated (e.g., by the Inuvialuit in the Western Arctic), and the federal government has agreed to divide the Northwest Territories into two political bodies with their own individual government structures by 1999—Nunavut in the eastern Arctic and Denendeh in the Western Arctic.¹³

Differences in race relations between the Northwest Territories and southern Canada have, thus, provided distinct local contexts *within* which sporting practices for native peoples have emerged. In general, native peoples in southern Canada have lived within a context of "otherness" facilitated by their small numbers relative to eurocanadians, in which government departments use legislative definitions for various native groups when allocating resources, and native discontent with government structures is constant. In contrast to this, native northerners have maintained a more "customary"¹⁴ native-derived lifestyle, made possible by their relative isolation and their majority status in terms of numbers relative to eurocanadians. In addition, they have experienced more support from government officials, fueled by increasing numbers of native politicians with expanding political clout.

Taking into account these local relations enhances the following examination of four native sporting practices—two in southern Canada and two in the Northwest Territories. Sport practices originating in southern Canada consist of the government-initiated Native Sport and Recreation Program (1972-1981), and the native-run All-Indian sport system. Sporting events examined from the Northwest Territories include the government-initiated Arctic Winter Games and the Inuit-initiated Northern Games. Native success in shaping these four sporting practices—in terms of the right to define the experience and the right to societal resources—has varied in relation to local race relations. Thus, while sporting practices have not been central in ongoing native challenges to existing race relations, neither has sport remained untouched by such concerns.

Sport Practices in Southern Canada

An Unsuccessful Challenge: The Native Sport and Recreation Program

The federal government's Native Sport and Recreation program¹⁵ existed from 1972 to 1981. In September 1970, the Minister in charge of federal sport proposed a demonstration project for isolated Indian areas in the prairies. A five-year experimental sport and recreation program for status Indians eventually received approval in September 1972. That December, an additional part to this program was endorsed for Metis and nonstatus Indians.¹⁶ The following spring, bureaucrats met for the first time with provincial native associations to inform them about the program. The program was to be operated through the funding of provincial native political associations.

Federal officials were attempting to create a sport system that would parallel customary eurocanadian-derived (mainstream) sports competitions. Through this parallel system, native athletes could increase their performance level so that they could eventually compete in mainstream Canadian competitions. The federal government, thus, assumed that the incorporation of native athletes into the mainstream sport system was the desired goal of native sport. However, native-derived as well as eurocanadian-derived activities occurred under this program, which had not been anticipated by government officials. When the program was evaluated in 1977, the Fitness and Amateur Sport Branch, uncomfortable with the "cultural" (i.e., native-derived) nature of some activities, attempted to shift the administration of the program to either the Department of Indian Affairs or the Secretary of

State, both of which had more experience serving native clients. These two departments declined because they felt they had no technical experience in administering sport programs. Eventually, the program was terminated in 1981, with the funds being redirected to Indian health.

Native leaders, at times, challenged the choice of delivery system for this program, the type of activities that were sanctioned, and the "incorporation" objective maintained by the government. None of these challenges, however, resulted in changes to the program. Instead, these challenges contributed to the eventual demise of the program in 1981.

The program funds were distributed through native political organizations. This created a problem for native communities that did not belong to a recognized association. In Ontario, for instance, six Indian organizations received program funding. Unfortunately, the Six Nations Reserve could not access program funds because, for political reasons, they had withdrawn from one of the funded associations. Although the Six Nations Reserve petitioned the Minister responsible for sport to release funds through a separate native organization (Six Nations Recreation Commission, 1978), their request was not granted during the short life span of this program. The message was clear: follow externally imposed guidelines in order to qualify for the program or lose program funding.

Several native sports groups challenged the intended mainstream sport focus of this program, by choosing to participate in customary native-derived activities such as powwows, Indian day celebrations, and "traditional games" (i.e., native-derived physical activities). These events did not fit within the program's intended objective of integrating native participants into the mainstream "sport" system. Fitness and Amateur Sport Branch officials, uncomfortable with this broadened range of activities, unsuccessfully attempted to redirect this program into the hands of departments that had more experience with native peoples and their "cultural" activities.

A final challenge to this program further contributed to its eventual demise. In December 1978, the federal Minister responsible for sport assembled native leaders and proposed that they establish an office in the National Sports Centre to serve as the governing body for Indians in sport in Canada. Her opening comments included a call for assimilation through sport—getting native participants "into the mainstream [to] compete like everyone else" (National Indian Brotherhood, 1978, p. 1). The native leaders present at the meeting declined her offer precisely because it was assimilationist in nature and would thus "wipe out any idea that Indians may have of being Indians, [including] our reserves, and our status" (National Indian Brotherhood, 1978, p. 4).

