

Lesson 2: Sport as an Agent for Social Change

Introduction

According to *Strengthening Canada*, a report published by the Conference Board of Canada, participation in sport is vital to our society:

Canadians love sport. It gives them pleasure, helps them to define themselves and their communities, and contributes to a sense of what it means to be Canadian. In any one year, more Canadians are involved as active participants in sport – more than 8 million people in 2004 – than take part in public education at all levels combined. Millions more take part as volunteers and attendees. In all, about half the entire population of Canada is involved annually with sport, including 55 per cent of all adults.

It is because sport engages so many – as families, friends, communities and individuals – that Canadians experience its effects so strongly. (Bloom, Grant, and Watt 1)

The report further argues that while sport touches so many aspects of people's lives, many Canadians are unaware of how powerfully sport affects them directly or indirectly. Sport changes us as individuals and communities (e.g., allowing us to enhance our skills, improve our health and well-being, develop social connections and cohesion), affects our economy (e.g., creating jobs in manufacturing, retail, and service industries), and contributes to shaping our national and cultural identities (Bloom, Grant, and Watt 1).

The assertion that sport and physical activity are important to our culture and society naturally leads to the question of whether people's attitudes, values, and beliefs about sport can influence social change. The challenge in this lesson is to examine critically the role that sport and physical activity have played in shaping lives. What impact does sport have on family and friends? How do the media influence thinking?

REFERENCE



For additional information, refer to the following report:

Bloom, Michael, Michael Grant, and Douglas Watt. *Strengthening Canada: The Socio-economic Benefits of Sport Participation in Canada—Report August 2005*. Ottawa, ON: The Conference Board of Canada, 2005. Available on the Canadian Heritage, Sport Canada, website at <http://pch.gc.ca/progs/sc/pubs/recherches-research_e.cfm>.



Specific Learning Outcome

11.SI.2 Examine the impact of sport on various social issues.

Examples: ethnic background, gender equity, populations with exceptional needs, politics, technology, business



Key Understandings

- Sport media are an important part of global entertainment, which provides immediate connectivity to sports, regardless of location.
 - Physical activity and sport can be agents for social change.
 - Physical activity and sport programs provide a valuable resource for physical activity and socialization.
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Essential Questions

1. How are the media involved in sport and in the portrayal of social issues through and in sport?
 2. How has sport shaped our society?
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Background Information

The Media and Sport Partnerships*

The world seems to shrink every day due to the high level of connectedness achieved by the many forms of media. Essentially, there are two forms of media:

- **Print media** include newspapers, magazines, and books.
- **Electronic media** include television, radio, and the Internet.

Sport, sport media, large corporations, and business in general are all linked, making this unique partnership a significant economic contributor to society. But sport media also fulfill many other functions, such as the following:

- The media **educate consumers** about a game or sport, its history, the players, and the strategies involved in the contest, making all of us “armchair experts” on the game so that we can discuss and debate the events with others.

* Source: Adapted, with permission, from R. B. Woods, 2007, *Social Issues in Sport*, (Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics), page 72.

- The media **create excitement** about upcoming events, motivating people to become avid consumers, not only of the contest itself but also of all the festivities surrounding it. Many people will watch a significant game (e.g., Stanley Cup final) even if they do not usually watch the sport.
 - The media **create emotional attachments** to athletes, coaches, and teams through the many features leading up to the start of a new season of play. The media often focus attention on athletes who have been injured, or who have had to overcome adversity in their lives to get them to a certain point.
 - The media **provide a form of recreation and entertainment** for many people, which is of great value in stressful lives. Cheering for a local or favourite team or player is the type of excitement and drama that can make a difference in a person's life.
 - The media **relate stories on social concerns** that attract attention, stimulate thinking, and often create lively debate. Significant topics addressed in the media include issues related to
 - racial discrimination and inequities (e.g., coaching assignments, player positions, team names, logos, mascots)
 - sport economics (e.g., profits, salaries, endorsements, public financing, careers)
 - gender inequities (e.g., salaries, attire, opportunity)
 - sport ethics (e.g., cheating, fighting, gambling, athlete and fan behaviour, alcohol and tobacco sponsorships, role modelling, sexual harassment)
 - technological advancements (e.g., playing surfaces, equipment, clothing)
 - substance use and abuse (e.g., steroids, alcohol, drug testing, blood doping, penalties)
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Suggestion for Instruction / Assessment

Advertising and Sport

Have students imagine they are in charge of securing advertising for the sports section of a major newspaper. What products or businesses would be included in this section? Ask them to list at least 10 products that they think would interest readers of the sports section.

