NORTH AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR SPORT SOCIOLOGY

Created by the UNDRIP Commitee

NEWSLETTER

Stories Worth Telling. Conversations Worth Having. | Issue # 1 October 2026

Introducing the NASSS UNDRIP Newsletter

Welcome to the first NASSS UNDRIP newsletter! As members of the NASSS UNDRIP Alignment Committee, we are responsible for implementing the ***Resolution to Commit to the UNDRIP Aim of Respecting Indigenous Peoples' Rights***, which NASSS passed unanimously in November 2023. This Resolution stated in part, "that NASSS unequivocally commits to UNDRIP's aim of respecting Indigenous peoples' rights and pledges to uphold these principles in its activities and initiatives, to promote the value of Indigenous peoples' participation, ways of knowing/being/doing, and sovereignty in the realms of sport, recreation and physical culture, and to contribute to the broader efforts of reconciliation and respect for Indigenous peoples' rights."

We are currently completing the first year of a **three-year strategic plan**, passed by our membership in 2025. Element #3 (of 4) of that Plan states **"Enhancing awareness of Indigenous histories and cultural practices within NASSS and within sport practices more broadly."** We are working toward this expectation by creating a biannual newsletter. One issue each year will be released around the time of our annual Conference, and focus on current developments in sport, recreation, and physical culture that impact, and are impacted by, Indigenous peoples across North America. The second newsletter each year, released at the end of the spring term, will outline a selection of Indigenous-informed/informing written texts (e.g., in academic journals, newspapers, government reports, podcasts) that NASSS members found provided them with key insights tied to our Resolution, and which thus might be worth considering for upcoming course curricula.

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Downtown Calgary, located within Treaty 7 territory.
Photo by ParsonsPhotographyNL
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Gathering on Treaty 7 Territory

As we gather in Calgary for the 2026 NASSS Conference, we will be visiting Treaty 7 territory, the traditional lands of the Blackfoot Confederacy (Siksika, Kainai, and Piikani Nations). This land is also significant to the Dene people of the Tsuut'ina First Nation, as well as the Îyârhe Nakoda people, consisting of the Chiniki, Bearspaw, and Goodstoney First Nations. Calgary is also home to the historic Northwest Métis and the Elbow and Nose Hill Districts of the Otipemisiwak Métis Government of Alberta. Signed in 1877, Treaty 7 continues to shape relationships, rights, and responsibilities on these lands. We encourage all NASSS attendees to reflect on their responsibilities as visitors to Treaty 7 territory and to approach their time here with openness, respect, and a commitment to ongoing learning.

Written by: Jennifer Booth, Berlyn Hennicke-Nasadyk, Eddie Wolf Child, Richard Running Rabbit, and Alexandra Giancarlo

Blackfoot Crossing Historical Park
Photo taken by Derek Gavey
Wikimedia Commons, CC BY 2.0.

Siksika Nation's Future Sports Hall of Fame

Understanding how sport and physical culture can support decolonization and cultural resurgence, the Siksika Nation plans to build a Sports Hall of Fame and History Exhibit to share their stories around sport, movement, and achievement. Athletes and community supporters of the past serve as role models who represent the strengths that come with the Blackfoot identity and can offer a "light" to guide future generations on how to "live a good life." The Hall of Fame and History Exhibit strives to reconnect these stories with members of the Nation (and beyond) by providing an accessible and interactive resource. Furthermore, the project supports the process of repatriation—returning archival documents and sacred items stored in mainstream museums or archives—by locating relevant photos, documents, etc. and transferring their control to the Nation. Historically, sports halls of fame spaces have lacked Indigenous representation, or present Indigenous athletes in generic, generalized terms. This is despite Blackfoot—and Siksika specifically—boasting an exceptional history of athleticism, from organizing numerous community leagues, to their trailblazing contributions in rodeo, through to their acts of bravery while counting coup. Establishing a relationship between the Nation and their stories is important, as explained by an Elder with the project: "every time you bring something home, it brings a little bit of power back to your culture. It brings a little bit of history back to your family. And I think those are powerful stories to share." To support Siksika's initiative, we encourage you to visit and support Blackfoot Crossing Historical Park, the future location of the exhibit, either by visiting or **donating.**