The decision to reject the Minister's proposals by native leaders was based on their assumed right to self-determination, even though it meant the loss of opportunity and dollars necessary to further Indian sport. Attached to their refusal was a uniquely Indian vision of sport. They talked about a form of physical activity in tune with native cultures, which incorporated nonsport objectives and developed at the pace of the participants. They hoped to use Indian leadership and ensure proper consultation with Indian people at the local level. Indian champions would be identified through their own system based on Indian regions within the provinces (National Indian Brotherhood, 1978). These native leaders, thus, outlined an image of what might be desired if Indians were placed in con-

trol of their own sport future. This hypothetical vision of sport can be compared to the All-Indian sport system that was developed and run by native peoples themselves.

Reinforcing “The Other” Within Sport: The All-Indian Sport System

The All-Indian sport system¹⁷ crystallized during the period in the 1970s when the Native Sport and Recreation Program was in operation. Although references to All-Indian sporting events precede 1972 (such as the establishment of the North American Indian Bowling Association in 1962), the frequency and regularity of these events increased in the 1970s in part due to the development of a national network of provincial native sport associations—the National Indian Sports Council. This Council was funded through the Native Sport and Recreation Program and, thus, funding ended with the demise of that program in 1981.

Aspects of the All-Indian system, however, have remained. For example, the Chiefs of Ontario, a native organization with a declared nonpolitical focus, formed the Ontario Indian Sports Council as one of its committees in 1984. This committee attempts to assist and support Indian reserves in their local, regional, and provincewide sports endeavors such as All-Indian tournaments in hockey and fastball (Chiefs of Ontario, 1985).

At All-Ontario Indian Men's and Women's Fastball tournaments, the Canadian Amateur Softball Association rules are followed. Registered umpires are used; however, the players must be “registered Indian[s] or nonstatus Indian[s] with a letter of reference from the Office of the Chief and/or Administrator” (Ontario Indian Sports Council, 1986). Competing teams are chosen from the different Indian regions in Ontario, and players must have resided on the reserve 6 months prior to the tournament.

A comparison of this format to the “uniquely Indian view of sport” espoused by native leaders in 1978 is illuminating. Indian leadership is ensured because the tournaments are run by native peoples, and Indian champions are identified through their own system based on Indian regions and Indian membership criteria. There is consultation with people at the local level, and no limitations are placed on the level of skill needed to compete. However, there is little to suggest that this form of tournament (at least in terms of the sporting competition) is more in tune with customary native-derived cultures since the only distinguishing sport regulation is that all participants must qualify as being “native.” Eurocanadian-derived rules are used for the sporting competition; therefore, the activities of hockey and fastball are not altered from their customary eurocanadian form, increasing the likelihood that imbued eurocanadian values will likewise be reproduced by the athletes.

The Indian participation base of other All-Indian tournaments also is enforced through race restrictions for participation. Criteria varies in its definition of appropriate participants. A 1978 All-Indian bowling tournament, for example, required that participants be Indians or individuals married to Indians. More restrictive criteria was evident at the 1980 Women's Fast Pitch National Championship, where players had to “be at least one-quarter degree of Indian blood in order to compete” (Kays, 1980). The Little Native Hockey League, formed in the 1970s, maintained criteria requiring that athletes “. . . must have one parent of native

birth, and a federal band number. Players without these qualify by presenting a legal affidavit that proves native descent" (The Little NHL, no date).

One concern raised in relation to the All-Indian system pertained to the exclusion of some native peoples from the Games because of the implementation of racial criteria. Prior to 1985, one section of the Indian Act discriminated against Indian women on the grounds of race, sex, and marital status (Jamieson, 1978). According to this section, Indian women forfeited their Indian status upon marrying nonnative men, which was not the case for Indian men marrying nonnative women. One woman, who had lost her Indian status when she married a eurocanadian, expressed her anger over the discriminatory sport practice whereby government-derived definitions were used to determine legitimate sport participants. Her youngest daughter was very good in sport but was denied the chance to play in an All-Indian tournament.

When it came to Indian Summer Games, they said, 'You can't play because you're nonstatus. You're not an Indian.' I said, 'My God, she's got as much Indian in her as a lot of them here.' That's when I really got mad. (Silman, 1987, p. 219)

In this instance, the decision by native organizers to adopt a government-created definition of "Indian" led to the alienation of other native groups who were biologically, though not legally, Indian.

In 1985, this discriminatory legal practice ended with the federal government's adoption of Bill C-31. Eligibility criteria for some All-Indian tournaments have reflected this change in law (thus continuing their use of government-created definitions of native peoples), noting that Bill C-31 candidates will be eligible to play in the tournament.

