

Lacrosse: A Rich History Hindered by Racist Attitudes in the United States

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis examines how Lacrosse's history and popularity has demonstrated a direct correlation with the ethnicity of the people who compose the majority constituency of the game. While Lacrosse began as a sport played almost exclusively by Native Americans, it now is mostly associated with middle to upper class white Americans. Furthermore, Lacrosse was not played by many people until the past twenty years when participants have consisted of mostly white Americans. This study relies on a multitude of sources ranging from scholarly books, to an interview with a National Lacrosse Hall of Fame Inductee, to articles located on reputable scholarly journals.

In forming my argument I have broken my project into five distinct chapters. First, I provide a detailed historiography of the sources that have been written on the sport of Lacrosse, on Native American involvement in the U.S. and on the current popularity of the sport. In the second chapter I include a comprehensive history of the sport of Lacrosse, from the time of its first documentation to the present day. The third chapter offers a brief overview of the injustice that Native Americans have faced in the United States, which was intended to destroy Indian culture, including their sports and games. I then focus on the link between prejudice attitudes and the modern popularity of Lacrosse. Finally a concluding chapter reviews the major points of the study and offers ideas for further exploration on the topic. Through

this work historians can clearly see that a significant reason for Lacrosse's stunted growth and its sudden expansion can be directly correlated to the racial groups who play the game; the game's past malaise and its present resurgence share similar racial foundations.

The Fastest Game on Two Feet: A Historiography of Lacrosse

Lacrosse, a game whose documented origins date back to the early 17th century in North America has been as much a religious event as a sport throughout its history.¹ While the game has changed drastically over the years, the core components of Lacrosse, as a game, have remained intact. Lacrosse is America's oldest sport, but the game has lagged behind many others such as Baseball, Basketball, Ice Hockey, NASCAR and Football in popularity; however, within the last twenty years Lacrosse has demonstrated rapid growth. The game of Lacrosse never became as popular as other sports such as Baseball, Ice Hockey, Basketball, NASCAR or Football in the U.S. because of anti-Native American sentiment in the 19th and 20th century. That has changed in the past several decades as Lacrosse has become more closely associated with middle to upper class white youth, and the popularity of the sport has skyrocketed. The drastic rise in popularity of Lacrosse in the past twenty years can be attributed to America's past and present racist attitudes. The reason for Lacrosse's stunted growth and its sudden expansion can be directly correlated to the racial groups who play the game; the game's past malaise and its present resurgence share similar racial foundations.

Lacrosse began as a sport played principally by one racial group, Native Americans. The earliest version of the sport involved a netted racquet, which was used to get the ball past the opposition's goal. Most versions of the game prohibited

¹ Thomas Venum, *Lacrosse Legends by the First Americans* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2007), 53.

participants from touching the ball with their hands, but there were very few rules. Native Americans who played the game were most routinely found in the eastern half of North America; the area southeast of the Great Lakes became a hotbed for the sport. Depending on the tribe, Native Americans used three different types of netted racquets, a three-foot stick, a pair of two and a half foot sticks or one stick over three feet in length. ² French settlers who came to North America as early as 1605 gave the name Lacrosse to the sport because of the curved stick that was used to play Lacrosse, which resembled a Catholic bishop's crosier, but it was not until the mid 18th century that non-Native Americans began playing the game. ³ In Native American culture the sport was not only used for recreational purposes but also religiously and even to settle territorial disputes between tribes.

Due to a number of factors, including the belief that Lacrosse led to a decrease in church attendance, a rise in gambling and violence in the sport, as well as the presence of prejudice against Native Americans, Lacrosse was banned in many parts of North America by 1900. From 1600 to 1900 the game of Lacrosse was largely played by Native Americans, but as the 20th century began more Euro-Americans began playing the game. Unfortunately racism (of many types) has often imposed a black mark on the history of the U.S. and its impact can be found in every aspect of life in the late 19th to early 20th century, even to this day. With considerable rules changes and more regulations in place, Lacrosse began being

² Vennum, *Lacrosse Legends*, 45.

³ William Baker, *Sports in the Western World* (Totowa, N.J.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1982), 46.

played more widespread starting in the 1930s and the altered game has sparked so much popularity that it is now the fastest growing sport in America.⁴ With so many changes to the sport, from the rules, to the equipment used, to the tactics used in the women's version of the sport, the game today, with the exception of some core components, no longer resembles the original sport practiced by early Native Americans.

The topic of racism within the sport of Lacrosse is significant for a variety of reasons. This topic will allow me to examine the importance of the history of the game, the history of the people who played it, the reason behind the sport's growth in popularity, including America's racist attitudes, and the basis of discrimination toward Native Americans. The history of Lacrosse provides a lens into the earliest times in North America, as historians and curious readers alike learn about the culture of Native Americans before European settlers arrived and examined ideas about the roots of our country. How might the early traditions, beliefs and practices of Native Americans have affected the history of our country? Lacrosse has been transformed from a quasi-spiritual event to that of a controlled and regulated game. This transition from the early origins of Lacrosse offers historians a deep

⁴ "Lacrosse: The Fastest Growing Sport in the Country ", accessed 10/5/2011, 2011, <http://blog.geoiq.com/2008/01/24/lacrosse-the-fastest-growing-sport-in-the-country/>.

appreciation for America's oldest sport and not only helps explain the development of the sport but also the development of United States of America.

As the U.S. evolved so did the game, yet it did not appeal to a significant number of people until the 20th century, and even then it was barely considered a sport compared with Baseball, Basketball, Ice Hockey, NASCAR or Football. It was not until the late 20th century that the game really grew and started a snowball effect of momentum that has made the game as popular as it is today. Common sense might suggest that since Lacrosse has been around longer than any other sport in America that it has had the most time to develop and create a large following, however that has not been the case until recently. By pursuing reasoning behind this phenomenon I will reveal how both past and present-day citizens of the U.S. view the world around them. This perspective is significant not only to the history of Lacrosse but also the history of the United States and assists in explaining our history and foreseeable future.

In order to support my thesis and examine all of the above-mentioned significant factors in the history of Lacrosse, I will be employing an abundance of sources. Books, journal articles, credible websites, magazine articles, film and an interview will assist me in explaining the historical aspect of Lacrosse. Two of the most helpful sources will be Thomas Vennum's *Lacrosse Legends of the First All Americans* and *American Indian Lacrosse: Little Brother of War*.⁵ Both of Vennum's

⁵ Thomas Vennum, *American Indian Lacrosse: Little Brother of War* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1994).

books are invaluable because of the broad scope of the history of Lacrosse they present. There are numerous sources that deal with the history of Lacrosse in specific tribes, but there are few sources that present a holistic view of the game like Vennum's works.

Another aspect of my thesis rests on the fluctuation in popularity of the sport. In order to demonstrate how the game has grown, I will rely on a number of business and marketing reports as well an interview from a Hall of Fame Lacrosse coach. The annual US Lacrosse Participation Report will provide significant statistical data.⁶ The report deals with the number of males and females who play lacrosse on organized teams in the U.S. Furthermore, the report also charts the percentage growth of the game in recent years.

Finally, the core component of my thesis is how race factors into Lacrosse and its popularity. To find the answer, I will examine several books as well as a documentary and a NCAA Student Athlete Ethnicity Report. My interview with esteemed Lacrosse coach Paul Wehrum should also provide insight into the popularity of Lacrosse.

The history of Lacrosse has been documented mostly completely through scholarly work, including Thomas Vennum's *Little Brother of War*. In the book Vennum shows how the Native American tradition has evolved into the fastest growing game in America. Yet the author is quick to switch gears to the early roots

⁶ 2010 Participation Survey, (Baltimore, MD: US Lacrosse, 2010).

of the game. Vennum discusses Lacrosse in Huron country, Iroquois country, Cherokee Reservation as well anecdotes from Montreal, Fort Michilimackinac (involving the



Ojibwe and Sauk tribes), and Fort Gibson (involving the Choctaw tribe). Vennum also is able to shed some light on the origin of the name “Lacrosse” as well as offering some insight into the early techniques, equipment, size of fields and uniforms that were used by Native Americans. Vennum investigates the significance in the early game, whether it is as a substitute for war, for pleasure, for ritual or for gambling purposes. To learn more about the game Vennum also employs an anthropological approach by gleaning information from art depicting early Lacrosse played by Native Americans.⁷ Vennum then shifts his focus to the more recent history of the game as he talks about rule changes applied to Lacrosse by Euro-Americans in the late 19th century, when Lacrosse rules were first nationalized. The author analyzes Lacrosse in more contemporary times by revealing how Lacrosse played in 1991 by young adolescents at the Niagara-Wheatfield High School differs from how the game was played by early Native Americans and how the sport has taken on a different meaning.

⁷ Vennum, *Little Brother of War*, 154.

In a similar book, *Lacrosse Legends by the First Americans*, Vennum takes a different approach to discussing the history of Lacrosse. While Vennum does indulge in sharing some basic historical information, he focuses more of *Lacrosse Legends* on the personal aspect side of the Native American tradition. The author begins his book by relaying old, Native American Lacrosse fables. For Native Americans, in mythical times animals and humans freely intermixed and many stories tell about animals playing the game alongside humans. Specifics about the game such as the sticks, ball, the face off, and cheating and gambling also accompany the stories. This book deals more with the religious and traditional side of Lacrosse than Vennum's *Little Brother of War*. *Lacrosse Legends* shares many stories taken from primary sources and discusses at length the role of the medicine man as a ritualistic leader in the sport. Vennum then spends a considerable part of the book discussing the cultural heroes who came from the Ho-Chunk, Menominee and Ojibwe tribes and how these men contributed to Lacrosse and its history.⁸ Another aspect of this book that is not mentioned in *Little Brother of War* is the role of women, as well as how teams and positions were created, team size, and violence in the game. The author is precise in explaining how Native Americans played the game with an air of stoicism and adults even used the game to teach their children discipline and composure.⁹ Similar to *Little Brother of War*, *Lacrosse Legends* deals with the strong relationship between Lacrosse and warfare as well as the athletic

⁸ Vennum, *Lacrosse Legends*, 97.

⁹ Vennum, *Lacrosse Legends*, 143.

garb adorned by participants. Vennum concludes by exposing how the traditional aspect of Lacrosse has been diluted, as synthetic sticks have ousted traditional wooden sticks and college recruiters and professional leagues have taken the most talented players from Native American communities.¹⁰ Even though the original Native American Lacrosse game has all but disappeared, the author notes a number of examples of how players today have adopted rituals from the past.

While Vennum's books will aid mightily in constructing a successful overview of Lacrosse, there are an array of other sources that will also help in this endeavor, although most other sources deal with a specific topic mentioned in one of Vennum's books. On US Lacrosse's website, Vennum offers a condensed version of the cultural roots of Lacrosse. *Life Magazine's* "Cherokee Stickball" discusses the equipment and rules used by the Cherokee tribe while playing the sport and the article also provides content on the brutality of the Native American tradition.¹¹ William Baker's book *Sports in the Western World* provides valuable information on not only Lacrosse but also other popular sports such as Ice Hockey, Baseball, Football, NASCAR and Basketball, and therefore presents an opportunity to compare certain aspects of each sport.¹² Baker's book also offers a different perspective on western sports than Vennum. Bob Korba's journal article "Brotherhood of Battle" delves precisely with the function of Lacrosse as a substitute for war. While Lacrosse had a number of other functions, Korba's specificity reveals interesting

¹⁰ Vennum, *Lacrosse Legends*, 145.

¹¹ "Cherokee Stickball." *Life Magazine* (November 11, 1946), 90-92.