Visit BlackFoot Crossing at Siksika Indian Reserve #146, AB T0J 0S0

Written by: Janice Forsyth

The Spirit of Sport - Active Together

Strengthening Canada's Indigenous Sport System

One of the more significant recent developments in Indigenous sport in Canada is the release of The Spirit of Sport – Active Together, a ten-year National Strategy for Indigenous Peoples' Participation in Sport, Physical Activity, and Recreation (2025–2035). Led by the Aboriginal Sport Circle (ASC), the Strategy was developed through three and a half years of consultation with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit individuals, communities, and organizations. The process engaged more than 100 organizations, governments, communities, institutions, and other bodies across all 13 provinces and territories.

Crucially, consultations extended beyond sport to education, health, recreation, and other sectors connected to Indigenous community well-being. This breadth matters because Indigenous sport does not exist in isolation from the wider social, cultural, and institutional conditions that shape Indigenous peoples' lives. In this respect, the Strategy institutionalizes broader, Indigenous-defined understandings of sport and the roles it plays in community and national life. "Indigenous sport" itself is understood broadly, encompassing the full range of sports and physical activities Indigenous peoples engage in, not only traditional or culturally specific practices.

The Strategy also builds on decades of Indigenous advocacy and legal and policy developments, including UNDRIP and its implementation in Canadian law, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action, and the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls' Calls for Justice.

Most importantly, the Strategy moves beyond treating Indigenous peoples as an "underrepresented group" to be included within existing structures. It advances Indigenous leadership, decision-making, and self-determination through two distinct but mutually supportive Indigenous and Canadian sport systems.

For scholars and students, this shifts attention beyond a conventional equity, diversity, and inclusion approach toward a more fundamental question: how can our research practices and institutions recognize and support Indigenous authority to define, organize, govern, and determine the future of Indigenous sport in Canada?

The Cover of the National Strategy, taken from the Aboriginal Sport Circle Website.

For more information and to read the National Strategy, see the Aboriginal Sport Circle Website:

English: https://www.aboriginalsportcircle.ca/national-strategy

French: https://fr.aboriginalsportcircle.ca/national-strategy

Written by: Rylan Kafara

Pekiwewin: A Place of Community and Care

Navigating houselessness requires a dynamic physicality. During the last ten years, sports-related gentrification in Edmonton's downtown caused by Rogers Place arena and the surrounding "Ice District", the new home of the Edmonton Oilers ice hockey franchise, has intensified the policing and displacement of the Indigenous street community. Members of this community continue to take care of themselves and each other. They do so while playing on grassroots sports teams, participating in communal activities including BBQs, and living in encampments.

My research explores one such encampment. In July 2020, amidst a polycrisis including COVID-19, a toxic supply of drugs poisoned by substances such as illicit fentanyl, and forced displacement from the Ice District, an Indigenous-led houseless encampment of roughly 400 residents formed on the northern flats of Edmonton's river valley. It was named Pekiwewin (Nêhiyawak/Cree for the act of coming home). For the next 112 days, Pekiwewin was a place grounded in life-sustaining practices. It was a site of relationship renewal and intergenerational reconnection. In this connective hub, Pekiwewin enabled the flourishing of talents, wellness, and safety. Encampment residents contributed to the encampment according to their gifts instead of concentrating on survival. The encampment ended during a violent police eviction on November 12, 2020.