Sport Practices in Southern Canada: Summary

In both of the sport events discussed in this section, the use of government-created racial criteria to delimit "legitimate" participants is evident. Legal definitions of "race"—identifying native peoples as the "other"—thus overtly shaped each activity, although the actual definitions of race varied by event. This pattern was consistent with race relations in southern Canada during this time, as both the federal government and political native organizations defined themselves, and/or their actions, in accordance with legal categories.

The Native Sport and Recreation Program, for example, was initially developed by the federal Fitness and Amateur Sport Branch to meet all "native" needs. However, this Branch was directed by the federal Cabinet and subsequently created two separate programs—one for status Indians and another for nonstatus Indians and Metis.¹⁸ Native organizers for All-Indian competitions reproduced this pattern, often choosing to adopt the government's definition of "status Indian" as a starting point when preparing racial criteria for participation and, thus, reproducing government-created concepts of race.

An indication of the naturalized, dominant eurocanadian practical consciousness (i.e., nondiscursive, day-to-day ways of living life), which southern Canadian native peoples have adopted, is the choice of activities incorporated into the All-Indian system. The majority of the events are eurocanadian-derived sports, using

recognized national or international rules as the protocol. Thus, while native sport leaders have adopted an infrastructure based on Indian regions that acknowledges the perceived centrality of reserves, they adopt eurocanadian activities without alteration.¹⁹

Sport Practices in the Northwest Territories

Addressing Native Participation: The Arctic Winter Games

The Arctic Winter Games were conceived within the colonial sporting context of the Northwest Territories²⁰ in the late 1960s. Northern athletes performed poorly, in relation to athletes from other provinces, at the first national, multisport Canada Games in 1967. Northern eurocanadian politicians subsequently pushed for a "Canada Games"-type festival above the 60th parallel in order to arrange a more equitable competition for "northern," rather than specifically native, athletes. They believed that this step would eventually lead to the development of competent national- and international-caliber competitors.

The Arctic Winter Games fits comfortably within the dominant, eurocanadian-derived system of sport existent within Canada. It was immediately seen as a "sports" festival and, thus, received ongoing funding from both federal and territorial government sport departments. The range of activities has primarily included "legitimate" eurocanadian-derived sports. In 1970, 10 such sports comprised the schedule of events for the Games. A quarter of a century later, the Games have some "uniquely northern" events, such as Arctic Sports and Snowshoe Biathlon, but the majority of the events are still found in multisport festivals in southern Canada.

The structuring of the Arctic Winter Games also has been premised on a eurocanadian-derived conception of sport. The organizational structure, based on the Canada Games model, connects to government at every level. In keeping with the nature of mainstream eurocanadian sport, the festival operates as a meritocracy based on skill. The emphasis of the Games is placed on "excellence."²¹ Territorial "unit" teams are identified by a process of preliminary trials. Each "unit" contingent member is then outfitted with an identifiable uniform.

Arctic Winter Games events are standardized as far as rules are concerned, with most events broken down into junior and senior age categories, and contestants separated by sex. Event schedules are established and adhered to in keeping with the expectations of the spectators who attend in order to see a performance. While this format would be acceptable to southern Canadians, ongoing debate has continued in the Northwest Territories concerning the appropriateness of this festival for the North.

Northern politicians have challenged the suitability of the Arctic Winter Games for native peoples by raising the possibility that a customary native-derived infrastructure might be more appropriate, as well as by noting the lack of native participation at the Games. Concerns over the limited, eurocanadian-derived range of "legitimate" activities were voiced initially by some elected members of the Territorial Government, but other politicians in 1970 made it clear that native-derived "traditional" games were not considered to be suitable events.²² Native-derived arctic games and dance were included as demonstration activities

in 1970 and 1972. When “Arctic Sports” was finally installed as an official event in 1974, this activity was immediately structured by the Games organizers to conform with other events in terms of its underlying structure.

A politician raised concerns again in 1988 that native-derived games—and native-derived activities within the Cultural Program—lacked recognition within the Arctic Winter Games. At a meeting of the Board of Directors of the Arctic Winter Games and the Ministers from the different government units, it was pointed out by the Minister from the Northwest Territories that less emphasis had been placed recently on the native-derived cultural component of the Games. He also noted that

. . . Arctic Sports were being relegated to a lower priority and the conventional sports were taking over. If this occurs then the Games could lose their special appeal and become just another regular Games session. (Arctic Winter Games Corporation, 1988)

He further noted that to get support from southern media, the Games must stand out as being uniquely northern. This statement reflects the dependency that the Arctic Winter Games has on maintaining a “unique northern identity,” both for promoting the North elsewhere and for securing ongoing funding from the federal government. The Arctic Sports event (which remains the only event designated for “traditional” native-derived sports) was subsequently expanded in 1990 to incorporate a Dene Games category, adding five Dene games to the nine Inuit contests already included in this event.

