

Report:

Panel Discussions on Aspects of Black Hockey and the Black Ice Project

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Introduction

Hockey has been an important aspect of the culture of Black communities in Nova Scotia. As far back as the 1820s, Blacks played hockey on the frozen ponds and lakes throughout the province. Since racism prevented them from playing on white teams, Blacks formed their own. As white teams refused to accept challenges to play, Black teams engaged in organized competition by the mid-1890s by issuing invitations and challenges to one another. Given the heightened interest in hockey, several Black community leaders formally established the “Colored Hockey League (CHL) of the Maritimes” in 1900 consisting initially of the *Halifax Eureka's*, *Africville Sea-Sides*, *Halifax Stanley*, *Dartmouth Jubilees*, and *Hammond Plains Moss Backs*. The league later expanded to include the *Truro Sheiks*, *Amherst Royals*, *Charlottetown West-Enders*, *New Glasgow Speedboys*, and *New Glasgow Rovers*. The CHL, which was comprised of the sons and grandsons of former American slaves from the Underground Railroad existed until 1925.

Historians George and Darril Fosty, in their book *Black Ice: The Lost History of the Colored Hockey League of the Maritimes, 1895-1925*, credit the league’s players whose style of play and innovations (e.g. the slap shot, goaltenders going down on the ice to stop pucks, etc.) helped shape the sport and revolutionized the game forever. As co-founders of the Society of North American Hockey Historians and Researchers (SONAHHR), their work with members of

the Black community in the Halifax area of Nova Scotia resulted in the founding of the Black Ice Hockey and Sports Hall of Fame Conference and Black Ice Project. The subsequent activities and initiatives undertaken through SONAHR helped to promote greater awareness of the CHL in the broader community and reclaim the important contributions of the league's players to the modern game of hockey.

As in the case of the 2001 international hockey conference (*Putting It on Ice: Hockey in Historical and Contemporary Perspective*), which was also held at Saint Mary's University, this year's event provided another opportunity to draw attention to Black hockey in Canada, especially in Nova Scotia, the home of the legendary "Colored Hockey League of the Maritimes".

During the 3-day event, conference delegates and members of the public, through a series of panel discussions led by and comprised of members of the Black community, had the opportunity to learn more about hockey and the Black community, the Colored Hockey League of the Maritimes, and hockey and the Black experience. The following provides a brief synopsis of the panel discussions.

Synopsis of Panel Discussions

Friday, July 13, 2012

Session IV B - Hockey and the Black Community

To open the session, delegates viewed the video *Black Ice, Frozen Out*. This video on the Colored Hockey League (CHL) was co-produced by George and Darril Fosty, co-authors of the

book *Black Ice: The Lost History of the Colored Hockey League of the Maritimes, 1895-1925*, in collaboration with ESPN.

After the video, panelists and conference delegates discussed:

- Black settlement in Nova Scotia and the Underground Railroad;
- The introduction of hockey to early Blacks on Nova Scotia's frozen lakes and ponds;
- The emergence of hockey in the Black communities and racist beliefs about the ability of Blacks to play hockey (e.g. could not endure the cold, possessed ankles too weak to skate, and lacked the intelligence for organized sport);
- The exclusion of Blacks from playing on local white teams and impact on Black communities;
- Events leading to establishment of the Colored Hockey of the Maritimes and the role of the Black church and its influence on the CHL (e.g. the Bible as the Rule Book, Baptist Articles of Faith served as the unofficial Oath of Allegiance);
- Hockey as an important aspect of Black culture and community: development in terms of creating greater contact between Black communities, fostering social cohesion, improving community; life, and contributing to community pride and identity.

Panelists: **Wayne Adams**, Executive Board Member of SONAHHR; **Irvine Carvery**, President of Africville Genealogy Society; **Wilfred Jackson**, President of Black Ice Hockey and Sports Hall of Fame Society; **Craig Smith**, President of SONAHHR Canada; **Andrew Tench**, Vice-President, Black Ice Hockey and Sports Hall of Fame Society.