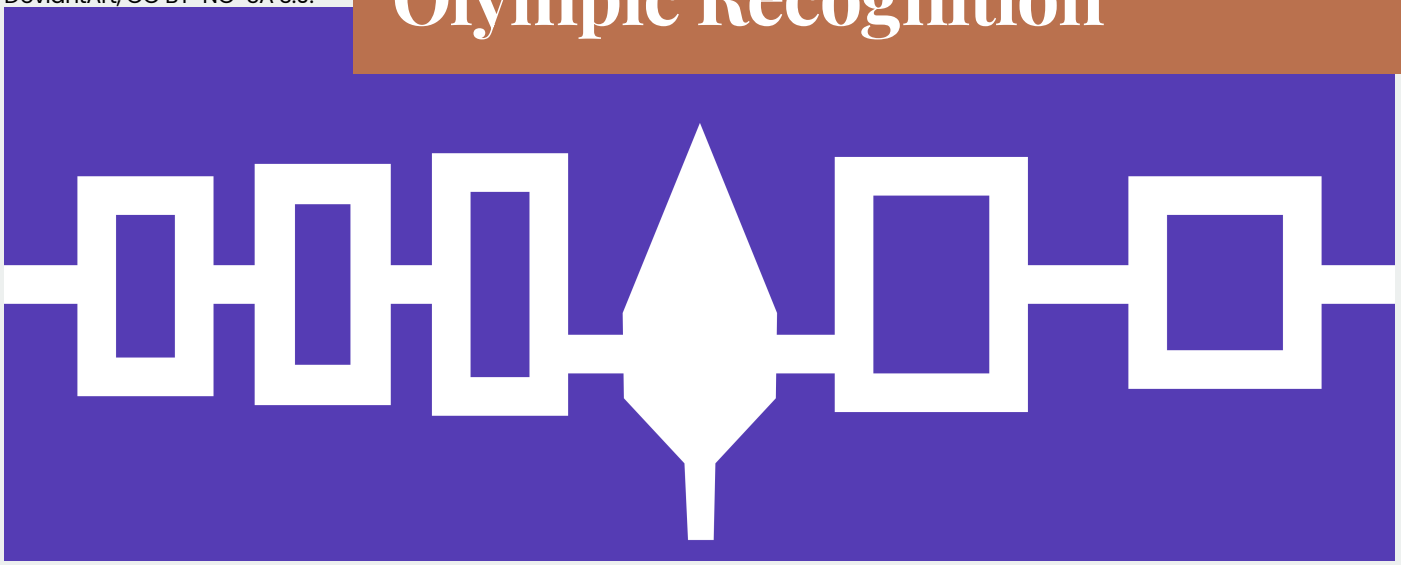
Today, it is the responsibility of settler sport scholars to critique and resist sport's use in perpetuating colonial harms against Indigenous Peoples. We can build connections with Indigenous residents in our home communities and learn helpful ways to be supportive of local sport initiatives. For example, I am a settler who has built and sustained relationships with Edmonton's Indigenous street community for over fifteen years. These relationships help guide my research.

If anyone wishes to monetarily support Edmonton's Indigenous street community, one way is to send an e-transfer to jeremiah@mosaichouse.ca. Gifts are tax deductible for Canadians and will support the community's floor hockey, slo-pitch, and soccer teams.

Photo facing north of Pekiwewin, taken on July 31, 2020. Photo taken by Rylan and shared with permission.

Written by: Daniela Solomon

Haudenosaunee Lacrosse and Olympic Recognition



Artist's interpretation of the Haudenosaunee flag incorporating the Tuscarora Nation. Image: Fjana, DeviantArt, CC BY-NC-SA 3.0.

Lacrosse is set to return to the Olympic program at the 2028 Olympic Games in Los Angeles (World Lacrosse, 2026). This return is especially significant for Indigenous sport because the Haudenosaunee are widely recognized as the originators of the game that provided the foundation for contemporary lacrosse. Lacrosse holds deep significance in Haudenosaunee epistemology, tradition, diplomacy, and sovereignty (Downey, 2012, 2018; Fisher, 2002; Mitchell, 2010). Yet despite this history, the Haudenosaunee are currently unable to compete as an independent nation at the Olympic Games (Goodyear, 2020).

Article 30 of the Olympic Charter defines a country as "an independent State recognized by the international community" (International Olympic Committee, 2026). Although the Haudenosaunee Confederacy is not recognized within this framework, Haudenosaunee sovereignty has long been asserted through treaty relationships, including the Treaty of Canandaigua (1794) and the Two Row Wampum (1613) (Hauptman, 1988; Lightfoot, 2021; Onondaga Nation, n.d.; Powless et al., 2000). The Haudenosaunee have also asserted sovereignty by travelling to international lacrosse competitions on Haudenosaunee passports. When these passports were not recognized by United Kingdom authorities, the men's team withdrew from the 2010 world championship and the women's U19 team withdrew in 2015 (Kolva, 2012; Lightfoot, 2021).