Compare the student-generated lists with what is actually advertised in the sports section of a major newspaper.

- Which products from the students' lists match the ones in the actual paper?
 - Were any surprises found in the advertisements in the paper?
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Background Information

Social Issues Highlighted through Sport

Sport engages the physical and mental abilities of groups and individuals world-wide, whether as fans or participants, as professionals or amateurs. Sport experiences generate a range of complex meanings that are shaped by many factors, including race, ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic status. To understand the significance of sport more fully, it is necessary to examine the connections between sport and issues such as social mobility, individual achievement, ethnic conflict, nationalism, and the drive for equity.



Suggestion for Instruction / Assessment

Social Issues Snapshots

To activate thinking about social issues in sport, ask students to form groups of three or four and have them

- choose an issue that affects sport participation and development
- use a web diagram or a mind map to identify challenges/barriers and successes for their chosen issue
- present their ideas to the class, asking for additional comments or feedback

In addressing gender equity in sport, for example, the following misconceptions could be used in a class discussion about why women were/are excluded from sport:

- Females aren't interested in playing sports.
- Certain physical activities harm the female body.
- The aggressive and sometimes violent nature of sports does not reflect the feminine character.
- Women aren't as good as men in sport and, therefore, shouldn't have the same opportunities.
- Girls with exceptional athletic talent are "tomboys."

If desired, have students investigate and expand on their topic further, using print or web-based resources.



Background Information

Social Issues and Values

The following are examples of social issues that affect sport participation and development, including access to sport participation for populations with specific or exceptional needs:

- Special Olympics
- Paralympic Games
- Aboriginal sport participation
- gender equity in sport
- physical activity and sport for older adults
- politics and sport
- technology in sport
- sport as business

A discussion of these social issues follows.

Special Olympics

In the early 1960s the Kennedy Foundation in Washington, DC, began to promote international games for individuals who were intellectually challenged. The Kennedy Foundation hired Dr. Frank Hayden, a well-known Canadian researcher in the area of fitness and people with disabilities, and thus the Special Olympic Games were initiated in 1968, primarily with athletes from the United States and Canada. Events were later added for athletes who were physically challenged. Hayden and other more recent investigators have shown that the low fitness levels demonstrated by athletes with intellectual disabilities in the 1960s and 1970s were the result of physical inactivity. Testing has shown that these athletes are among the fitness elite, not only in physical skills for their peer groups, but also, in many cases, when compared with other athletes. Today the Special Olympic Games are the second largest international events, next to the Olympic Games.

REFERENCES



For additional information, refer to the following websites:

International Olympic Committee (IOC). *Olympic Games*. <www.olympic.org/>.

Special Olympics. <www.specialolympics.org/>.

Special Olympics Canada. <www.specialolympics.ca/>.

---. "The Birth of Special Olympics in Canada." *About Us: History*. <www.specialolympics.ca/en/default.aspx?tabid=10000013>.

For website updates, please visit Websites to Support the Grades 11 and 12 Curriculum at <www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/physlth/>.

Paralympic Games

Athletes with disabilities were included in the Olympic Games for the first time in Rome in 1960. By the 1976 Olympic Games in Toronto, more groups with disabilities were added. That same year the Winter Paralympics took place in Sweden.

Since that time, groups with disabilities have increasingly been included in international sports competitions. Today, six different groups with disabilities are involved in the Paralympics, with athletic achievement being highlighted over disability. The number of athletes participating in the Summer Paralympics, for example, has increased from 400 athletes from 23 countries in Rome in 1960 to 3806 athletes from 136 countries in Athens in 2004 (International Paralympics Committee).

Currently, the Paralympics and the Olympic Games are both held in the same year and in the same location. The decision to ensure this practice for the future came about with a 2001 agreement between the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and the International Paralympic Committee (IPC), establishing that any host city will be presenting not only the Olympic Games but also the Paralympics.

REFERENCE



For additional information, refer to the following website:

International Paralympic Committee (IPC). *Paralympic Games*.

<www.paralympic.org/release/Main_Sections_Menu/Paralympic_Games/>.

For website updates, please visit Websites to Support the Grades 11 and 12 Curriculum at

<www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/physhlth/>.