Challenges to the “legitimate” structure of the Arctic Winter Games have rarely focused on the meritocratic process inherent within the Games. However, members of the Legislative Assembly did raise concerns about the underlying structure on one occasion. A member asked if the Arctic Winter Games personnel had examined “. . . the [traditional Eskimo Olympics] program and the way in which these events are organized” (Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories, 1970b, p. 526) in order to incorporate an approach more in keeping with native-derived cultural practices. The response given reflected the wide gulf in perspectives existing between native peoples and Arctic Winter Games organizers at that time. The Arctic Winter Games representative, who had just attended the festival under discussion, claimed that it was “the poorest organized event I ever attended” (Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories, 1970b, p. 526). What his comment really reflected was his inability to appreciate a festival which was more in tune with a customary native-derived practical consciousness. Heine (1995) has labeled this approach “bush consciousness,” wherein the emphasis is placed on process rather than result, the importance of an achievement rarely outlasts the occasion, cooperation is stressed as much as individual achievement, and there is minimal organization (p. 194).

Concerns also have surfaced around the lack of native participants at the Games, as well as at the more elite Canada Games. Although more than 50% of the Northwest Territories population is native, the percentage of native peoples in the Northwest Territories contingent to the Arctic Winter Games has been relatively small, ranging between 22% and 33% in any one Game (Kyllo, 1987). Accordingly, politicians pressured the government to ensure more involvement from the smaller, largely native communities, by recruiting a more representative sample of

athletes from throughout the Northwest Territories, rather than just in the Western Arctic (or, more specifically, just from Yellowknife).

A few concerns over the low number of native peoples involved in the Arctic Winter Games were raised by members of the legislature in the early years, although no actions were taken subsequent to these comments. A politician from the Central Arctic, for example, read a telegram in the Assembly before the first Games, which stated that if Central Arctic athletes were not acceptable for the Games, then the name of the Games should be changed to the Western Arctic Winter Games (Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories, 1970a, p. 272).

This concern was voiced again in the Legislative Assembly in 1983, when sport executives were criticized about the racial makeup of the Canada Games contingent. Politicians instructed these executives to “send athletes from all ethnic backgrounds and . . . all parts of the North rather than just send an exclusive Yellowknife contingent composed only of White people” (Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories, 1983, p. 829). The accompanying explanation pointed out that there were important social and educational benefits which would be valuable for all northerners, even though this idea was contrary to the meritocratic Games ideology, in which the best are chosen to attend.

The provision of funding to communities for travel to regional as well as territorial trials, along with the creation of a new region,²³ and the inclusion of activities (such as indoor soccer) which are more popular to the smaller communities, have all been steps taken to increase native participation. These steps have not actually increased the number of native people participating in the Games; however, the number of native athletes involved in the overall Arctic Winter Games qualifying process, which includes the regional participation statistics, has continued to rise with each Game since these changes were implemented (Kyllo, 1987).

Despite these changes, questions about the “legitimate structure” of the Arctic Winter Games continue. A member of the Legislative Assembly, for example, challenged Sport North officials in 1987 to restructure their Board to include regional community representatives along with representatives from the Sport Governing Bodies (Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories, 1987, pp. 386-387). This would effectively alter the basis of power by including more native people with a small community focus on the Board, rather than just individuals from sport associations who largely espouse a eurocanadian-derived perspective on sport.

A Customary Inuit/Dene Practical Consciousness: The Northern Games

The first Northern Games was held in July 1970. Native organizers hosted a weekend of “traditional” games and activities in Inuvik. They created this festival as an alternative to the proposed structure for the Arctic Winter Games, which was to include only eurocanadian-derived sports primarily for younger participants (Dittrich, 1976). It was an “emergent” festival (see Williams, 1977) conceived of and developed by native peoples outside of government, prompted in part by the exclusion of native-derived sporting activities by Arctic Winter Games organizers. Aspects of the “residual” system (Williams, 1977) of “traditional” games, which were played informally in the native communities, were incorporated into the

eurocanadian-derived concept of a trans-Arctic festival in order to help create this emergent festival.

Federal government officials continued to debate whether or not this festival was to be considered "sport," and funding sources in the 1970s reflected its ambiguous status. Several sources of funding were accessed in the first decade under a variety of labels including "recreation," "sport," and "culture." The Northwest Territories Recreation Division was the only department that provided an ongoing program specifically linked to the Northern Games. Other departments provided funding out of general programs, within which some aspects of the Northern Games were considered to fit. Many of these departments, however, subsequently ceased their funding to the Northern Games, stating that the Games no longer fell within their mandate.