¹² Baker, *Sports in the Western World*.

information regarding the reason behind why Native Americans played Lacrosse.¹³

Eugene McCluney's journal article "Lacrosse: Combat of the Spirits" deals with the function of Lacrosse as a spiritual ritual. While sometimes Lacrosse was used to vent aggression, it also took on a curative function according to McCluney.¹⁴

Lacrosse continues to be one of the most poorly documented sports in America, and the role of race in the sport has even less information available.¹⁵ Michael L. Seigel's *Race to Injustice* does not deal with the history of Lacrosse as explicitly as either of Thomas Vennum's books. *Race to Injustice* takes on an entirely different focus. Instead of discussing the history of Lacrosse, Seigel narrows his scope to the 2006 Duke Lacrosse Rape Case.¹⁶ Rather than going over the early stages of Lacrosse, the author deals more with how cultural aspects of the U.S. impacted the 2006 Duke Men's Lacrosse Team. While the book considers a wide range of issues, from academic freedom to DNA evidence and even prosecutorial ethics, I will be focusing on the impact of race, not only in one case but also more directly in the sport of Lacrosse. Seigel begins his book plainly by presenting the reader with the facts of the case; the most intriguing, of course being that the members of the 2006 Men's Duke Lacrosse team were white and the person prosecuting them was an African-American woman. The university administration's

¹³ Rod Korba and Bob Korba, "Brotherhood of Battle." *Saturday Evening Post* 248, no. 7 (10, 1976): 46-80.

¹⁴ Eugene McCluney, "Lacrosse: The Combat of the Spirits." *American Indian Quarterly* 1, no. 1 (Spring, 1974): pp. 34-42.

¹⁵ Vennum, *Little Brother of War*, 341.

¹⁶ Michael Seigel, *Race to Injustice: Lessons Learned from the Duke Lacrosse Rape Case*. Durham, N.C.: Carolina Academic Press, 2009.

reaction reveals how strained racial tension was in Durham, North Carolina. The author examines how minorities in the area had a history of oppression, and how the race of the defendants may have impacted the fateful night. The author also mentions the impact of race in political correctness and in racial profiling. Through Seigel's discussion of race, the reader is able to see how this dynamic affects our country even in the 21st century and thus how it affects the game of Lacrosse.

While *Race to Injustice* offers commentary on America's current standing with racial tension, there is an assortment of other sources that document race in America's past. Theda Perdue's *The Cherokee Nation and the Trail of Tears* provides a more historical-based source relating to America's actions taken towards Native Americans in the 19th century.¹⁷ *The Real All Americans* by Sally Jenkins explains the role of race in 20th century American society with regards to Football. Not only does the book explain racial tensions in 20th century America, but racial tension between Native Americans and whites in the context of sport.¹⁸

Alisha Ricardi's article "Diversifying Lacrosse Still a Work in Progress," the documentary *The Morgan Lacrosse Story* and the book *Ten Bears* all offer contemporary views of race in American sports; *Ten Bears* and the documentary deal with the obstacles an all-black college Lacrosse team faced as recently as 1975.¹⁹ Meanwhile Ricardi's article discusses the implications behind the

¹⁷ Michael D. Green and Theda Perdue, *The Cherokee Nation and the Trail of Tears* (Penguin Library of American Indian History, New York: Viking, 2007).

¹⁸ Sally Jenkins, *The Real all Americans: The Team that Changed a Game, a People, a Nation* (1st ed. New York: Doubleday, 2007).

¹⁹ Chip Silverman and Miles Harrison, *Ten Bears* (Positive Publications Books, 2001).

phenomenon of Lacrosse having such a small amount of minority sports stars. A primary source that will assist in dissecting the role of race in Lacrosse is the *2009-2010 NCAA Student Athlete Ethnicity Report*, which will provide hard data on the ethnic breakdown among NCAA sports.²⁰

The popularity of Lacrosse is a current and hot topic as it has only grown to its current standing in the U.S. sports culture in recent history. Therefore it is not surprising that many of the sources concerning the popularity of Lacrosse consist of articles and data rather than scholarly texts. Primary sources that offer useful statistical information on the popularity of the game consist of the *2010 U.S. Lacrosse Participation Survey* and laxpower.com (a Lacrosse forum and database). This information is no longer a well-kept secret as numerous media sources have written about the rise of Lacrosse. Kelly Evans and Jeffrey Trachtenberg's article in the *Wall Street Journal Online* titled "Lacrosse Muscles its Way West" not only contemplates the reasoning behind the growth of the sport, but also offers data on its popularity. Another aspect that Evans and Trachtenberg consider is how the sport has appealed to both men and women. Similar to the *Wall Street Journal* article, Rick Burton and Norm O'Reilly's "Why Lacrosse's Popularity is Spreading" provides statistical information and systematically breaks down how and why the sport has grown so rapidly. Since Burton and O'Reilly's article comes from a

²⁰ NCAA. *2009-2010 NCAA Student-Athlete Ethnicity Report*. Accessed November 1, 2011. <http://www.ncaapublications.com/p-4214-student-athlete-ethnicity-2009-10-ncaa-student-athlete-ethnicity-report.aspx>.

nationally recognized newspaper their information delivers a fair barometer on how the general public in America view the sport.

Historically, Lacrosse is a relatively untapped reservoir for historians with most information coming from a relatively limited collection of select works. This phenomenon cannot only be attributed to the lack of interest in the game until recently, but also to the fact that Native Americans were the people who almost exclusively played Lacrosse. Native Americans did not have written documentation of their history; they passed down the rules, customs and stories associated with the game through oral tradition.²¹ Therefore, comparative to other sports, historians have a relatively small amount of information to access when considering the roots of Lacrosse. Yet as the popularity of the game grows, more and more has been written about the sport as it comes into the national sporting landscape. While the future appears bright for the sport of Lacrosse, its past has been smeared by discriminatory actions taken by white U.S. citizens.

When considering how race has affected the rise in popularity of Lacrosse, it is vital to understand the background of the history of Lacrosse. From there it is important to attain a grasp of what relations were like between Native Americans and whites, especially in the 19th and 20th century and up to the present day and how these interactions influence Lacrosse currently. After developing an understanding of Lacrosse's history and race relations in the U.S. we will then turn to the rise in popularity of Lacrosse and its peculiar timing. By combining

²¹ Vennum, *Little Brother of War*, 342.

knowledge from the early years of Lacrosse in the U.S. with information up to the present day, one will clearly be able to see how Lacrosse's stunted growth and its sudden expansion are both intricately related to the racial groups who play the game.

The Roots of Native American Lacrosse

Lacrosse was being practiced long before early 17th century Jesuits, who were the French speakers that gave the game its name, arrived in Huronia. Each Native American tribe had a different name for the sport; tribal names often described the way the sport was played. For instance the Onondaga tribe called the game *dehuntshegwaes*, which means “they [men] hit a round object” and the Ojibwe tribe called the game *bagaa’atowe* that translates to “they hit something.” Upon arriving among the Huron in present day Ontario, in the 1630s the French Jesuits saw a resemblance between the curved sticks used in the sport and the Catholic bishop’s tall staff that takes the form of a shepherd’s crook. The origins of the name therefore come from the name “crosse” used by the French to describe a game using a curved stick and ball.

The many variations of Lacrosse that we practice today, such as Box Lacrosse, as well as women’s and men’s field Lacrosse all descended from the early Native American ball game that used a wooden, curved, netted stick. Much of the history of Lacrosse among the Native Americans had been passed down generation-to-generation through folklore and oral tradition, which included supernatural beings that were personifications of various elements of nature, such as the Sun and Moon. These celestial beings served as role models for Native Americans and provided a mode of conduct for proper societal behavior. ¹

The stories that supplied a history were the responsibility of a revered older male or female in a tribe to share with others. These men who acted as a historian

¹ Thomas Vennum, *Lacrosse Legends of the First Americans* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), 2.

were referred to as a “medicine man” or “conjurer.”² In Native American culture the term “medicine” takes on a different connotation than the typical meaning in current American society. Rather than merely providing substances to heal or cure, the medicine man was believed to hold discreet super-natural powers. Medicine men were believed to be able to have power over events such as weather, success in a hunt or war and even the outcome in Lacrosse. Because the medicine man was thought to have such control over every aspect of life the Native American community treated their conjurer with much respect and deference, almost to the point of a deity. The power each medicine man held not only came from their natural ability, but also from their aptitude to use plants and animals from the natural world in order to create unnatural results.³

Medicine men also prepared each individual on a Lacrosse team for their game. This ritual often included, emetics, sweat baths, “scratching,” and sympathetic magic. Conjurers produced emetic substances by boiling certain plants in order to purify each Lacrosse player. This purification process also included other liquids and ointments, which were rubbed on each player’s skin. To further purify the players, the medicine man required each player to take a sweat bath. Much like present-day saunas, water was poured onto hot rocks that in turn produced vapor to make the players sweat and thus rid their bodies of any impurities.⁴ To perform “scratching,” medicine men used an implement containing teeth from a rattlesnake that acted like teeth on a comb. The teeth were attached to

² Vennum, *Lacrosse Legends*, 4.

³ Frederick Hoxie, *Encyclopedia of North American Indians* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1996), 180.

⁴ Vennum, *Lacrosse Legends*, 92.

a handle and the piece of equipment, called a *kanuga* in Cherokee meaning “surgical tool” was brought over a player’s body more than one hundred times.⁵ This action was done not only to open wounds so that the body could absorb healing ointments and lotions, but also to enact a form of sympathetic magic. Sympathetic magic refers to the belief that by attaching a piece of an animal to a person, that person will then inherit the attributes of that animal. Therefore after “scratching” was performed the player was thought to have the ability to strike his opponent with the speed of a rattlesnake. Other forms of sympathetic magic include weaving a piece of a bat’s wing into the webbing of a player’s stick or placing a turkey feather in a player’s hair. Sympathetic magic was not only used by medicine men to help their own team, but also as a precautionary tool. For example, Eastern Cherokee players were forbidden to eat rabbit because it was thought that if they consumed rabbit they would assume the characteristics of a timid, easily frightened rabbit.

Therefore, when Native Americans played Lacrosse, the medicine man was often employed to act as a type of coach who oversaw the game.⁶ The few regulations that were created were done so by the omniscient medicine man. Every piece of advice medicine men offered came from the rich history of folklore that served as a guide in Native American life.

Some of these older myths portrayed animals as star players who freely intermixed with humans in many aspects of life.⁷ Animalistic and human behaviors were therefore believed to exist in both animals and humans. Another example is

⁵ Vennum, *Lacrosse Legends*, 93.

⁶ Vennum, *Lacrosse Legends*, 5.

⁷ Vennum, *Lacrosse Legends*, 17.

the Eastern Cherokee story of “The Great Game in Which the Birds Defeat the Quadrupeds.”⁸ According to legend a great ball game was arranged between the birds and all four legged creatures. As the game was about to commence two small creatures, smaller than mice, climbed up a tree and asked the captain of the birds to join their team. The captain proceeded to ask the four-legged creatures why they did not join the other four-legged animals. To this question the diminutive animals replied that they had been laughed at and rejected by the larger four-legged creatures. Taking pity on the small animals the captain of the birds allowed them to join the side of the birds in the game. To provide a makeshift wing the winged animals proceeded to take pieces of leather from a drumhead and fasten them to one of the small creature’s legs, and thus the bat was created. The bat proved to be very useful as he expertly darted around the sky, never letting the ball fall to the ground as he practiced before the game. Upon seeing this useful addition to their team the birds realized that they did not have time to execute the same procedure to the other animal. Therefore the birds stretched the skin between the fore and hind feet of the other small creature and thus the origination of the flying squirrel came into being. As the newly created flying squirrel tested out his new apparatus, the birds became overjoyed with how gracefully the flying squirrel was able to navigate the skies. When the game commenced the flying squirrel carried the ball up to the tree tops and carried it for some time until it fell toward the ground; right before the ball was to reach the ground, the bat swooped in and snatched the ball away from the four legged animals and threw it in the goal, thus winning victory for the birds.

⁸ *Tewaarathon (Lacrosse): Akwesasne’s Story of Our National Game* (North American Indian Traveling College, 1978), 8.

In order to summon the aid of the bat and flying squirrel in Lacrosse games Native Americans tied a small piece of a bat's wing to his stick.⁹

Not only does the story explain one of the many superstitions/traditions in the game, but it also serves to display the talents needed to be successful at the sport, such as the speed of a deer, the durability of a terrapin, the strength of a bear, and the elusiveness and maneuverability of a bird. The importance of animals came from the Native American belief that every creature on earth is a representation of a spiritual head of the species. These creatures were put on earth to help man, whether it was to provide meat for food, fur for warmth or feathers for decoration. Therefore, when a Native American hunted, they made a sacrifice in honor of the spiritual head of whatever species they were hunting.¹⁰

The legend of "A Dog's Power Beats the Old Chief," demonstrates the Iroquois tribe's beliefs about supernatural dogs. In the story, a dog takes the form of a man to play an evil chief in a game of Lacrosse; he makes a wager for control of the tribe and defeats the evil chief.¹¹ The story serves to not only display the reverence Native Americans hold for animals, but also how Lacrosse served as a gambling outlet for Native Americans.