Aboriginal Sport Participation

In Canada the Aboriginal Sport Circle is the national voice for Aboriginal sport, bringing together the interests of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples. Established in 1995, the Aboriginal Sport Circle was created in response to the need for more accessible and equitable sport and recreation opportunities for Aboriginal peoples. Canada is viewed throughout the world as a leader in promoting and protecting the rights of all its citizens, including the access and participation in sport and physical activity programs. Today, many Native bands and individuals located near cities participate in athletic leagues. As well, every four years competitive games are held between Aboriginals from places such as Nunavut, the Northwest Territories, Yukon Territory, and Alaska. The competitions include indigenous games and demonstrations such as the arm pull and high kicking.

REFERENCES



For additional information, refer to the following websites:

Aboriginal Sport Circle. <www.aboriginalsportcircle.ca/>.

Arctic Winter Games. <www.awg.ca/>.

For website updates, please visit Websites to Support the Grades 11 and 12 Curriculum at

<www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/physhlth/>.

Gender Equity in Sport

One of the most consistent injustices of the past and present is the lack of equal access to, for example, job opportunities for women in our society. The quest for equitable and fair access in all aspects of society including sport is still a struggle today, although great strides have been made in recent history.

According to the Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women and Sport and Physical Activity, “no women took part in the first modern Olympic Games in 1896” (CAAWS, “Introduction”). At the 26th Olympic Games (1996) in Atlanta, for example, 97 of the 271 events were open to women, with both women and men contesting in 11 events; 3626 of the 10 629 athletes were women. Canada has fared better than other major countries when it comes to representation: “Of the 307 Canadian athletes who competed in Atlanta, 154 were women and 153 were men, making it the first Canadian Olympic team ever to consist of more women than men, an impressive shift in a short time” (CAAWS, “Introduction”).

Significant events that have ultimately changed the social view of women in sport include

- the women’s movements of the 1950s and 1960s
- the creation of organizations such as the National Organization for Women (NOW) and the Canadian Association for Advancement of Women and Sport and Physical Activity (CAAWS)
- the passing of U.S. legislation called *Title IX* in 1972 prohibiting gender discrimination in federally assisted education programs

Title IX states: “No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving financial assistance” (U.S. Department of Labor).

The impact of events such as these has changed the level of female participation in sport throughout the world.

REFERENCES



For additional information, refer to the following websites:

Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women and Sport and Physical Activity (CAAWS). “Women’s Sport from 440 BC to 1998.” *Milestones*.
<www.caaws.ca/e/milestones/sport_print.cfm>.

National Organization for Women. <www.now.org/>.

Title IX. <www.titleix.info/>.

U.S. Department of Labor. Office of the Assistant Secretary for Administration and Management. *Title IX, Education Amendments of 1972*.
<www.dol.gov/oasam/regs/statutes/titleix.htm>.

For website updates, please visit Websites to Support the Grades 11 and 12 Curriculum at
<www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/physhlth/>.

Physical Activity and Sport for Older Adults

As humans age, the body begins to deteriorate, from the cellular level to the total body. Aging is inevitable, and the process cannot be stopped. Research has shown, however, that it is possible to slow the loss of physiological and physical functions through exercise and sport. The Canadian Centre for Activity and Aging is a world leader in aging research and provides practical advice and materials on the benefits of physical activity for older adults. Recently, the Canadian government was instrumental in the formation of the Canada Senior Games, a national competition for seniors over the age of 55, which includes sports such as snooker, swimming, five-pin bowling, golf, and track.

REFERENCES



For additional information, refer to the following websites:

Canadian Centre for Activity and Aging (CCAA). <www.uwo.ca/actage/>.

Canadian Senior Games Association. <www.canada55plusgames.com/>.

For website updates, please visit Websites to Support the Grades 11 and 12 Curriculum at <www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/physhlth/>.

Politics and Sport

The Canadian Sport Policy, available on the Sport Canada website, “presents a powerful vision for sport in Canada” and emphasizes the “goals of enhanced participation, excellence, capacity, and interaction in sport” (“Introduction”):*

The Policy is unique in comparison to the many previous studies and policies on sport in Canada because it

- represents the shared vision and goals of 14 governmental jurisdictions for sport for the period 2002 to 2012 and challenges the sport community to share in their achievement
- reflects the involvement in the policy development process of stakeholders not previously included
- emphasizes increased communication and collaboration amongst all the stakeholders
- commits all governments to setting targets for enhanced participation and enhanced high performance sport in collaboration with their respective sport communities
- commits governments to strengthening their regular and formal communication with their respective sport communities on issues affecting sport
- will be implemented by complementary Action Plans developed by the governments collectively and individually, bi-laterally and multi-laterally, and by the sport community

* Source of Excerpts: Canadian Heritage. Sport Canada. “Introduction.” *The Canadian Sport Policy*. 24 May 2002. <www.pch.gc.ca/progs/sc/pol/pes-csp/2003/1_e.cfm>. Reproduced with permission.