The funding relationship between the Northern Games Association and the Fitness and Amateur Sport Branch exemplified this dilemma. This Branch did, at one point, consider the Northern Games to be "sport," describing it as a "competition in traditional native sports as well as cultural and social activities" (Government of Canada, 1976). The Games, however, were apparently not enough of a "sports competition" to remain funded. In 1978, the Fitness and Amateur Sport Branch began reducing its funding to the Northern Games, with plans to phase out all funding by 1980. In an explanatory letter to the Northern Games Association, an official from Fitness and Amateur Sport claimed that the Arctic Winter Games was more suited to the mandate of their Branch than was the Northern Games (Willette, 1980). Thus, the Arctic Winter Games were placed in direct competition with the Northern Games for federal sport dollars, and the former festival was not surprisingly perceived to be more legitimate within federal "sport" circles.

In contrast to the federal government's view in 1978 that the Games were "nonsport," the native organizers of these Games did see a sports and games thrust to the festival. In a 1977 reply to the federal *Green Paper on Sport*, the Northern Games Association disputed the claim that their festival was merely "cultural" in nature, noting that

its focus is on games and sport. Sports in the south also are cultural events with a different purpose (i.e., a winning purpose in a win-oriented culture). Must we buy that ethic to be funded? (Northern Games Association, circa 1977).

There were no initial attempts by government bureaucrats to modify and/or limit the range of "legitimate" activities for this festival. Women competed in the Good Woman Contest. This event included a variety of activities which simulated traditional living skills, such as bannock making, tea boiling, seal skinning, muskrat skinning, and fish cutting. Men's events included various activities, such as one- and two-foot-high kick, ear pull, knuckle hop, rope gymnastics, musk-ox push, and head pull. Although these contests were primarily Inuit-derived games, various Dene-derived events such as stick gambling, mooseskin handball, and Indian blanket toss also were occasionally included by the organizers.

Funding agencies also did not initially concern themselves with the fact that the Northern Games operated according to a customary Inuit/Dene practical consciousness rather than being based on a eurocanadian-derived, meritocratic concept of sport. For example, participants for the annual Games were not selected

through a regional playdown. Instead, a number of seats on a chartered airplane were delegated to each community. When the plane would arrive in the community, interested people would “hop on” and attend the Games. This pattern reflected the more informal Games philosophy, which encouraged participation over excellence and an atmosphere of camaraderie and self-testing rather than competitive equality.

At the Northern Games, participating contingents were recognized by settlement, including communities from Alaska, Northwest Territories, Yukon Territory, Arctic Quebec, and Labrador. The teams were chosen by the communities, although no particular uniform was used to identify that allegiance. It thus became a “gathering” of people rather than a competition among opponents. This environment lends itself to competing with others against oneself rather than the standard eurocanadian-derived adversarial approach.

Although the Northern Games published a list of daily events and daily starting times, these only served as rough guidelines. Events started and finished in accordance with the natural rhythms of sun and season. Because people came to visit and participate, there were few true spectators; hence, no one expected a spectacle to start “on time.” People, equipment, and food thus came together and flowed apart daily in keeping with a schedule, but not necessarily the “official” schedule.

Initially, there were no age categories used in the Northern Games. All ages participated, and individuals were often recruited just prior to an event. These activities also fell in line with customary Inuit/Dene practical consciousness in terms of gender roles, as is evidenced by the differentiation between, and nature of, men’s and women’s events. Whereas the men competed in events of individual self-testing—such as musk-ox pull, one-foot-high kick, and one-arm reach—the women were participating in the Good Woman Contest by boiling tea, skinning seals, and parading in their traditional clothing for the judges.

The development of standardized rules for the events was never a priority for the Northern Games Association. After acknowledging a need to formalize their event rules due to the sporting variations existent within their wide participation base, they did hold a workshop in 1978 in order to identify and formalize rules for Inuit games across the Arctic. However, the application of these rules at subsequent Northern Games remained flexible.

Government intrusion into the operation of the Northern Games was minimal at first. However, Williams (1977) notes that “to the degree that [a new practice] emerges, and especially to the degree that it is oppositional rather than alternative, the process of attempted incorporation significantly begins” (p. 124). The Northern Games, while created as an emergent, alternative festival by the organizers, was in part an oppositional practice²⁴ because it challenged the naturalness of eurocanadian-derived sport as the sole, “legitimate” form of government-sponsored physical activity. More importantly, this festival also challenged the naturalness of the eurocanadian-derived way of structuring sporting events. By operating in accordance with a customary Inuit/Dene practical consciousness, this festival instead reinforced the naturalness of a native-derived way of structuring sports events.

Attempts by government to increase its control over the way(s) in which the festival would be constructed (i.e., incorporation²⁵) began in 1981, when the gov-

ernment of the Northwest Territories agreed to accept sole funding responsibility for the Games. At that time, they also outlined stipulations: the Association must become more community-oriented and strengthen its organizational framework by forming regional associations.²⁶ Members of the government's Sport and Recreation Division provided ongoing consultation to these regional organizations, thus, the government became more involved in the conceptual, as well as the operational, features of the Games. For example, specific expectations were outlined by government officials as criteria for funding, such as the legal incorporation of each regional association.