Stories of wagering in folklore often exaggerate the severity of the bets, but in reality Native Americans still wagered significantly high stakes on Lacrosse. An example of a high stakes wager includes how betting a person's wife and children

⁹ "The Cherokee Ball Play," *American Anthropologist* 3 (1890): 105-132.

¹⁰ Hoxie, *North American Indians*, 261.

¹¹ J. Curtin and J.N.P. Hewitt, *Twenty-eighth Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1911), 234-236.

were once acceptable practices in Native American communities.¹² Not all wagers were this extreme, as bets could be something as simple as a blanket. To guard and keep track of bets, tribe elders took the position of stakeholders. Stakeholders inserted sticks into the ground as a way to register bets and held the wagered items under tents or tied them to a “betting pole.”¹³ Placing bets became so customary in some tribes, such as the Eastern Cherokee, that a small ritual was initiated and each team stood at their goal line with their wagers and walked to the mid line where betting took place. While one may assume that gambling created some economic turbulence, the net profit of an individual or community inevitably evened out because of rematch Lacrosse games.¹⁴ Rematch games also served as a means to ease the anger of a losing team, because they could request an opportunity to win back their lost property. Nevertheless, fights following games occurred mostly because the losing team blamed the other team’s medicine man for using magical charms to prevent or aid in scoring.

Lacrosse has not just been used as a spiritual game or for gambling, but was also critical in war. During the Pontiac Wars, when the Native Americans and French allies defeated the British, the Mesquakie tribe played the Ojibwe tribe in an exhibition game outside of Fort Michilimackinac on June 4th, 1783.¹⁵ The Native Americans played the game as a distraction so that they could take over the British fort. The British, intrigued with the brutality and grace of the sport came out of the fort to spectate. Once outside, Native American spectators encouraged the British

¹² Vennum, *Lacrosse Legends*, 36.

¹³ Vennum, *Lacrosse Legends*, 39.

¹⁴ Vennum, *Lacrosse Legends*, 39.

¹⁵ Vennum, *Lacrosse Legends*, 36-37.

gentlemen to place wagers so that the British men became even more focused on the game. The women of the tribes came to the match as seemingly innocent spectators, but in reality they were hiding weapons under their shawls and blankets. As the game progressed, the women made their way toward the fort's entrance, so that when the ball was deliberately thrown into the fort's entrance they could discretely hand the Lacrosse player hand knives or hatchets as the Lacrosse player chased after the ball. Once inside the player hid the weapon and return to play. Through this ruse the Native Americans were able to take over the fort and use it as a bargaining chip in relations with the British.

Yet another function Lacrosse served was acting as a healing rite to restore an ill person's health. Starting in the early seventeenth century, the Huron people played a ceremonial game to restore an ill person's health.¹⁶ No matter what the reason a Lacrosse game was being played for, a very large crowd would often form, especially when tribes played against each other. There has been an account of ten thousand spectators at one match, when the Creek tribe played against a Choctaw tribe to settle a boundary dispute.¹⁷

As each Lacrosse match was planned and advertised ahead of time the game always was also used as a means of social gathering. Lacrosse drew the community together not only because of what was at stake, depending on the game, but also because of the personal connection and pride each individual had for their respective team. Most recently in 1990 a Mohawk community was deeply divided on a gambling issue that eventually led to a car burning and shootings. Two years

¹⁶ Vennum, *Lacrosse Legends*, 153.

¹⁷ Vennum, *Lacrosse Legends*, 38.

later, a Lacrosse league was formed including the opposing factions and played a critical role in restoring peace.¹⁸ These examples not only display how lacrosse has brought people together, but also how the game served as a substitute for war. In the case of the Creek and Choctaw tribes, instead of resorting to war to settle a territory dispute they turned to Lacrosse and for the Mohawk people they used Lacrosse as a way to bond as a community.

Though there are many reasons to play Lacrosse, two of the most popular uses for the sport were as a war substitute and gambling. The Native American tradition is associated so closely with war because of folklore connecting the two practices. The story “Playing for Heads” relates the ball used in Lacrosse with the head of the victim who lost the match. In the story, a young man and his evil mother gamble using dice and a dispute over the use of the dice ensues. To settle the dispute the young man plays his opponent in a game of Lacrosse and loses the match. The victor then preaches to his community “‘you can have the heads of the old woman and her son.’ The two heads were cut off, and the boys played with the old woman’s head over the whole field.”¹⁹ This story not only stresses the violence and war like nature that takes place during the game, but also the inherent practice of wagering on games.

Early accounts of the game of Lacrosse tend to exaggerate the brutality of the sport as most European travelers were used to milder sports that were regulated and played in a gentlemanly fashion. Lacrosse still had a healthy dose of violence, mostly because of its close association with war and the absence of Euro-American

¹⁸ Vennum, *Lacrosse Legends*, 154.

¹⁹ Curtin and Hewitt, *American Ethnology*, 372-374.

style rules that did not come into play until 1880.²⁰ In a Cayuga game, players were permitted to slash an opponent as long as they had two hands on the stick; the leniency of the rules went so far as to allow players to lift opponents off of the ground with their sticks and toss them aside.²¹ It was not until the nineteenth century when Native Americans started playing Canadians that they began wearing protective equipment. This equipment was adopted from other sports games, such as Ice Hockey and Baseball.

Violence was not only tolerated and accepted in Native American Lacrosse, it was insisted upon in some instances. In Ojibwe Lacrosse, if a player refused to pass the ball, his opponent could yell “*bagadoon*” (get rid of it). If the player carrying the ball did not move the ball after three commands it was acceptable for the opponent to use his stick to strike the guilty party in the head, almost always ending in an unconscious player.²² There is a myth that early Native American Lacrosse was so brutal that the game left scores of dead and wounded players on the field after the game. The truth behind a story such as this stems from the skirmishes and incidents that happened after the game had been concluded. Therefore, it was not necessarily Lacrosse that left people brutalized, but moreover the angered players venting their frustrations afterwards.²³

The most vital pieces of equipment in playing Lacrosse are the sticks and balls, but because they were made of natural materials, very few of original examples have been preserved. Native American Lacrosse sticks were made of wood

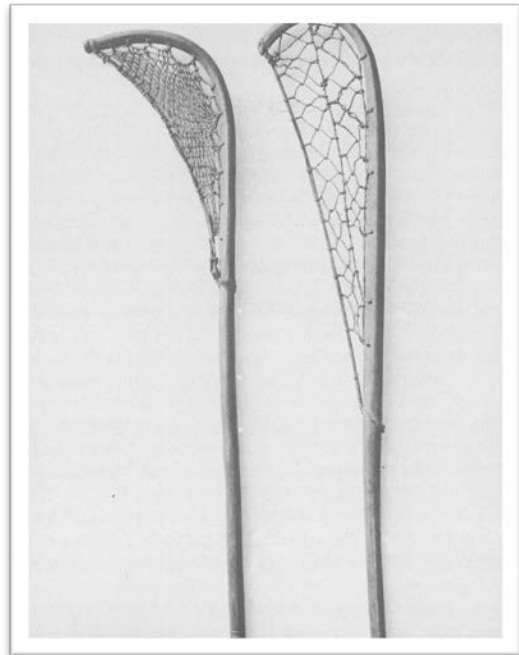
²⁰ Venum, *Lacrosse Legends*, 48.

²¹ Venum, *Lacrosse Legends*, 127.

²² Venum, *Lacrosse Legends*, 129.

²³ Venum, *Lacrosse Legends*, 142.

and rawhide or catgut; wooden pegs were used to connect pieces of the Lacrosse stick. Once Europeans introduced metal, Native Americans employed this strong resource to connect pieces of wood. However, before European influence, in order to bend the sticks Native Americans steamed the sticks and then wrapped the pliable hickory around the circumference of a tree. After the introduction of metal, the use of a tree in bending the wood was abandoned, as Native Americans used a metal loop to hold a Lacrosse stick's curve. Using either technique, a Lacrosse stick took about six months to dry, and then be released from the bent position. Next, the bark is removed from the stick and the shaft is whittled down to the desired size. Holes are then drilled into the top of the stick to provide a means for stringing the stick. Before being strung the stick is sanded and lacquered. Often women were the ones who strung the sticks, either with catgut or rawhide while the men were the ones who collected and crafted the wood.²⁴

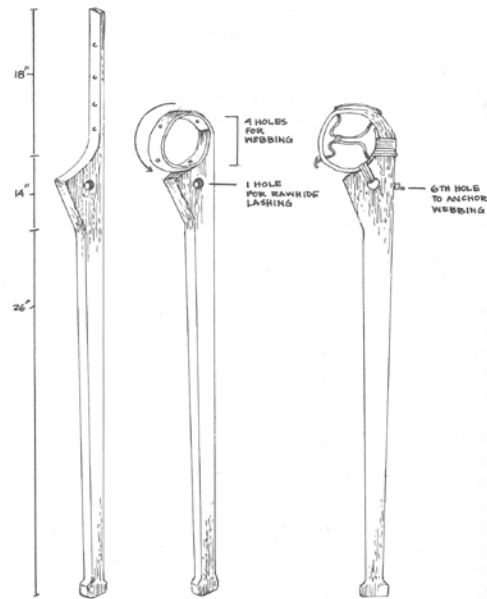


The Iroquois living in upstate New York and northeastern North America utilized the stick most similar to what is currently used. The crook in their stick's head leaves a V-shape area to carry the ball. The crook in the stick was not entirely enclosed, so the crook is connected back

²⁴ Vennum, *Lacrosse Legends*, 10.

to the shaft of the stick by tying a string from the end of the crook to a groove along the handle.²⁵

Native Americans living in the Great Lakes regions used a different type of Lacrosse stick. This stick used a three-and-a-half foot piece of wood at the end of which a fully enclosed cup slightly larger than the size of the ball was tied to the wood by webbing. The greatest difference between the sticks used in the Great Lakes areas and that of the Iroquois is that the sticks used in the Great



Lakes territory abuts itself, while the Iroquois stick does not and has a much larger area for which to control the ball. With only one wall on the head to control the ball, a small pocket in the stringing was created so that the ball did not fall out of the open side of the stick.²⁶ In early sticks this pocket was barely visible, but throughout time the pocket has become larger and more profound.

While in most parts of North America Lacrosse was played with one stick per player, in the southeastern part of what is currently the United States, Lacrosse players employed two sticks each, one for each hand.²⁷ The sticks also were generally two to two-and-a-half-feet long, (traditional length ranged from three to five feet) lighter in weight, and therefore less durable. Length differed from player

²⁵ Vennum, *Lacrosse Legends*, 24.

²⁶ Vennum, *Lacrosse Legends*, 42.

²⁷ Vennum, *Lacrosse Legends*, 27.

to player depending on a players' position or their personal preference. Players with smaller sticks could protect their sticks from other opponents more easily, while players with larger sticks had the defensive advantage. At the end of southeastern



sticks was a cup (today called the head) with one stick having a slightly smaller cup so that the player could more effectively carry the ball between his sticks.²⁸ Because a lighter and smaller (barely larger than a golf ball) ball was used, the lacing used in the cups consisting of animal skin or twisted bark was minimal.²⁹ Coupled with the carrying technique, southeastern Lacrosse relied heavily on running and ground balls rather than passing. Instead of scooping up a ground ball like most traditional players, a southeastern man utilized a pincer technique to gain possession of the ball between his two sticks.³⁰

The other vital piece of equipment used in Lacrosse is the ball, which was one of two types. One type of a traditional Native American Lacrosse ball was a solid round, hard sphere made from wood or baked clay covered in animal skin. The other kind of Lacrosse ball had an animal skin covering that was stuffed with moss, grass or animal skin. Each Lacrosse ball was decorated in a unique manner depending on ritualistic associations. Blue stood for death, cold, winter, and the directional north, while red symbolized life, warmth, spring, and south. Therefore

²⁸ Vennum, *Lacrosse Legends*, 25.