THE GOALS OF THE CANADIAN SPORT POLICY ARE

▪ **Enhanced Participation**

A significantly higher proportion of Canadians from all segments of society are involved in quality sport activities at all levels and in all forms of participation.

▪ **Enhanced Excellence**

The pool of talented athletes has expanded and Canadian athletes and teams are systematically achieving world-class results at the highest levels of international competition through fair and ethical means.

▪ **Enhanced Capacity**

The essential components of an ethically based, athlete/participant-centred development system are in place and are continually modernized and strengthened as required.

▪ **Enhanced Interaction**

The components of the sport system are more connected and coordinated as a result of the committed collaboration and communication amongst the stakeholders.

REFERENCE



For additional information on the policy, refer to the following website:

Canadian Heritage. Sport Canada. *The Canadian Sport Policy*. 24 May 2002.

<www.pch.gc.ca/progs/sc/pol/pcs-csp/index_e.cfm>.

For website updates, please visit Websites to Support the Grades 11 and 12 Curriculum at

<www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/physhlth/>.

Governments play a key role in protecting the rights of individuals. In Canada we refer to these rights as human rights. When individuals perceive that their human rights are being violated they may use legal means through the Human Rights Commission to ensure that their rights are respected. For an example, refer to RM 3-SI, which reports on the ruling, “Winnipeg Girls Win Right to Play on Boys’ Hockey Team.”



Refer to RM 3-SI: Human Rights Appeal.

Sport is often seen as a venue for the promotion of social values, thereby making sport a political venue. For example, sport and physical activity enable participants to

- enhance personal growth and development
- develop life skills (e.g., skills in time management, priority and goal setting)
- strive for excellence and success through hard work, discipline, and perseverance
- experience change in socioeconomic status
- contribute to and benefit from teamwork and team cohesion

Champion athletes can use their celebrity and success to bring attention to inequities, injustices, and other social and personal causes (e.g., racism, gender bias, homophobia, substance use, eating disorders, cancer, AIDS, disaster relief). Sport can also inspire national pride and unite a nation.

Technology and Sport

New sport products are continually being developed, including sportswear, court and field surfaces, equipment, fabrics, and materials. The primary reasons for the development of new products are safety, increased speed of movement (e.g., better trained athletes and the design of playing tools such as the shape and size of balls and the configuration of skis), and improved performance. Innovations in sport products (e.g., larger racquet heads, new waxing techniques for cross-country skiers) have made sport easier for beginners, assisted top-level athletes to reach superior performances, and eased the transition from individual to team play and from recreational sport to highly competitive sport.

Scientifically proven, sport-specific training regimes have significantly added to improved performance, as well as helping to combat the deleterious effects of physical inactivity. Advances in understanding how the body reacts to physiological and psychological stress, as well as improved rehabilitation methodology and technology, have enhanced knowledge of how to live a healthier life.

REFERENCE



For additional information, refer to the following website:

Sport and Technology. <www.sportandtechnology.com>.

For website updates, please visit Websites to Support the Grades 11 and 12 Curriculum at <www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/physhlth/>.

Sport as Business

Sport is big business. More individuals participate in sport as spectators, athletes, and/or administrators than are involved in any other singular human endeavour. In many nations, including Canada, more money is spent on physical activity and sportswear, admission fees, salaries, equipment, and facilities than on the armed services or on any other area of concern, with the exception of health care. Sport involvement contributes to the fitness level of the nation, serves as a major form of entertainment, contributes to personal and national pride, provides employment for thousands of individuals, results in the construction of superior facilities, and thus contributes significantly to the gross national product of the country.