In 1988, the government of the Northwest Territories further incorporated the "emergent" Northern Games festival by creating a Traditional Games Program, which provides ongoing funding to both the Northern Games and the Dene Games²⁷ (a similar style of festival held by the Dene in the Western Arctic). For the first time, the government also specified what were to be considered "legitimate" traditional sports events. Two of the four principles included in the program guidelines outlined why the traditional games were "legitimate," and what these "legitimate" activities would include.

- Traditional native sport and recreation activity contributes to the well-being and quality of life of residents of the Northwest Territories, preserves and strengthens the traditional ways of life of native peoples and contributes to a pride in our northern culture.
- The fabric and foundation of traditional games is native recreation and life-style demonstrations, competitions and celebrations. While nontraditional activities may contribute to the participation of all communities and their residents, the primary focus of the games remains traditional native games and recreation activity (Government of the Northwest Territories, 1988).

The parameters set by government for Traditional Games reinforced the perception that these Games have a different purpose from sporting activities, and that the activities held at such Games must reflect that "traditional" focus.²⁸ This change reflects very clearly the government's intent to separate the program and delivery system related to traditional games from those of sport activities in the North.²⁹

Although the "cultural distinctiveness" of the Northern Games and the Dene Games was to be preserved, government officials informally encouraged the organizers to structure the Games more in keeping with a eurocanadian-derived, meritocratic style of sport. Several changes were recommended, including the division of events by age and sex, the development of community trials to choose participants, the standardization of rules, and the improved scheduling of events.

A review of Northern Games programs since 1988 demonstrates that many of these suggestions are being incorporated, although they often reflect a customary Inuit/Dene practical consciousness. All of the programs have Inuit games events for both men and women, and most regional associations have the contests broken down into junior and senior categories. Interesting developments related to these changes can be seen in the Good Woman Contest, which now has categories for both men and women. While men on the traplines do carry out many of the tasks

included in the Good Woman Contest, their performance in this event often generates laughter from the audience more so than it does amazement over their skills.

Another deviation, related to the categorization of sport by age, occurred at the Keewatin Summer (Northern) Games in 1989. Their age categories included "old person" (46 years of age and older), "middle age" (35 to 45 years old), and young person (34 years and younger). They even carried this categorization one step further, stipulating that a coach had to be 25 years old at minimum.

The development of community qualifying trials has not been completely adopted within the Northern Games at present. Most of the regional associations stipulated that a set number of participants per community would be financed to come to the Games, leaving the choice of actual participants up to the community. It appears, however, that the practice of "hopping on" the plane still occurs on occasion. A Recreation Development Officer, in her trip report for the 1988 Baffin Games, noted that athletes from all over the Baffin region except for Broughton Island had been able to attend. Her explanation concluded by noting, "The plane was too full for them to get on" (Kadlutsiak, 1988).

This same report highlighted the fact that standardized rules for the Northern Games were not enforced through trained officials. While at the Games, the Recreation Development Officer was recruited to provide a variety of services—including event judging—although she had no previous experience. She noted the involvement of other community members in judging and even the recruitment of competing athletes to serve as judges while waiting for their next turn. Clearly, the camaraderie and friendliness of the traditional games continues on in these Baffin Summer (Northern) Games.

The Western Arctic Northern Games, held in Holman Island in 1989, provided a detailed schedule of events. One interesting aspect of their schedule, however, involved the timing of events. The first night, after a midnight feast, the organizers scheduled a square dance "outside on [the] platform 'til around 4 a.m." (Western Arctic Northern Games Association, 1989). Two days later, the junior events were scheduled at the school from midnight until 3:00 a.m. Each of these examples demonstrates that while the meritocratic principles inherent in eurocanadian-derived sport may be adopted to some extent in the Northern Games, the Games organizers seem able to use these principles in a way that does not unduly conflict with their customary Inuit/Dene practical consciousness.

Sport Practices in the Northwest Territories: Summary

Thus, while the Arctic Winter Games is essentially a "northern" sporting event reinforcing a mainstream eurocanadian-derived practical consciousness, and the Northern Games is essentially an emergent customary native-derived festival, the changing race relations in the North have impacted on both Games' structures and activities. The Northwest Territories' government has been challenged by native peoples to increase native involvement in the Arctic Winter Games. Accordingly, while the eurocanadian underpinnings of the festival have not been altered, the government has made concrete changes so that the smaller, native communities will be more involved. On the other hand, the government's setting of "traditional games" parameters, and their encouragement of a more meritocratic basis to the Northern Games, highlight ongoing efforts by government to incorporate this

festival into the dominant structures of eurocanadian-derived sport. Regional Northern Games Associations, however, have clearly addressed these government expectations within a customary Inuit/Dene practical consciousness. Native peoples have thus shown consistent resistance to the imposition of eurocanadian-derived structures onto the Northern Games. This resistance, combined with the "legitimation" they have received through the formalization of a government program, serve as indicators of the continuing ability of northern native peoples to foster and shape their particular vision of sport.

