

A Note from Nadine McSpadden, Author of *Canada's Oldest Sport*

This story is about Rose and Cody, two children from the Shuswap First Nation, who want to learn about the sport of lacrosse. It includes two key ideas that relate to Indigenous cultures. Some explicit teaching about these ideas will help students to understand the cultural connections and will provide background knowledge.

Key Idea: *Recognizing the contributions of Indigenous peoples is important.*

Lacrosse is a very old game. Its origin and history are directly linked to First Nations people across North America. Lacrosse served several purposes. It kept men fit and strong so they were always ready to protect their communities, and it ensured they were strong for hunting season. The game was sometimes played between communities to resolve political conflicts.

In the story, Mom brings in the historical context of lacrosse by showing the children a photo of the Canadian lacrosse champions of 1869. The players were from the Mohawk (Haudenosaunee) Nation. Her children see that First Nations people were experts in the game and, although it is a very old game, it is still played today. In many ways, the game of lacrosse united Indigenous communities in times of displacement. The fact that the game continues to grow in popularity today is a point of pride for First Nations people.

Guiding Questions to use with students:

- Mom says she plays the game to keep fit. Why do you think it was so important for First Nations people to be fit and strong many years ago?
- Look at the photo of the Canadian lacrosse champions of 1869. Then look at one of the players on the Bears team. What is the same/different?
- Lacrosse is one of many contributions from Canada's Indigenous peoples. Which of these things do you think were also introduced by Indigenous people—snowshoes, goggles, corn? (answer: all of them)

Key Idea: *Engaging in activities that relate directly to one's culture builds a strong sense of personal and cultural identity.*

Mom clearly values the game and she is passing on that value to her children. Engaging in activities that relate to our cultural heritage promotes pride and gives opportunities to share our culture with others. The team names in the book are meant to bring in a cultural tie, too. Although the game of lacrosse is open to all Canadians, it still attracts many First Nations players.

Guiding Questions to use with students:

- Why do you think Mom has the old photo of the Mohawk team?
- In the book, the team names are the Bears and the Eagles. Why do you think those names were chosen?
- Can you think of an activity your family does that relates to your culture?