Saturday, July 14, 2012

Session VII B - Black Ice: A Retrospective on the Colored Hockey League of the Maritimes

The video *Black Ice, Frozen Out* was presented again to open the session and set the context for discussion.

As a lead into the interactive discussion, panelists, who had descendants that played in the CHL, shared their family stories about the league and their relatives' participation in it.

Panelists and conference delegates also discussed the following:

- The uniqueness of the CHL, as an organization, and the central figures involved in the formation and operations of the league such as Henry Sylvester Williams, James R. Johnston, and James A. Kinney;
- The cultural significance of the names used by some of the CHL teams such as *Africville Sea-Sides*, *Dartmouth Jubilees*, *Halifax Eureka's*, *Halifax Stanley*, and *Hammond Plains Moss Backs*;
- The “style of play” exhibited in the league and contributions to the modern game of hockey such as the slap shot (Eddie Martin of the *Halifax Eureka's*) and goaltending style of going down on the ice to stop a shot and wandering out of the goal to play the puck (Henry “Braces” Franklyn of the *Dartmouth Jubilees*);
- The factors or events that led to the demise of the league such as World War One, the move by the City of Halifax in 1905-1906 to expropriate lands in the Black community of Africville for the expansion of the railroad line, and the 1917 Halifax Explosion;
- The failure and unwillingness of the hockey establishment (NHL) to recognize the contributions of the CHL to hockey.

Panelists: **Wayne Adams**, Executive Board Member of SONAHR; **Irvine Carvery**, President of Africville Genealogy Society; **Wilfred Jackson**, President of Black Ice Hockey and Sports Hall of Fame Society; **Percy Paris**, former member of Saint Mary's University “All-Black

hockey line” and current Provincial Cabinet Minister for Economic and Rural Development and Tourism, and Office of African Nova Scotian Affairs; **Craig Smith**, President of SONAHR Canada.

Saturday, July 14, 2012

Session VIII B - Hockey and The Black Experience

Segments of the video documentary *Too Colourful for the League* were presented to help set the stage for the session. The documentary examines the struggle of Blacks in hockey in Canada from the 1930s to the present day.

A lively discussion ensued when the panelists shared with the conference delegates the following:

- Their stories of why and how they got involved in hockey;
- The experiences they encountered with racism and discrimination as a hockey parent, a child growing up, and player;
- The impact the experiences had on them and how they dealt with it;
- Their perspectives on the state of hockey today and what needs to be done to make it more welcoming and inclusive for Blacks and other minority groups.

Panelists: **Kendrick Douglas**, former university player (University of Cape Breton College and Dalhousie University); **Viola Fraser**, hockey parent and volunteer; **Mark McFarlane**, former junior, university (Acadia) and professional hockey player; **Tracey Mulder**, women’s senior hockey player; **Andrew Tench**, hockey coach, former university (Dalhousie University) and senior hockey player.

Useful Web Links

Black Migration to Nova Scotia

<http://www.bccns.com/history/>

Black Loyalist History

http://www.blackloyalist.com/?page_id=2

The Underground Railroad

<http://www.blackhistorycanada.ca/events.php?themeid=21&id=6>

Black Ice (The Book)

<http://www.blackicebook.com/blackice/index.cfm>

The Black Ice Project

<http://www.theblackiceproject.com/blackiceproject/index.cfm>

The Colored Hockey Championship of the Maritimes (Dr. Garth Vaughan)

<http://www.birthplaceofhockey.com/hockeyists/african-n-s-teams/segr-integr.htm>

SONAHR (Society of North American Hockey Historians and Researchers)

<http://www.sonahr.com/sonahr/index.cfm>

Black Ice Hockey and Sports Hall of Fame

http://blackicesociety.ca/hall_of_fame.html

Box Score News Article (Mayor Issues Apology for Africville Destruction)

<http://boxscorenews.com/mayor-issues-apology-for-africville-destruction-p87-90.htm>

Africville: The Spirit Lives On

<http://www.africville.ca>