Suggestion for Instruction / Assessment

Social Issues in Sport

Specific business aspects of sport include

- investment income
- ticket sales
- facility revenue
- media revenue
- licensing fees
- team merchandise
- naming rights
- player revenue through endorsements

Ask students to select one of the topics listed above and research its impact on a specific sport, using information from newspapers, magazines, or web-based articles. Have students write a report on their selected research topic in which they

- state the sport and social issue
 - provide background on why it is an issue
 - explain how the issue was/is being addressed through sport and/or the business of sport
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Suggestion for Instruction / Assessment

Player Endorsement Revenue

Have students predict the salaries, and identify any endorsement deals they know of, for different key athletes, such as the following:

- Tiger Woods (golf)
- LeBron James (basketball)
- David Beckham (soccer)
- Sidney Crosby (hockey)
- Cindy Klassen (speed skating)

After students have made their predictions, provide correct statistics for comparison. As a class, discuss the impact of player endorsement deals on society.

REFERENCES



For information on current statistics, refer to the following websites:

Badenhausen, Kurt. "The World's Top-Earning Athletes." 26 Oct. 2007. *Sports Business*. Forbes.com. <www.forbes.com/sportsbusiness/2007/10/25/sports-tiger-woods-biz-sports-cz_kb_1026athletes.html>.

Forbes.com. <www.forbes.com/>.

For website updates, please visit Websites to Support the Grades 11 and 12 Curriculum at <www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/physhlth/>.

RM 3–SI: Human Rights Appeal

Winnipeg Girls Win Right to Play on Boys' Hockey Team*

Two Winnipeg sisters have the right to try out for the boys' hockey team at their high school, the Manitoba Human Rights Commission ruled Friday.

* This story is available at the following website:
Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC). "Winnipeg Girls Win Right to Play on Boys' Hockey Team." 24 Sept. 2006. *CBC News*.
<www.cbc.ca/canada/manitoba/story/2006/09/22/hockey-decision.html>.

RM 3–SI: Human Rights Appeal (*Continued*)

Human Rights Appeal*

September 22, 2006

The Manitoba High Schools Athletic Association is disappointed with the decision regarding high school sport programs. The association strongly believes that its eligibility rules promote equal opportunity for boys and girls to participate in high school sport.

In this case, both the West Kildonan boys' and girls' high school hockey teams had approximately the same number of games and practices. The coaching staff of the girls' team consisted of a Level 2 coach, and a specialized goaltender coach, and other assistant coaches, while the boys' team only had Level 1 coaches.

The MHSAA followed the guidelines as set out by the Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women and Sport (CAAWS) who assert that it is preferable for athletes to play on a gender specific team, when resources are similar. The MHSAA policy is consistent with all other provincial associations across Canada.

The MHSAA allows girls greater opportunity than boys in high school hockey. [The girls] could have played for an "AAA" or "AA" boys' hockey team, but stated it was too expensive or they did not like the coach. They could have played both high school hockey and community hockey, which is an opportunity not available for boys in Manitoba. They chose not to play. They could have attended another school that didn't have a girls' hockey program and tried out for the boys' hockey team there. They chose not to play any hockey for two years and then requested financial compensation for their choices.

The Manitoba Human Rights Commission should consider that educators guide the Manitoba High Schools Athletic Association and its rules and regulations. They should appreciate that these individuals know what is appropriate for sport development at this level and what is best for the student athletes. It is regrettable that the Manitoba Human Rights Commission has chosen to uphold this challenge. This decision is a significant backward step for girls' high school sport progress, and amateur sport in general.

The school had opportunity to appeal the initial decision of the MHSAA Board. They chose not to appeal. The mother and superintendent were informed that another appeal could be put forward. The original appeal was not based on the differences of the games, but simply, "Can girls play on a boys' team, when the school has a girls' team?" It is regrettable that the school chose not to appeal. The school had the opportunity to present a formal Motion to change our rules. This could have been considered at an Annual Meeting, but no motion was ever submitted.

This decision paves the way for a purely merit (ability)-driven high school sport program. This is contrary to the expert evidence from the vast majority of school administrators, principals, and coaches. Does this now mean that boys can try out for girls' teams? Do we eliminate gender specific teams? How will this affect female participation? Can this carry over to Canada Games and other activities? The MHSAA feels that by providing funding and coaching in separate categories for competition, they promote maximum participation and opportunity for all student athletes to achieve personal success.

* Source: Manitoba High Schools Athletic Association (MHSAA). "Human Rights Appeal." *News*. 22 Sept. 2006. <http://www.mhsaa.mb.ca/pages/news/06_07/sep22a.php>. Used with permission.

Note: For updates, refer to the MHSAA website.