²⁹ Vennum, *Lacrosse Legends*, 28.

³⁰ Vennum, *Lacrosse Legends*, 27.

the color of the ball was matched with the time of the year that a game was being played. The manufacturing of Lacrosse balls was the exclusive privilege of the medicine men because the balls were thought to be capable of supernatural performance. The medicine men often added a special substance to the ball to give it supernatural abilities, such as a flea to make the ball lively. Because of the supernatural abilities associated with Lacrosse balls, special security was required so that an opponent could not change the composition of the ball. Lacrosse balls were so highly regarded that there were special ceremonies before games so that the medicine men could give them a special blessing.³¹

The only universal rule between all tribes when considering the game of Lacrosse is the prohibition of a player using their hands to carry the ball. Clues to this one well known rule stems from the Native American language itself, as the Cherokee word for foul is *uwagi*, means “with the hand.”³² Yet even this cardinal rule was sometimes amended. Before 1943, the Cherokee nation allowed players to carry the ball as long as they had originally gained possession of it with their stick. Hands could also be used to transfer the ball from one player’s stick to their teammates. The closest comparison to a modern referee was “stickmen” or “drivers” who wore turbans and policed the field with long willow switches. The role of “stickmen” was not a widely used position among Native American tribes and the main purpose they served was to break up any prolonged fighting or wrestling by striking the guilty parties involved on the back with the switches. Yet even this

³¹ Venum, *Lacrosse Legends*, 50-53.

³² Venum, *Lacrosse Legends*, 55.

action was rare, as the direct involvement of a “driver” was only deemed appropriate when the fighting significantly slowed the game.

Without standardized rules, Native Americans often played the sport with no boundary lines and often quarreled over what constituted as a scoring play. Before the introduction of goals, Lacrosse was played with an erect pole at each team’s end. In order to score the opponent had to hit the pole with the ball in the air or by striking the post while the ball was still being carried in the pocket of the stick. Perhaps the only role that survives from early Native American ball play is that of the scorekeeper. Sometimes the “stickmen” acted as scorekeepers as well, but often scorekeepers stayed away from the play and kept score of the games by inserting sharpened wooden pegs into the ground or making marks in the earth.³³ Restrictions on how to play the game did not come until the mid-nineteenth century when the Choctaw people outlawed actions such as head butting and slashing. These offenses were penalized, not only by physical punishment from “stickmen” but also a five-goal penalty and even ejection from the game.³⁴

A face-off occurred to begin the game and after every scored goal. Like almost every aspect of Lacrosse the face-off’s roots lie in a Native American fable. In a Ho-Chunk legend the sport of Lacrosse is depicted as being played by the Wangeregi and Manegi; at this match the ball was tossed up into the air at each face-off.³⁵ The members of each team formed two lines facing each other about five yards apart and a medicine man paced between the two lines uttering ritual chants

³³ Vennum, *Lacrosse Legends*, 55.

³⁴ Vennum, *Lacrosse Legends*, 143.

³⁵ Paul Radin, *37th Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology*, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1923), 72-73.

until he tossed the ball high in the air, signaling the beginning of the game. While this face-off ritual was the most commonly found among Native American tribes, there were a few variations of the face-off. In a Mohawk-Seneca game in 1897 there were accounts of the face-off taking place by the ball being placed between two sticks raised in the air, much like the current face-off technique used in women's Lacrosse.³⁶ Yet another Mohawk face-off description described players forming two lines facing each other and the ball being dropped (similar to an Ice Hockey face-off) between the opposing players.³⁷

The players who took part in these games were almost always male and documentation of female participation is very limited.³⁸ From the myth "He Who Wears Human Heads for Earrings Defeats the Giants" a rare reference to a woman playing Lacrosse is made, and thus does infer that women did play the game.³⁹ Yet accounts of women playing Lacrosse are sparse, mostly because the sport, much like war or hunting was regarded as a male activity. When women played, it was either in a women's only game or in a purely recreational mixed gender game. In mixed gender games, Native Americans gave a handicap to the women's team. The Dakota tribe's handicap was 5 females to every 1 male, while other tribes moved the goals closer together on the field of play.⁴⁰

³⁶ Vennum, *Lacrosse Legends*, 96.

³⁷ J.N.B. Hewitt, "Iroquois Game of Lacrosse," *American Anthropologist* 5 (1892): 191.

³⁸ Vennum, *Lacrosse Legends*, 105.

³⁹ A piece of folklore describing an adventure of a cultural hero named Red Horn. Paul Radin, "A Study in Aboriginal Literature," *Memoirs of the Anthropological Journal of Linguistics* 14, no. 3 (1948): 38.

⁴⁰ Vennum, *Lacrosse Legends*, 106.

The players of Lacrosse were most often divided up into teams based on community affiliation. If there were ever an argument over a player's affiliation, the disputing tribes were represented by their "Big Warriors" whose other civic responsibilities included declaring war and punishing wrong doers in their village. When meeting, "Big Warriors" most often cited the player in question's lineage and current family members in order to prove what community they should affiliate themselves with. If no agreement could be made the match was simply cancelled. For Lacrosse games between people of the same community, two captains were selected. As each player arrived at the field for play they deposited their stick into a pile. As was custom for the Potawatomi tribe, once all the sticks had been put forth, the captains were blindfolded and then took turns selecting one stick at a time. Each stick had some sort of personal identification markers on it that were subtly carved into the stick. Thus, each stick represented a player and the division of sticks into two piles represented two teams.⁴¹ The number of players on a team varied significantly, depending on the tribe and the purpose of the game. Early illustrations of Lacrosse depict thousands of players, but this portrayal has no documented evidence as games between tribes settling territory disputes most likely had as many as three hundred people per side, while ritual/spiritual games tended to have a small (less than ten), set amount of players as prescribed by legends.⁴² As the sport evolved in Native American culture there was a decrease in team size toward the more ritual team size that also created an emphasis on positional skill.

⁴¹ Vennum, *Lacrosse Legends*, 116.

⁴² Vennum, *Lacrosse Legends*, 118.

The tallest and strongest players were positioned in a “center fighter,” “shortstop” or “center knocker” position so that they could win the face-off, while other positions were less formal. In order to guard against a goal, defending players congregated near the goal or scoring post in an effort to block the opposition from scoring. As this strategy progressed some players were better than others at blocking the ball and thus the goalie position eventually came into being.⁴³ Yet, in the years before 1850, players were often described more by their playing attributes than by a particular position, for instance, Choctaw names included *palki* (fast player), *sala’na wasona* (slow player), *siti* (snake), *canasa* (moccasin snake), and *opa niskin* (owl eyes). The first well-documented evidence of Native Americans embracing specialized positions was in the 1850s when the Mohawks played Canadians.⁴⁴

Each player also wore unique athletic garb to each Lacrosse game. While the individual chose each selected athletic outfit, most clothing choices encompassed a ceremonial tailpiece made out of a wide variety of material, ranging from animal hair to beads.⁴⁵ These ceremonial tailpieces were of such religious importance that the Choctaw tribe continued wearing the tailpieces well into the twentieth century. Body paint, first worn by Native Americans going into battle was adopted into the sport for purposes of team identification. It was not until 1930 when the Montreal Amateur Athletic Association made a rule requiring six inch high numbers on the

⁴³ Vennum, *Lacrosse Legends*, 118.

⁴⁴ Vennum, *Lacrosse Legends*, 119.

⁴⁵ Vennum, *Lacrosse Legends*, 125.

back of jerseys that Native Americans started wearing jerseys with tribal affiliations.⁴⁶

Presently, most of Native American Lacrosse has been diluted through the introduction of other ethnicities into the sport, which did not happen until around 1850.⁴⁷ The vast number of rules added to the game and the introduction of synthetic materials to the game first occurred in 1970.⁴⁸ The original and traditional game of Lacrosse practiced around the Great Lakes is extinct, but the southeastern game using two sticks and tossing the ball up for face-offs is still played. While the Iroquois game of using V-shaped head stick does exist, it does so in different forms. Iroquois teams today mostly play Box Lacrosse, an adaptation of Iroquois Lacrosse introduced by Montreal Ice Hockey entrepreneurs in the 1930s.⁴⁹ The Iroquois stick itself becomes more and more sparse as technology improves and different synthetic materials have become most popular for Lacrosse sticks today. The Lacrosse head today not only consists of synthetic materials, but also encompasses a completely closed head. Since the Iroquois game is most similar to the men's Lacrosse game that is practiced by many college level teams, Iroquois players themselves have been enticed away from their communities. With promises of a higher education many talented Iroquois players have been recruited to play Division I and Division III Lacrosse.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Venum, *Lacrosse Legends*, 136.

⁴⁷ Venum, *Lacrosse Legends*, 47.

⁴⁸ Venum, *Lacrosse Legends*, 43.

⁴⁹ Box Lacrosse is an indoor version of the field sport.

⁵⁰ Venum, *Lacrosse Legends*, 145.

Even though Lacrosse played today by mainstream America is much different than the original Native American game, there are still a number of traditions that are practiced in the sport today that originated from Native American Lacrosse. Similar to the war paint that Native Americans applied to their bodies before the event, players today apply black paint under their eyes. Current Lacrosse players who adorn black eye paint often apply to their faces in a multitude of creative fashions. While the eye black does serve a functional purpose during especially sunny days, its use today is more so stylistic, as displayed by how players apply black eye paint ritualistically, no matter the weather. Also, it is common to see players on a team huddle together and prepare for the game by talking and raising their sticks together, much like how the Choctaw tribe began games first documented in 1834.⁵¹

While the game of Lacrosse does have a rich history and all Native Americans who play it do so with the upmost reverence for the game, European Americans did not treat Lacrosse and Native Americans humanely in the history of the United States of America. Most citizens of the U.S. know how their country was rife with prejudice at various times throughout its history. This prejudice has known no bounds as many ethnic minority groups has suffered from racism in the U.S. Native Americans were not excluded from this terrible fate, and Lacrosse suffered with them.

⁵¹ Venum, *Lacrosse Legends*, 148.

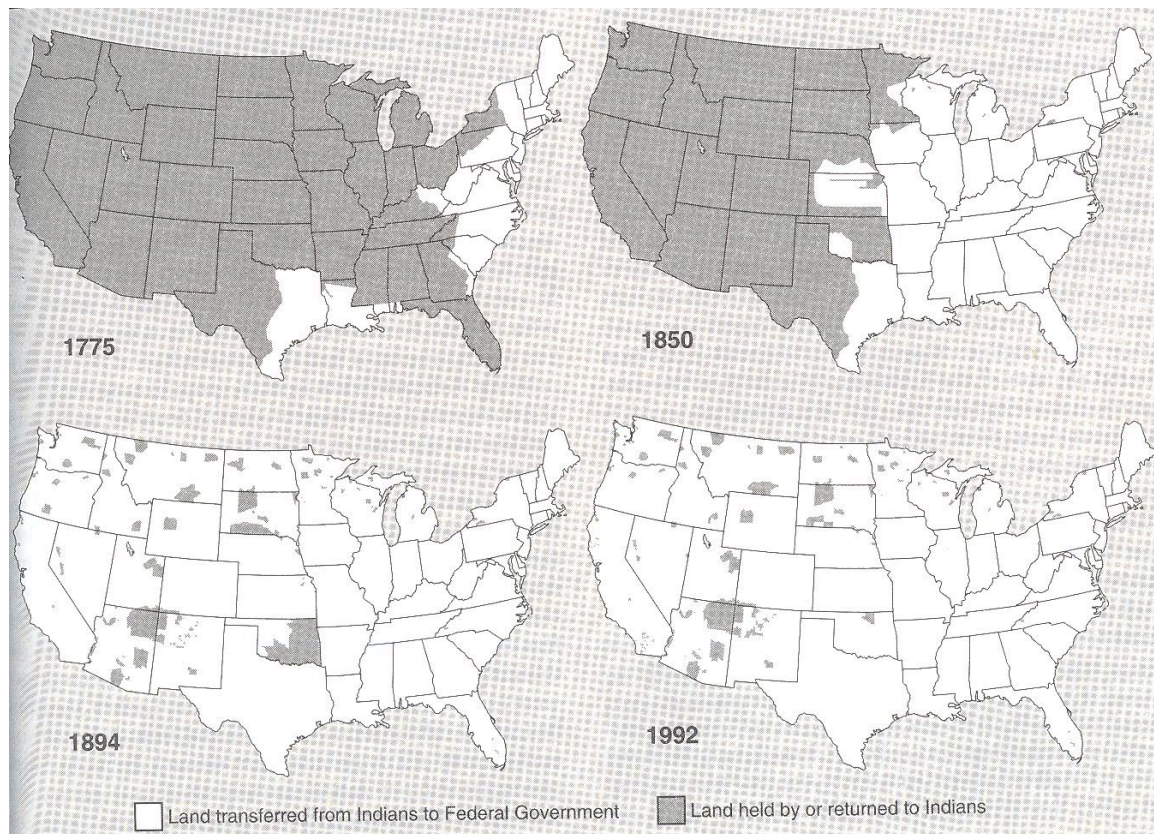
White America: A Brief Overview of Native American and European American Relations