No final decision has been made about whether the Haudenosaunee can participate in the Olympics as their own nation or whether athletes must compete for Team USA or Team Canada. For readers, this issue raises questions about how international sport bodies can reproduce settler-colonial structures by requiring Indigenous nations to fit within state-based systems of recognition. Supporting Indigenous sport requires attention to Indigenous peoples' authority to represent themselves on their own terms.

Want to learn more?

Check out these UNDRIP-organized activities & presentations at NASSS

Wednesday

4:30-6:00: Traditional Blackfoot Games Workshop

- Stephen A & B
- Email undrip@NASSS.org to register

Thursday

9:30-10:45: Truth Telling: Indigenous Scholars in the Sociology of Sport

- Virtual: Zoom 2

11:00-11:15: Indigenous Welcome & Land Acknowledgment

- Imperial 4/6/8 (Theatre)

2:15-3:30: Puyallup Tribe Follow-Up

- Virtual: Zoom 1

Friday

7:00-8:00: DCCC and UNDRIP Breakfast

- Herald

8:00-9:15: Building an UNDRIP-Informed Code of Ethics for NASSS

- Imperial 7

2:15-3:30: Preparing for Responsible Research: Non-Indigenous Scholars Workshop

- Imperial 3

Want to learn EVEN more?

Check out some other sessions on topics related to Indigenous, settler colonialism & decolonizing sport

Thursday

9:30-10:45: Locating Indigenous Games in the Global South: Narratives and Methodologies

- Panel – Imperial 1

2:15-3:30: Indigenous Inclusion and Its Limits in the PWHL

- Individual Presentation – Imperial 3

2:15-3:30: "The spirit of Deerfoot continues to shine through:" The true story of Blackfoot runner, Api-kai-ees, beyond settler colonialism

- Individual Presentation - Imperial 1

3:45-5:00: Decoloniality and Physical Cultures I

- Panel – Imperial 5

Friday

8:00-9:15: Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Indigeneity in Sport I

- Panel – Walker

8:00-9:15: Decolonial Embodied Learning: "What We Think Echoes in Our Bodies"

- Preconstituted Session – Imperial 5

8:00-9:15: Black and Indigenous Feminist Futurities in Women's Hockey

- Individual Presentation – Imperial 2

9:30-10:45: Settler Sweat: The Hypocrisies and Limitations of Embodied Decolonial Movement

- Individual Presentation – Virtual: Zoom 1

Want to learn EVEN more?

Check out some other sessions on topics related to Indigenous, settler colonialism & decolonizing sport

Saturday

8:00-9:15: Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Indigeneity in Sport II

- Panel – Imperial 5

8:00-9:15: Decolonial and Physical Cultures II

- Panel – Bannerman

8:00-9:15: Climbing in Relation: Racialized Settler Responsibilities through an Indigenous-Guided Praxis

- Individual Presentation – Walker

9:30-10:45: The Medium of the Hockey Rink: Indigenous Re-Imaginings

- Individual Presentation – Imperial 4/6/8 (Theatre)

We need your help to optimize future newsletters! Our aspiration is that providing relevant, current information that is produced by NASSS members, their community co-researchers and other sources will enhance the awareness all NASSS members have of current conditions, contextualize Indigenous physical and cultural practices, and enable each of us to reflect on it personally as well as to bring accessible information into our classrooms and perhaps into our advocacy work as individuals. We (Committee members include Miruthula Queen Anbu, Nik Dickerson, Vicky Paraschak, Niya St. Amant, and Sean Seiler) look forward to your feedback on this newsletter and welcome your suggestions and engagement as we identify and share information that helps us all become more knowledgeable. If you hear of an innovative project impacting Indigenous lives and think others would like to know about it, email us the details. If you read an article that helps you better grasp Indigenous ways of knowing/seeing and doing, email us about it. We'll then package this material biannually for NASSS members. Together, we'll ensure these newsletters are worth reading and learning from. You can reach us with any comments or suggestions for future articles at **undrip@nasss.org.**