Conclusion

The sporting practices in which native peoples participate reflect the routinized social patterns evident in their daily lives—examples of their lived practical consciousness. Native peoples in the Northwest Territories, who live a life isolated in many ways from eurocanadians and more in touch with a customary native-derived life style, reproduce a sporting context in keeping with that reality. This includes the expectation that native participants have a right to participate in sporting competitions sponsored by their government, and that they have a right to festivals which are structured according to customary Inuit/Dene values and activities. Meanwhile, southern Canadian native peoples, who have interfaced with eurocanadians for much of this century and have increasingly adopted a customary eurocanadian way of life, have been unsuccessful in maintaining a federal government-supported sports program for native participants. They have, however, developed a self-funded All-Indian sport system, largely comparable to mainstream eurocanadian-derived sporting practices, in which they define legitimate participants with government-created definitions of race.

The Inuit and Dene of the Northwest Territories thus demonstrate a naturalized, customary native-derived practical consciousness concerning their life possibilities. This practical consciousness has been facilitated by their increased power, relative to natives in southern Canada, within the government of the Northwest Territories and their more customary native-derived social practices. This practical consciousness enhances the ability of northern natives to reshape opportunities for sport in ways which address their needs to some extent, even when they are not directly in control of the event such as occurs with the Arctic Winter Games.

Meanwhile, native peoples in southern Canada, who sit outside mainstream government structures, are left to obtain their own resources for sport. The sporting opportunities that they do provide tend to reproduce the dominant system of sport along with government-created definitions of race. These patterns also are in keeping with their practical consciousness, which is largely rooted in eurocanadian reality, along with government-created definitions of race which impact on them daily. Thus, while they have developed and reproduced an All-Indian sport system, they have understandably created that system substantially in accordance with eurocanadian-derived sporting practices.

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Notes

¹I will use the term “native peoples” for reader ease (terms such as aboriginal peoples, indigenous peoples, and First Nations could equally have been used). More precise terms, such as status Indian, Inuit, and Dene, will be used where appropriate. “Native peoples” is pluralized to indicate that within this collectivity, there are groups of people who see themselves as distinctively different rather than all forming one homogeneous group.

²Susan Birrell (1989) provides a cogent argument for using power relations to better understand the relationship between race and sport. Power relations have, likewise, been employed to examine sport practices in relation to ethnicity (e.g., Jarvie, 1992), class (e.g., Gruneau, 1983), gender (e.g., Messner, 1992; Hall, 1993), sexual preference (e.g., Lenskyj, 1991; Pronger, 1990), and colonization (e.g., Klein, 1991).

³For an extended discussion of “racialized spaces” and their potential as a site for resistance, specifically in relation to native powwows, see Paraschak (1996).

⁴Allen Guttman addresses this possibility when he quotes Herbert Schiller: “What does it matter if a national movement has struggled for years to achieve liberation if that condition, once gained, is undercut by values and aspirations derived from the apparently vanquished dominator?” (as cited in Guttman, 1994, p. 9).

⁵These documents noted, for example, the guarantee of lands reserved for the use of Indians, as well as promises to provide health, educational, or other services to Indians, in exchange for the surrender of a specified tract of land (Smith, 1975, p. xxvii).

⁶Edward Said (1979) notes that knowledge about the “other” is embedded in power relations which privilege the definer of that relationship and begin from a fundamental assumption of difference between the definer and the “other.” Thus, a practical consciousness emerges which privileges one explanation for behavior—difference—as being most important and marginalizes other explanations for reality.

⁷There are only two small federal reserves in the Northwest Territories—the Hay River Reserve (near Hay River) and Rainbow Valley (near Yellowknife).

⁸For example, the Inuit were never formally defined through legislation. A 1939 court decision ruled that the Inuit were a federal responsibility, but they were not subject to the Indian Act. Instead, separate programs and services were provided to them (Taylor, 1988).

⁹This document, which called for the termination of all special rights—including the Indian Act, reserves, and treaties—was viewed by native peoples as a formal and official policy of assimilation. Aboriginal peoples across the country united politically to reject this document.

¹⁰Politicians and native peoples were given a specific length of time by government to define the phrase “existing aboriginal rights” which was included in the Canadian Con-

stitution. Although these two groups met together on this task several times, they failed to agree on a definition for this phrase within the time allotted.