Before Europeans settled in the Americas in the early sixteenth century, a diverse population of Native Americans already lived upon the land. When Europeans came to America they found a copious collection of distinct Native American nations, some of which included: Algonquin, Huron, Iroquois, Cherokees, Catawba, Yuchi, Natchez, Mobilians/Floridians and Dakotah/Sioux. Algonquin lived in southern Quebec and eastern Ontario in Canada, Cherokees lived in southeastern North America, Catawba originally lived in North and South Carolina, Yuchi inhabited areas in Tennessee and Kentucky, the Natchez lived in what is now Mississippi, Mobilians lived in the area of Florida, while the Sioux occupied Wisconsin, Minnesota as well as North and South Dakota.¹ Americas continually attempted to remove all elements of Native American culture from every tribe, including the tradition of Lacrosse, but when this attempt failed many Americans supported violent treatment towards Native Americans. While all Native Americans were subject to brutal treatment by white Americans, the Iroquois in the North East, Navaho in the west and the Cherokee tribe in the South East, were the recipients of more than their fair share of cruelty.

The graphic below depicts the land Native Americans owned in different time periods throughout history, ranging from 1775 to 1992. The shaded regions are the lands held by or returned to Native Americans and the white areas are the lands taken by the U.S. Federal Government from Native Americans. The graphic creates

¹ "Native American Language Net: Preserving and Promoting Indigenous American Indian Languages", accessed 12/17/2011, <http://www.native-languages.org>.

an effective visual aid in showing how the U.S. has taken a vast amount of land from Native Americans over the years. ²



In 1863 General James Carleton of the United States Army invaded Navaho territory in southwest California with instructions to open an overland mail route. General Carleton's goal was to relocate the Navahos to a small reservation in eastern New Mexico. There were a total of seven treaties between the United States and the Navaho tribe, but instead of addressing the situation through negotiation, General Carleton used a "scorched earth" policy. This policy consisted of destroying all Navaho structures and fields and forcibly marching several thousand Navahos over

² Frederick Hoxie, *Encyclopedia of North American Indians* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1996), 291.

three hundred miles. This excruciating forced migration, known as the “Long Walk,” was done during a harsh winter with no food or supplies and serves as a prime example of how the United States has mistreated Native Americans.³

The Iroquois in the North East also illustrate how Native Americans have been mistreated. Already feeling pressured from American colonists to move west, Some Iroquois tribes supported Great Britain in the Revolutionary War and some sided with the colonists. Regardless of what side the Iroquois took, the colonists forced the Iroquois into new cessions in the Fort Stanwix Treaty of 1784. The Fort Stanwix Treaty of 1784 compelled the Iroquois to cede western Pennsylvania and Ohio to the U.S. government. The Iroquois people were well aware of the force under which they had agreed to the treaty and therefore did not recognize the legality of the 1784 treaty. This belief, coupled with the U.S.’s encroachment of the Pennsylvania and Ohio lands led directly to the Indian wars of the 1780s and 1790s, where countless Iroquois were slaughtered.⁴

In the early nineteenth century, the United States forced the Cherokee nation to leave their land in southeastern America against their will and relocate west of the Mississippi. During this time, the U.S. also continued to institute legislation that limited all those who were not white male citizens. With such a system, elite white men continually were put into positions of power and therefore did not often consider the interest of Native Americans and only had loyalty to other white male citizens.⁵

³ Hoxie, *North American Indians*, 356.

⁴ Hoxie, *North American Indians*, 646.

⁵ Green and Perdue, *The Cherokee Nation*, XIV-XV.

These kinds of forced policies were not entirely new to Native Americans. Before the Navaho's "Long Walk" and the Iroquois's mistreatment in the 1780s the English negotiated treaties with the Cherokees that gave the Native American tribe the right to govern themselves as early as 1684. This treaty and others proved to be especially beneficial for the English in the form of military assistance, such as when the Cherokees helped them defeat the Tuscaroras in 1711-1713 or joined a Virginia expedition against the French in 1756. Yet relations began to fray as early as 1758 in the Anglo-Cherokee War that lasted until 1761. During the war the Cherokee and the British were allied against the French, but by 1759 the Cherokee, suspicious of British betrayal openly declared war against the Crown. Following the victory by the British and the increased tension between Native Americans and the English, the King issued the Proclamation of 1763. The Proclamation of 1763 was the first official regulation by the British government that encouraged Native Americans to move west.

The Proclamation of 1763 mandated that English settlers were prohibited from living west of the Appalachians, thus creating a distinct separation between the living areas of Native Americans and European settlers.⁶ Between the years of 1721 and 1777, the Cherokees entered into nine agreements with the English that effectively gave half of their land to the European settlers.⁷ While only the English government could acquire land, European settlers pressured the Cherokees to move west. With the end of the American Revolutionary War in 1783, the Treaty of Paris

⁶ Michael Green and Theda Purdue, *The Cherokee Nation and the Trail of Tears* (New York: Viking, 2007), 15-17.

⁷ Charles Royce, *The Cherokee Nation of Indians* (Washington, DC: Bureau of American Ethnology, 1887).

recognized the boundaries of the newly created United States of America, which constituted all land east of the Mississippi River between the Great Lakes and Spanish-owned Florida.⁸ The treaty made no mention of the Native Americans, who at the time lived on the land of the newly formed United States of America.

The United States of America grew rapidly and there was an increasing demand to settle more land, but after fighting a war with the British, the U.S. government did not have the money to purchase land from Native Americans. Therefore the U.S. adopted a policy that ignored Native American lands and created treaties that took huge allotment of lands without compensation, under the justification that the Native Americans were a defeated enemy. By applying this right of conquest doctrine to the Cherokee, the U.S. reasoned that the tribes had no right to the lands they had occupied and therefore should not receive compensation. Yet the first treaty that the Cherokee Nation signed did not include any of these unjust sentiments.

In 1785 Cherokees signed the Treaty of Hopewell, officially recognizing Cherokee land with an agreement to respect the boundaries. However this did not hold for long; Georgia and North Carolina confiscated large tracts of land with no compensation for the Cherokee. The Cherokee nation became furious and confronted secretary of war Henry Knox about the violations of the treaty. Knox came to the conclusion that Congress's aggressive confiscatory policies were to blame for the mounting tension between the U.S. and Native Americans. Furthermore other states encouraged individuals to invade Native American

⁸ Green and Perdue, *The Cherokee Nation*, 21.

Territory and take land. But without money or an effective army Knox could do little to soothe the Native Americans, as the states defended their actions behind the rights of warfare.⁹ The reasoning went along these lines: since Native Americans were technically living within the state's borders, the state involved had every right to remove the non-citizens from the land. Knox believed that a war with the Native Americans contradicted the principles of honor, justice and humanity that he had fought for in the Revolutionary War. Knox's opinion of Indian land rights is best summarized by his statement that:

The Indians, being the prior occupants, possess the right to the soil. It cannot be taken from them except by their consent, or by rights of conquest in case of a just war. To dispossess them on any other principle would be a great violation of the fundamental laws of nature.¹⁰

Knox's ultimate aim was to create an Indian policy that Native Americans would accept and also serve the aims of the states. Knox's vision was to bring "civilization" into Native Americans societies through western influences such as education, religion (Christianity) and the adoption of farming. Knox believed that "civilized" Native Americans would want to sell their land to the U.S. in order to gain a means to set up farming and business communities.¹¹ Yet Knox's influence was minimal, as the Articles of Confederation gave authority to the states when dealing with Native Americans within their boundaries. The federal government only was able to exert

⁹ Green and Perdue, *The Cherokee Nation*, 22-24.

¹⁰ D'Arcy, McNickle, *Native American Tribalism: Indian Survivals and Renewals* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 52.

¹¹ Green and Perdue, *The Cherokee Nation*, 25.

an influence in circumstances with Native Americans occupying land outside of the boundaries of the states.¹² But under the guidance of President George Washington, in 1790 the Trade and Intercourse Act was enacted, which declared that the United States recognized tribal sovereignty of Native Americans, the federal government conducted relations with tribes through treaty negotiation, that the United States only acquired land by buying it from willful Native Americans, and that the boundaries between U.S. citizens and Native Americans would be well defined.¹³ This treaty satisfied states such as Georgia and North Carolina because it provided an opportunity for them to obtain Cherokee land, and the treaty also proved valuable to Native Americans because the legal document, at least theoretically, made all Native Americans lands off limits to settlers.

Yet white settlers still invaded Native American land and the confrontation may have exploded into full-scale war if the Washington administration had not negotiated the Treaty of Holston in 1791. In the Treaty of Holston, the United States bought the fought-over land from the Cherokee Nation, created new defined boundaries and added a provision to the Hopewell Treaty that allowed the Cherokees to punish intruders as they saw fit. The Treaty of Holston also provided the Cherokee with “implements of husbandry,” including items such as plows axes and other tools that encouraged Knox’s idea of “civilizing” the Native Americans.¹⁴

¹² Virginia, *The Articles of Confederation; the Declaration of rights; the Constitution of the Commonwealth, and the articles of the definitive treaty between Great-Britain and the United States of America* (Richmond, VA: Dixon and Holt, 1784).

¹³ Green and Perdue, *The Cherokee Nation*, 27.

¹⁴ Charles Joseph Kappler and United States, *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1903), 29-33.

A year later, George Washington appointed a U.S. agent to live in Cherokee Nation to provide instruction to help the Cherokee “civilize” their society. These agents served as a liaison between the Cherokee and the U.S. government.¹⁵

Western influence continued invading Native American culture in 1799, as Christian missionaries set up a mission in Cherokee territory.¹⁶ By 1812 Methodist, Baptist, and the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions entered into the Cherokee mission field, all with the goal of converting Native Americans. Americans believed that western culture was superior to the Native American way of life and therefore attempted to smother Native Americans with western culture. But Native Americans continually made it clear that they were accepting these outsiders in an effort to provide education for their children, not to learn about a foreign religion. Much like Knox, missionaries constantly attempted to “westernize” Native Americans, by encouraging American-style cultivation, gender roles and disproving of Native American traditions, including games such as Lacrosse.¹⁷ One angered Mississippi citizen, H.S. Halbert shared the same perspective of most European Americans, that Native American culture was inferior to western culture and that Lacrosse was a major obstacle to the assimilation of Native Americans. In passionately pronouncing “The greatest obstacle in the way of the educational and religious progress [of the Mississippi Choctaw is ball play]. To put it mildly, the ball play is the most demoralizing institution in Mississippi,” Halbert not only shares the belief that the Native American way of life was backward, but also that their

¹⁵ Green and Perdue, *The Cherokee Nation*, 29.

¹⁶ Green and Perdue, *The Cherokee Nation*, 32.

¹⁷ Green and Perdue, *The Cherokee Nation*, 34.

practices, such as Lacrosse were to be avoided.¹⁸ Yet Native Americans steadfastly stood by their culture and traditions, such as Lacrosse.

While missionaries attempted to aid Native Americans while force-feeding them western culture, people of the church continually frowned upon the sport of Lacrosse because it interfered with church attendance and sometimes was used as a means to gamble.¹⁹ By the mid-eighteenth century, it was clear that Native Americans did not support the western lifestyle that missionaries and other European Americans were trying to force upon them. Some Native American men simply refused to practice American agricultural techniques, and chose to instead herd cattle, hunted and engage in commerce. In some Native American households, it was tradition that women dealt with the cultivation of crops while the men tended to cattle and provided meat for the family.²⁰ Western culture therefore was a conflicting ideology to traditional Native American lifestyle.

While European Americans were not hesitant to move Native Americans off the land before Knox and religious groups employed the civilization policy, European Americans were even less shy about moving Native Americans west once this policy appeared to fail. Also, while Native Americans did learn much from western culture, they never intended to subscribe to the drastic assimilation that European Americans envisioned. Therefore, when Native Americans did not walk, talk and act exactly as Americans did, the white men were quick to call the

¹⁸ John R. Swanton, "Source Material for the Social and Ceremonial Life of the Choctaw Indians", *Bureau of American Ethnology Bulletin Number 103* (Tuscaloosa, Ala., University of Alabama Press, 1931), 24-25.

¹⁹ Thomas Vennum, *Lacrosse Legends of the First Americans* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), 37.

²⁰ Hoxie, *North American Indians*, 261.

civilization policy a failure. Rather than wonder if the policy was reasonable and practical enough for Native Americans to endorse, white Americans rashly concluded that the failure of the policy was due to the fact that Native Americans were savages incapable of becoming civilized.²¹ When Governor Joseph McMinn of Tennessee wrote in 1816 that Native Americans who embraced western culture in his state were “entitled to all the rights of a free citizen of color,” the racist attitudes of Americans comes to the forefront as the leader of a state thought that it was reasonable that Native Americans who abandoned their tribes be welcomed into American culture as second class citizens.²²

It was not only the early seeds of racism that bolstered the westward charge of early European Americans, but also their population and economic growth. Through the 18th century and into the 19th century, the American population skyrocketed and thus more and more land was needed in order to sustain their ever-growing population. Force became a prominent option for solving early American citizen’s dilemma. To further compound the situation, by 1822 Native Americans had grown tired of white people taking advantage of them and became determined to “not dispose of even one foot of ground.”²³ Bold statements such as these became more and more common from Native Americans as in 1827 the Cherokee Nation drafted their first constitution.²⁴ Meanwhile, the discovery of gold

²¹ Green and Perdue, *The Cherokee Nation*, 43.

²² Charles Hudson, *The Southeastern Indians* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1976), Chapters 3 and 5.

²³ James Mooney, *Sacred Formulas of the Cherokee* (Washington, D.C.: Bureau of American Ethnology, Seventh Annual Report, 1886), p. 342.

²⁴ William G. McLoughlin, *Cherokee Renaissance in the New Republic* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), Chapter 19.

in Native American territory in 1829 was another incentive for U.S. citizens to invade Native American land. With a vast amount of wealth to be had, many Americans traveled westward into Native American territory searching for fortune.²⁵

In 1829 American policy toward Native Americans officially shifted from civilization to removal on December 8th, as President Andrew Jackson delivered a confrontational speech to Congress. Years before and after this speech reasonable minded people such as William Penn and Catherine Beecher contested that a policy of Native American removal was immoral and illegal due to past treaties.²⁶ William Penn acted as the voice of reason before Jackson's speech, while Beecher became the vocal voice behind Native American rights after the speech. Jackson reasoned that the U.S. Constitution forbade the erection of one state within the boundaries of another and that was just what the Cherokee in Georgia and Native Americans elsewhere were doing. By taking such a strong and radical stance, Jackson left Native Americans with two choices: either "emigrate beyond Mississippi" or "submit to the laws of those [American] states."²⁷ Jackson did not see his words as hurtful toward Native Americans; he saw them as a final solution to settle the feud between

²⁵ Green and Perdue, *The Cherokee Nation*, 74.

²⁶ Catherine Beecher was a female activist who is most well known for her involvement in education, but was also vocal in equal rights for females and minority ethnic groups.

Nancy Hoffman, *Woman's "True" Profession: Voices From the History of Teaching* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press, 2003), 234.

William Penn was the founder of the Province of Pennsylvania and associated with the concepts of democracy and religious freedom.

Catherine Owens Pearce, *William Penn; a Biography* (Philadelphia, PA: Lippincott, 1957), 17.

²⁷ Green and Perdue, *The Cherokee Nation*, 60.

Native Americans and states. Jackson believed his words solved the constant quarrels between states and Native Americans because the states could have their land and Native Americans could also have their own uncontested land if they so chose. Therefore, the Indian Removal Act passed in the House and Senate and was signed into law on May 28, 1830.²⁸

The Indian Removal Act set aside regions west of states and territories for Native Americans to move into and take up residence. Each region was then offered to a tribe, which theoretically would then move west to that designated area. Congress pledged to guarantee the new land to each tribe, pay each tribe compensation for the abandoned land, finance the removal, and provide support for each tribe for their first year in the west.²⁹ Furthermore, Congress mandated that Native Americans could not testify in court, but were subjected to each state's laws. Laws such as these created loopholes, which allowed U.S. citizens to steal Native American property, and brutalize and intimidate the Native American people without consequence from the U.S. justice system. Aggressive states, such as Georgia, justified their aggressive actions toward Native Americans by claiming that as one of the original colonies they had the right to exercise their power over all people and land within its borders. Also, these states asserted that the federal government was not permitted to meddle in their business because the Commerce

²⁸ Angie Debo, *The Rise and Fall of the Choctaw Republic* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1961), 223.

²⁹ Green and Perdue, *The Cherokee Nation*, 64.

Clause in the U.S. Constitution only gave Congress the power to regulate trade, while leaving all other matters to the states.³⁰

In resistance to this invasion, most Cherokee tribes did not resort to violence, but first defended themselves through the court system.³¹ *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia* was one such case, as the Cherokee Nation asked the U.S. Supreme Court for an injunction mandating that Georgia cease and desist from entering Cherokee territory. The Cherokee Nation claimed that such an order was necessary because as a foreign nation it was unconstitutional for any entity of the United States of America to impose their laws upon foreign people. Therefore the Cherokee Nation asked the U.S. Supreme Court to void all Georgia laws that supposedly bound the Cherokees. The U.S. Supreme Court heard the case but declined to make a ruling because the justices believed that the framers of the U.S. Constitution did not regard any Native American tribes as being foreign countries, but rather as domestic dependent nations.³² While at first being dealt a crushing blow, the Cherokee Nation received somewhat promising news in 1832 when Chief Justice John Marshall delivered the majority opinion of the court concerning relationships between Indian Nations and the United States in *Worcester v. Georgia*. Chief Justice Marshall proclaimed that while the action of conquest or purchase leads to political dominion, that these actions were the responsibility of the federal government and

³⁰ Green and Perdue, *The Cherokee Nation*, 72.

³¹ Many other Native American tribes were not as patient as the Cherokee. The Seminoles provide the most famous examples through their engagements in a series of wars with the U.S. over the issue of their removal. The first Seminole war was from 1814-1819, the second from 1835-1842, and the third war from 1855-1858. Hoxie, *North American Indians*, 672.

³² Charles Wilkinson, *American Indians, Time and the Law* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1987), 73.

not the state of Georgia. Furthermore Chief Justice Marshall ruled that the Cherokee Nation was a distinct community with self-government and therefore Georgia laws have no force and that the federal government had the final say in all American Indian affairs.³³

But this partial victory was short lived as on December 29, 1835 the United States government officials and a minority Cherokee political faction signed the Treaty of New Echota. Once amended by Congress in 1836, and without the support of the Cherokee National Council and Principle Chief John Ross, the treaty expected all of the Cherokee Nation to leave its territory in the Southeast and move west to a designated Indian territory within two years. The appealing part of the treaty to the Cherokees was that the designated Indian Territory was to be conveyed and surveyed to the Cherokees by patent. A patent allowed the Cherokees to claim absolute ownership in a U.S. court of law and that the U.S. protected them from non-Indian intruders and as well as western Indian aggressors. The United States also promised to pay for the land and to assist in building schools, buildings, churches, other public projects as well as providing skilled laborers to the Cherokee tribe. But even more appealing was the guarantee of the right of self-government and the authority to send a lobbyist and a delegate to Congress to look after the Cherokee Nation's interests.³⁴ Most in the Cherokee Nation had little or no interest in moving from their homes; nevertheless, the treaty was still signed and put into effect. When Governor William Schley of Georgia admitted that the Treaty of New Echota "was

³³ Joseph Burke, "The Cherokee Cases," *Stanford Law Review* 21 (1969): 500, doi: 10.2307/20068726.

³⁴ Green and Perdue, *The Cherokee Nation*, 96.

not made with the sanction of their [Cherokee] leaders” he revealed how unjust the Treaty of New Echota was toward the Cherokee Nation.³⁵

While the Treaty of New Echota acted as an official marker of the expulsion of Cherokees from eastern America, the removal of Cherokees from the United States began as early as 1794. Being pressured and brutalized by European Americans, many Native Americans succumbed to the pressure and moved west on their own accord. In 1810-1811 a land cession in the east sent about one thousand Cherokees west to Arkansas and in 1819 another land cession sent another two thousand west as well.³⁶ By the end of the two-year time period set out by the Treaty of New Echota, many Cherokees remained in the east because of stories told to them by other Native Americans. Those who chose to emigrate westward were moved under harsh conditions and were given limited supplies and resources to start their new lives. Once the May 23 deadline passed in 1837, U.S. troops began rounding up Cherokees and confining them to forts nearby before forced removal began. The U.S. was tasked with moving about thirteen thousand people over a distance of around one thousand miles.³⁷ These round ups were done chaotically, as Cherokees were not permitted time to bring any provisions with them, those who resisted were killed and many families were separated through the process.³⁸ Once

³⁵ William Schley to Andrew Jackson, February 13, 1836, Georgia Governor’s Letter Book, in “Early State Records.” *Records of States of the United States of America* (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, 1949-1951), E.2, Reel 4, Unit 1.

³⁶ Green and Perdue, *The Cherokee Nation*, 117.

³⁷ Green and Perdue, *The Cherokee Nation*, 134.

³⁸ Sarah Hill, “Cherokee Removal: Forts Along the Georgia Trail of Tears” (The National Park Service and the Georgia Department of Natural Resources/Historic Preservation Division, 2005, <http://www.nps.gov/trte>).

inside the forts, Cherokee people were forced to live in inhumane conditions. Not only were they so tightly packed together that any sort of comfort was almost impossible, but the Cherokee people also had to deal with malnourishment and the spread of disease. From the forts the Native Americans were then herded onto riverboats to travel west through a network of rivers. The organization of this process was so chaotic and mishandled that three hundred Cherokees died from drowning during the first forced migration.³⁹

By June of 1837, drought and famine had swept through the newly designated Cherokee lands and the constant flow of Cherokees being forcibly moved west only worsened the effects. In some cases the drought became so fierce that navigation through rivers became impossible and Cherokees were taken west by land. The committee for removal of the Native Americans decreed that there should be one wagon and five horses for every twenty Cherokee people.⁴⁰ While the plan to use wagons to transport people seemed plausible on paper, the reality was that most Cherokees were forced to walk the one thousand miles or die trying. The combination of inadequate food, miserable living conditions, overworked immune systems and cruel weather made the forced migration a living hell. While the exact number of people who died while traveling along the Trail of Tears is not known, the most commonly cited death total is four thousand, about one fourth of the Cherokee Nation's population.⁴¹

³⁹ Green and Perdue, *The Cherokee Nation*, 127.

⁴⁰ Green and Perdue, *The Cherokee Nation*, 130.

⁴¹ Green and Perdue, *The Cherokee Nation*, 139.