¹¹The removal (or reinstatement) of Indian status has implications for Band members because status Indians collectively share whatever resources belong to their Band. Thus, the reinstatement of women who had lost their status by marrying non-Indians would increase the size of the Band and decrease the benefits to any one Band member. Native women's organizations tended to support Bill C-31; other Indian political organizations (dominated by men) fought against this bill.

¹²In the summer of 1990, a confrontation occurred between the Quebec Provincial Police and members of the Kanetasake reserve near Oka, in which a member of the police force was shot and killed. The reserve members had been demonstrating against the proposed expansion of a golf course onto sacred land. A standoff ensued between the police and a militant group on the reserve, which made national headlines throughout the summer. Native groups across the country carried out acts of protest in support of the native group under siege.

¹³This political division reflects native differences in the North. The Eastern Arctic is comprised of Inuit communities, whereas Dene communities are found in the Western Arctic.

¹⁴Eric Hobsbawm (1983) points out that "invented traditions" are socially constructed, selective, invariant practices which serve a particular role in society, whereas "customs," which are social practices legitimated through their social continuity, are flexible by necessity (pp. 2-3). I will, thus, use "customary native-derived" life style, rather than "traditional" life style, to refer to a current way of life which can be linked to a self-determined Inuit or Dene past cultural life.

¹⁵Additional details concerning this program are found in Paraschak (1995).

¹⁶Both Metis and nonstatus Indians are of Indian ancestry. Metis (individuals of mixed Indian-European ancestry) were never awarded Indian status, whereas nonstatus Indians lost their status at some point (e.g., through marriage, through enfranchisement). Status Indians and Inuit fall under federal jurisdiction; Metis and nonstatus Indians fall under provincial jurisdiction.

¹⁷For an expanded discussion on the All-Indian sport system, including its comparison to the mainstream sport system, see Paraschak (1990).

¹⁸The difference between these two programs was largely administrative. Each program had a separate budget and the native organizations which qualified for each program were different; however, the program guidelines were similar.

¹⁹Allen Guttmann correctly notes that it is ethnocentrically arrogant for "Western critics to insist that non-Western peoples are wrong to prefer modern sports to traditional ones" (Guttmann, 1994, p. 187). I am not critiquing the decision by native organizers to adopt mainstream sport practices but, rather, pointing out that their preference goes in this direction.

²⁰The nature of race relations in the Northwest Territories and their impact on the Arctic Winter Games and the Northern Games is detailed more fully in Paraschak (1985) and Paraschak (1991).

²¹The emphasis of the Games was initially placed on "excellence," culminating in the presentation of the Games flag to the team achieving the largest number of points. In 1978, this practice was replaced by the presentation of the Stuart Hodgson Award to the most "sportsmanlike" [sic] team. This change marked a shift toward participation rather than excellence, however, the "unofficial" medal count still is tabulated daily in the official Games newspaper.

²²As early as 1968, a member of the Assembly suggested that a large number of “traditional” native-derived games also should be included in the Arctic Winter Games (Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories, 1968, p. 51). This position was refuted by other members of the Assembly who suggested in one instance that these native-derived games “. . . had no common rules or regulations to form a unit through which these people could compete against” (Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories, 1970b, p. 518).

²³In 1986, a new, 7th region was created for regional trials. This Mackenzie Region was composed of the small communities which had formerly competed against Yellowknife at the regional level. Because Yellowknife athletes consistently dominated the Games, few athletes from these smaller communities ever qualified for the Territorial trials.

²⁴I see oppositional practices as those practices which disrupt, and therefore challenge, the naturalized way(s) of viewing a dominant, mainstream practice. This happens, for example, when individuals operating within a nonmainstream practical consciousness insist that their nonmainstream practices are equally as legitimate as mainstream activities.

²⁵I see “incorporation” as a process whereby government officials set out to construct the Northern Games within the customary eurocanadian-derived way of playing sport—that is, in keeping with the practical consciousness of government officials from southern Canada (e.g., financially accountable, ensuring competitive equality, maintaining records).

²⁶These regional associations included the Western Arctic Northern Games Association, the Kitikmeot Northern Games Association, the Keewatin Northern Games Association, and the Baffin Northern Games Association.

²⁷For further information about the history of the Dene Games as well as comparisons between the Dene Games and the Northern Games, see Paraschak (1983) and Heine (1995).

²⁸This approach differed from the initial government of the Northwest Territories’ treatment of the Dene Games in the 1970s, which was funded as a “traditional” festival because it was a gathering of native people, even though the central event of the festival was a baseball tournament.

²⁹However, a number of native organizers lobbied the government to place the Northern Games within the Sport North Federation so that they could receive the benefits accorded to eurocanadian-derived sports—and this eventually occurred at their insistence in the early 1990s.

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