While the brutal conditions and the vast number of deaths the Cherokee Nation had to endure was daunting, the spiritual harm done to the Cherokee people can be seen as equally disturbing. Grieving that “We are now about to take our final leave and kind farewell to our native land the country that the Great Spirit gave our Fathers, we are on the eve of leaving that Country that gave us birth” Cherokee George Hicks revealed how the land had a much deeper meaning for the Cherokee people than merely its monetary value.⁴²

Although the Trail of Tears turned into one of the darkest marks in U.S. history, the U.S. government continued to attempt to assimilate Native Americans into western society. Five decades later, in 1887 Congress passed the Dawes Act that allotted plots of tribal land to individual Native Americans as individual owners of an American-style farm. Furthermore the U.S. bought any land it deemed “excess” for non-Native Americans to settle. By creating private ownership of land among Native Americans, the U.S. thought that Native Americans would be more likely to adopt western values. In reality, the Dawes Act merely acted as another tool for Americans to seize more land from Native Americans.⁴³ It was not until 1924 that Native Americans were even considered U.S. citizens due to the Indian Citizenship Act, proposed by Senator Homer Snyder of New York.⁴⁴

While some people may attribute racism in the U.S. toward Native Americans due to the ignorance of many of the first European settlers, anti-Native American

⁴² David Baird, “Review of the Papers of Chief John Ross Edited by Gary E. Moulton,” *Great Plains Quarterly* 935 (1986): 285.

⁴³ Leonard Carlson, *Indians, Bureaucrats, and Land: The Dawes Act and the Decline of Indian Farming* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1981), 33.

⁴⁴ Haney López, *White By Law: The Legal Construction of Race* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 153.

sentiment has prevailed throughout the 20th and 21st centuries. The Football team at Carlisle Indian Industrial School, founded by Richard Henry Pratt in 1875, offers a prime example of how prejudice against Native Americans was still prevalent in the 20th century. During a number of their games against predominately white schools, fans often yelled mocking war whoops when the Native American Football team took the field.⁴⁵ In order for the Native Americans to prove that they could assimilate into American culture they specifically chose Football and not Lacrosse to play. If the Native Americans had played Lacrosse they would have garnered no credit for being successful at the sport from American society.

While Euro-Americans have attempted to “make peace” with Native Americans, the fact of the matter remains that Native Americans are still forced to live on the least desirable land, are functionally excluded from the rest of U.S. society and are constantly being exploited by white people, often through gambling. Yet with each U.S. act of forced removal, every Native American tribe held onto their important traditions, which included Lacrosse. Before removal the Cherokee played the game and following the forced migration they continued to embrace Lacrosse.⁴⁶ To this day, some Americans are prejudiced against certain Native American traditions which are considered “witchcraft and attribute them to superstitions of Indian people- just another reflection of their ‘primitive’ culture.”⁴⁷ With such prejudiced feelings present in the U.S. it is not surprising that Americans were hesitant to embrace certain Native American traditions, such as Lacrosse.

⁴⁵ Sally Jenkins, *The Real All Americans: The Team That Changed a Game, a People, a Nation* (New York: Doubleday, 2007), 144.

⁴⁶ Hoxie, *North American Indians*, 323.

⁴⁷ Vennum, *Lacrosse Legends*, 7.

The Link Between Lacrosse, Its Popularity and Prejudice

Lacrosse dates back to the late 1600s as one of the oldest sports in North America, yet Lacrosse's popularity has lagged far behind other sports in the U.S. such as Basketball, Football, NASCAR, Baseball and Ice Hockey, all of which had a much later introduction to U.S. society. According to the Abner Doubleday creation myth of Baseball, the sport was introduced in 1839, almost one hundred and fifty years after Lacrosse came to the attention of early European settlers to the New World.¹ In 1876 Walter Camp was deemed the "father" of arguably the most popular sport today, Football.² Then in 1891 Dr. James Naismith created Basketball at a YMCA camp in Springfield, Massachusetts.³ While Ice Hockey began in Canada, the sport did not find its way to the U.S. until 1893 when Yale University and Johns Hopkins started participating in the game.⁴ The number one spectator sport in the U.S. today is NASCAR, which was founded by William France, Sr., but not until February 21, 1948.⁵

With such a head start on these other sports and an undeniable link to purely "American" roots, one might assume that Lacrosse should be the most popular sport in the U.S., yet that is not the case. Ice Hockey, Baseball, Basketball, Football and NASCAR have always been more popular than Lacrosse in the U.S.

¹ Benjamin G. Rader, *American Sports: From the Age of Folk Games to the Age of Spectators* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2004), 108.

² William J. Baker, *Sports in the Western World* (Totowa, N.J.: Roman and Littlefield, 1982), 128.

³ Rader, *American Sports*, 153.

⁴ Baker, *Western World*, 161.

⁵ Al Pearce and Bill Fleischman, *The Unauthorized NASCAR Fan Guide*, (Visible Ink Press, 1999), 6.

Lacrosse was little more than an afterthought as a sport until the last twenty years, when the game has taken off around the country. An important factor to consider in this regard is that every sport other than Lacrosse was created and first played by men of white European ancestry, while Lacrosse originated with Native Americans. Abner Doubleday was a United States Army officer and a general for the Union in the Civil War. He was of English descent and his family had a great impact on the U.S. as his grandfather fought in the Revolutionary War. His status as an American hero was a significant factor of Spalding's willingness to embrace the Doubleday myth. Born in British Canada, Dr. James Naismith had a white Euro-American background as he made history creating the sport of Basketball. Walter Camp was born into privilege as a white upper class male who attended Yale undergraduate and medical schools before becoming famous for being the "Father of American Football." And William France Sr., a man of Irish ancestry was yet another white American who organized a now widely popular sport, NASCAR.

The resurgence of Lacrosse has come so suddenly that it now stands as the fastest growing sport in America. As of 2008, U.S. Lacrosse membership was at 296,743, and had a growth rate of 579% since U.S. Lacrosse was founded in 1998.⁶ Two important factors behind the growth of Lacrosse are the practicality of the sport as well as the nature of the game. From a practical standpoint Lacrosse does

⁶ U.S. Lacrosse is the national governing body of men's and women's Lacrosse. Members of U.S. Lacrosse are individuals who play the sport and voluntarily choose to register through U.S. Lacrosse.

Norm O'Reilly and Rick Burton, "Why Lacrosse's Popularity is Spreading Across the U.S.," *Sports Business Journal Daily*, May 31, 2010, accessed November 5, 2011, <http://www.sportsbusinessdaily.com/Journal/Issues/2010/05/20100531/Opinion/Why-Lacrosses-Popularity-Is-Spreading-Across-The-US.aspx>.

not need new playing fields to be erected because the game can be played on existing Football fields. Even though full competition requires helmets and other paddings, Lacrosse can also be played for a relatively low cost. For an informal game, all that is needed is a field, two make shift goals, a ball and a stick for each player. Furthermore, Lacrosse is also easily practiced as two people can play a game of catch almost anywhere. The easy and fast learning curve for Lacrosse also attracts people to the sport because of the game's simple rules. Lacrosse is also an easy sport to pick up as people with running and hand eye coordination often excel in Lacrosse after playing the sport a few times.⁷

The nature of the game provides yet another enticing incentive for people to support or start playing the game. In a country that loves offense in sporting events Lacrosse fits right in, as it is a generally high scoring. Jim MacKenzie, the marketing manager at New Balance Team Sports described Lacrosse as such:

Lacrosse has elements of Football and Ice Hockey as well as the constant movement of soccer. It's natural in the spring for kids to move over to Lacrosse. And playing Lacrosse lets a young person carry their identity with them. Their stick is a part of who they are. Kids can bring their individual personalities to the game and it's really encouraged.⁸

For spectators, Lacrosse is equally appealing as the sport combines the speed of Ice Hockey, the contact in Football, and requires the endurance of Basketball. With similar elements found in other sports, the transition to Lacrosse can easily be made for most athletes and observers; in a society that idolizes individuality, Lacrosse fits

⁷ Paul Wehrum (Member of the National Lacrosse Hall of Fame), interviewed by Matthew Livingston, March 5, 2012.

⁸ Burton and O'Reilly, "Why Lacrosse's Popularity."

right in. Players are encouraged to express themselves in a multitude of ways whether it is through a hairstyle, athletic apparel design or in their equipment choice. The most drastic example of this is the viral video icon “Con Bro Chill” (Connor Martin) who exaggerates common Lacrosse player stereotypes such as having long hair and wearing bright clothing.⁹

Another major factor in the growth of Lacrosse is the national media exposure the sport is receiving. Along with an increased media presence the emergence of a professional league, Major League Lacrosse (MLL), accompanied by a steady, reliable indoor professional league, National Lacrosse League (NLL), have both helped to spread the sport of Lacrosse. There are now eight MLL teams throughout North America: Boston MA, Charlotte NC, Chesapeake MD, Denver CO, Long Island NY, Delaware Ohio, Rochester NY, and one team out of the U.S. in Hamilton Ontario. The NLL has an equally impressive presence having teams in the U.S. and Canada in Buffalo NY, Philadelphia PA, Rochester NY, Toronto ON, Calgary AB, Colorado, Edmonton AB, Minnesota and in the state of Washington.¹⁰ With these professional teams playing regular schedules, TV networks such as CBS and ESPN have televised games, further exposing people to the sport. Steve Herbst the executive vice president of CBS College Sports Network reveals how he has seen media coverage of the sport expand across the country by sharing, “[Lacrosse has]

⁹ Connor Martin, Con Bro Chill, accessed March 2, 2012, <http://www.conbrochill.com>.

¹⁰ ADMIN, “Lacrosse: The Fastest Growing Sport in the Country,” *Geo IQ*, January 24, 2008, accessed November 5, 2011, <http://blog.geoiq.com/2008/01/24/~lacrosse-the-fastest-growing-sport-in-the-country>.

always been considered an Eastern sport, but now it's spreading nationwide."¹¹ In addition to TV networks, Steve Stenersen, the CEO of U.S. Lacrosse, has admitted how the Internet has also been used as an avenue for media exposure; social networking sites such as Youtube.com have been used to further expose the sport.¹²

Tied to media exposure is the role of sports apparel and equipment manufacturers, which have come to realize the large sales growth they can achieve if they invest in the Lacrosse market, because the sport is reaching mainstream American society. Major companies such as Under Armour, New Balance, and Gatorade have already made significant efforts to tap into this lucrative business line. In 2006 Lacrosse was the number one sport for sales with a thirty one percent increase in sales.¹³ Thirty three percent of Lacrosse participants come from households that earn more than seventy five thousand dollars per year.¹⁴ In a survey recently taken by sixty sporting-good industry experts, thirty of them picked Lacrosse as the sport that has the greatest chance for sales growth.¹⁵ With continual growth anticipated, sports apparel companies have not only made an effort to produce income from the game of Lacrosse, but they have also encouraged Lacrosse's growth because as the sport grows so will the sports apparel's profits.

¹¹ Jeffrey Trachtenberg and Kelly Evans, "Lacrosse Muscles Its Way West," *The Wall Street Journal*, May 20, 2009, accessed November 5, 2011, <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB124278087620937367.html>.

¹² Evans and Trachtenberg, "Lacrosse Muscles."

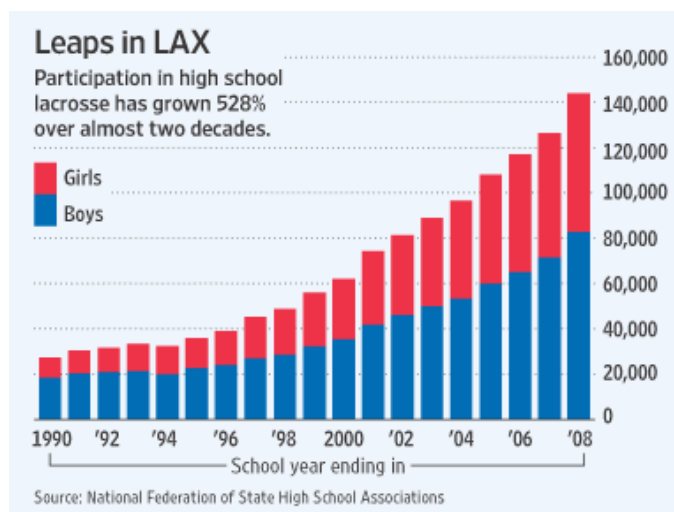
¹³ "The Lacrosse Market," *Active Marketing Group, Inc.*, 2007, accessed September 28, 2011, <http://activemarketinggroup.com/Assets/AMG+2009~/Lacrosse.pdf>.

¹⁴ "The Lacrosse Market," *Active Marketing Group, Inc.*, 2007.

¹⁵ Sporting Goods Manufacturing Association, *2011 State of the Industry Report* (Silver Spring, MD: Sporting Goods Manufactures Association, 2011), 17.

While Lacrosse has grown professionally and has received interest from large sporting goods companies, perhaps the greatest reason for Lacrosse's growth has been due to the emergence of youth and college level programs across the country. At the youth level, by 2007 there were 2,612 Boy's High School Lacrosse Programs throughout the country, which is more than double the number that existed in 2000. Between 2000 and 2007, High School Boy's Lacrosse programs were being added at a rate of 190 programs a year.¹⁶ High School Lacrosse has grown at almost an equally high rate for women at the high school level as well; from 2000 to 2008 participation in the sport has grown 528%.¹⁷

While Lacrosse is most commonly thought of as a northeast sport, its popularity has spread to such a point that the game is being played across the country. A vital component of Lacrosse's sustainable growth has been its devote following



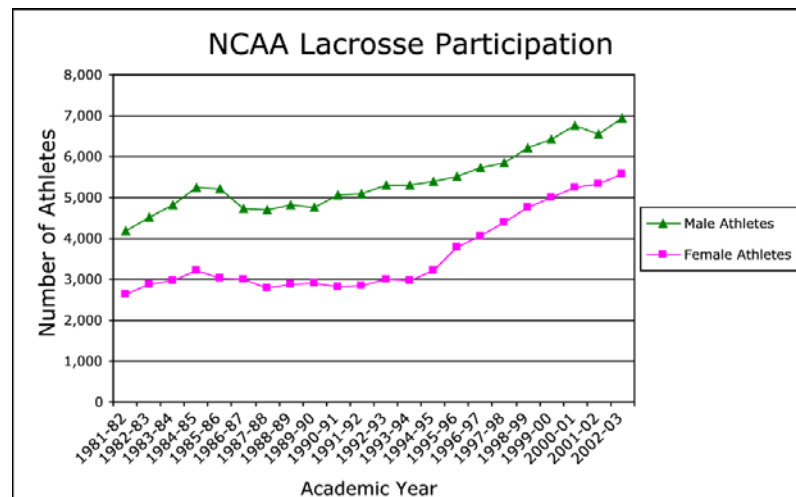
from niche locations such as upstate New York, Long Island and Baltimore areas. While Lacrosse is most closely associated with those areas, the game has spread west to states such as California, who have begun to embrace the game. In 2000 there were only forty High School Boy's Lacrosse Programs in all of California. In

¹⁶ ADMIN, "Lacrosse: the Fastest Growing Sport."

¹⁷ Evans and Trachtenberg, "Lacrosse Muscles."

2007 that number rose to one hundred and seventy three.¹⁸ California serves as an example of how non-traditional Lacrosse locations have begun to encourage participation in the sport. In 2009, of the 2,427 Men's Lacrosse players in Division I, 55 players came from California, 37 came from Colorado 13 came from Washington, 9 from Arizona and 4 from Oregon.¹⁹

The growth of Lacrosse programs does not only apply to the youth level, but the collegiate level as well. In Division III, the number of teams leapt from 112 to 405



between 1999 and 2012. Division I Lacrosse has 153 total teams and Division II has 113 total teams.²⁰ Lacrosse has especially grown across the country at the collegiate level in large part due to the fact that women's Lacrosse programs help athletic departments deal with complexities of gender equality due to Title IX. Women's Lacrosse provides schools with a large roster of female participants to help provide proportionality with the number of male athletic participants at a given school.²¹

¹⁸ ADMIN, "Lacrosse: the Fastest Growing Sport."

¹⁹ Evans and Trachtenberg, "Lacrosse Muscles."

²⁰ "Growth of College and HS Lacrosse," *LaxPower*, 2003, accessed November 5, 2011, <http://www.laxpower.com/common/participation03.php>.

²¹ In order to legally abide by Title IX colleges often attempt to provide athletic opportunities to both sexes that are proportional to student enrollment.

However, as important as any for the reasons discussed above, a prime reason that Lacrosse has expanded so dramatically recently is the fact that Lacrosse has been embraced as a white middle to upper-class sport in US society. Unfortunately, in addition to an economic class factor, Lacrosse can also be seen to reflect a racial component. In NCAA Lacrosse during the 2009-2010 season, 91% of participants were Euro-American, 2% were African American, 1.6% Hispanic, 1% were Asian American, 0.4% Native American, and 4% were of other or multiple ethnic backgrounds.²² Compare that to NCAA Basketball during the 2009-2010 season, 53% of participants were Euro-American, 40% African American, 3% Hispanic, less than 1% Asian American, less than half a percent Native American, and 4% were of other or multiple ethnic backgrounds.²³ These statistics clearly show how Euro-Americans have taken over the game of Lacrosse, especially when comparing these statistics to other sports. Therefore, it is not uncommon for people in the 21st century to think of the game as a sport for privileged children in private high schools or Ivy League colleges. Lacrosse began as an exclusive Native American tradition, but over time Euro-Americans have adopted the sport and thus the sport's popularity has dramatically risen.

A prime example of the exclusivity of the sport can be found in the people Lacrosse celebrates. Lacrosse stars today include white men such as Paul and Gary

Title IX. DVD. Bernice Resnick Sandler, Birch Bayh, Ketra L. Armstrong, Diane Regan, WBGU-TV and Bowling Green State University. Bowling Green, OH: 2009.

²² NCAA. *2009-2010 NCAA Student-Athlete Ethnicity Report*. Accessed November 1, 2011. <http://www.ncaapublications.com/p-4214-student-athlete-ethnicity-2009-10-ncaa-student-athlete-ethnicity-report.aspx>, 183.

²³ NCAA. *2009-2010 NCAA Student-Athlete Ethnicity Report*, 178.

Gait, the three Powell brothers Casey, Ryan and Michael as well as Paul Rabil. Yet the Lacrosse community did not and does not often mention that one of the early great players of Lacrosse was an African American, NFL legend Jim Brown. While playing Football at Syracuse University in the mid 1950s, Jim Brown also played Lacrosse; he was named a first team All-American and ranked second nationally in scoring with 43 goals in 10 games his senior year.²⁴ Yet Jim Brown is almost exclusively known for his accomplishments on the Football field and there has never been a player of a minority race nationally recognized as a Lacrosse star of equal or greater legendary status as white players.

Part of the lack of diversity in Lacrosse can be attributed to the fact that it is a field sport, which is hard to play in urban areas where minorities largely reside, and the cost of protective equipment can be prohibitive.²⁵ But even more of a reason for this phenomenon is the fact that there are no role models in the sport to attract minority players and without easy access to Lacrosse, children of ethnic diversity need a strong connection to Lacrosse in order to play. Mary Cate Slay, the manager of youth development for U.S. Lacrosse finds that a significant obstacle in the way of more minorities playing Lacrosse is the perception that Lacrosse is “too white or too rich” a sport for them to play.²⁶ Thus the major impediment in the participation of minority athletes in Lacrosse is as much society’s perception of the sport as it is the practical limitations.

²⁴ Ronald Mann, *Bouncing Back: How to Recover When Life Knocks You Down* (Garden City, NY: Morgan James Publishing, 2010), 19.

²⁵ Alisha Ricardi, “Diversifying Lacrosse Still Work in Progress,” *ESPN*, June 17, 2011, accessed November 14, 2011, <http://sports.espn.go.com/espn/news~ /story?id=6165886>.

²⁶ Ricardi, “Diversifying Lacrosse.”

While Lacrosse has garnered increased popularity in the U.S., it has done so in an era that associates the game most directly with white Americans, not American minorities, and not the Native Americans who created and introduced the game to Euro-American settlers. The statistics speak for themselves, during the same time that Lacrosse has become popular, minority populations have had limited participation in the sport. Yet before Lacrosse made this leap to national relevance, the sport was largely played by Native Americans and was not accepted by American society as a worthwhile sport. Lacrosse's rise in popularity was suppressed by racism against Native Americans; however, now as whites make up a large majority of participants, and minorities appear, either willfully or not, to be excluded, Lacrosse has been accepted as a legitimate sport. Unfortunately, the tinge of racism remains.

Conclusion

The sport of Lacrosse has a long a storied past most likely dating back from before the discovery of the New World to the present day. Lacrosse originally had a ritualistic or spiritual connotation attached to it, yet over the years Lacrosse has evolved into a very popular sport in the U.S. Lacrosse has a rich history of being played by Native Americans as a substitute for war, ceremonial and religious purposes, as an avenue for betting, and for general recreational play. While Lacrosse began by having many different rules and equipment depending on the location in North America that the sport was played, eventually the game became universalized with uniform rules, sticks and padding. Once the brutality of the game was curbed by the adoption of uniformity, Euro-Americans began playing the sport. But Lacrosse never reached the heights of popularity of many other sports in the U.S. Being the first widely played sport in North America, Lacrosse has had hundreds of more years exposure more than other sports such as Basketball, Ice Hockey, NASCAR, Football and Baseball, yet all of these mentioned sports have eclipsed Lacrosse's popularity.

The reason for Lacrosse's stunted growth and its sudden expansion can be directly correlated to the racial groups who play the game. Lacrosse's lack of popularity and its present resurgence share similar racial roots. Such a discovery falls in line with America's history of racial prejudice, from the use of slaves, to the forced migration of Native Americans, to racist attitudes towards other minority races such Asians and Hispanics. America has continually proved that it will persecute those who are not white until those in power are forced to pass laws to

help along change that in turn aids in changing societal perceptions of certain races. Therefore the correlation between the introduction of white people to the sport of Lacrosse and the thereafter spike in popularity of the sport is not coincidental, and historians should not be shocked by such an occurrence. Since white American citizens could not westernize Native American culture they often turned to violence and deception. The mistreatment of the Iroquois in the 1780s in the form of the Fort Stanwix Treaty of 1784, the Cherokee's Trail of Tears, and the Navaho's "Long Walk" all provide prime examples of the atrocities committed by citizens of the U.S. against Native Americans. Such intimidation, violence, cruelty, thievery and abuse of legislation stands as a prime example of how unjust the U.S. has been towards Native Americans. From all of America's past racial injustices hopefully the U.S. can become a country that learns from its mistakes and become a racially tolerant country.

By also taking a closer look at the origins of NASCAR, Ice Hockey, Basketball, Baseball and Football one can see how each sport was influenced greatly by white Euro-Americans, while Native Americans created the sport of Lacrosse. Combined with the U.S.'s history of racist beliefs and actions taken toward Native Americans historians cannot argue that America's history is rife with prejudice against ethnic minority groups.

Even though the before mentioned sports have a larger backing than Lacrosse, Lacrosse has recently skyrocketed in popularity. Lacrosse combines many exciting aspects of other sports and provides an avenue for players to embrace their individuality, which draws people to play the game. The ease of making the

transition of playing Lacrosse, and the fact that white culture has accepted the sport, as proven by the ethnic statistics of NCAA participants, have attracted many people to Lacrosse. Lacrosse has become a sport dominated by white Americans in part due to the fact that the sport must be played on fields, which are scarcity to find in urban areas where racial minorities often live. Therefore, even though there is a paucity of sources concerning Lacrosse, from the information gathered in this study by examining the link between Lacrosse, prejudice towards Native Americans and Lacrosse's popularity the material strongly supports the concept that the popularity of Lacrosse has been tied to the ethnicity of the people who play the game.

Other fascinating avenues to delve into if a project such as this had more time and resources would be to investigate the history of race and indigenous sports in other North American countries. While in the case of Lacrosse race played an important role in inhibiting the sport's early growth, there must be a multitude of other sports in other North American countries that have had similar histories. Perhaps in other North American countries race does not play as large a role in society as it does in America, as certain sports are associated more with other factors than race. Such a discovery would shed further light on the history and current state of America, as historians would find that other North American countries value race less than Americans. But perhaps other countries do frown upon some indigenous sports due to the fact that it is associated with a certain race of people. In that instance it would be intriguing to compare and contrast Lacrosse in America to the history of another indigenous sport in another North American country.

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