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The Creator's Game: Lacrosse, Identity, and Indigenous Nationhood by Allan Downey

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smaller, more subtle ways, often through more informal solidarity networks based on "family and kin" (603). Heron describes these struggles as part of a pattern of ever-shifting "working-class realism," which he defines as a "propensity among workers during the past 150 years to evaluate what is possible and realizable in any given context and act on that understanding" (603). Often, this outlook never takes workers beyond meagre day-to-day struggles to modestly improve living standards. But in certain more exceptional contexts, working people might strive for something much more ambitious and engage in broader, more militant, and transformative struggle, as Heron himself demonstrates in his chapter on post-First World War labour revolts. Such an argument is profoundly materialist, yet also takes seriously the "cultural and discursive lenses" with which working-class people interpret the world (603).

This is not to say Heron rejects all the provocations from the more recent post-structural and so-called 'intersectional' theoretical perspectives which have largely displaced Marxism in the academy. Heron is quick to acknowledge that race and gender analyses, for example, were not always given their rightful due during the new labour history's early years and Heron's chapters on gender function as important correctives to these earlier disciplinary silences. But while many academics hang their theoretical cloaks on the wind, Heron reminds readers that a consistent and principled commitment to historical materialism need not be drab, deterministic, or exclusionary.

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The Creator's Game

Lacrosse, Identity, and Indigenous Nationhood

By Allan Downey

Vancouver: UBC Press, 2018. 346 pages. $34.95 paper. ISBN 9780774836036 $34.95 PDF. ISBN 9780774836043. $34.95 EPUB. ISBN 9780774836050.

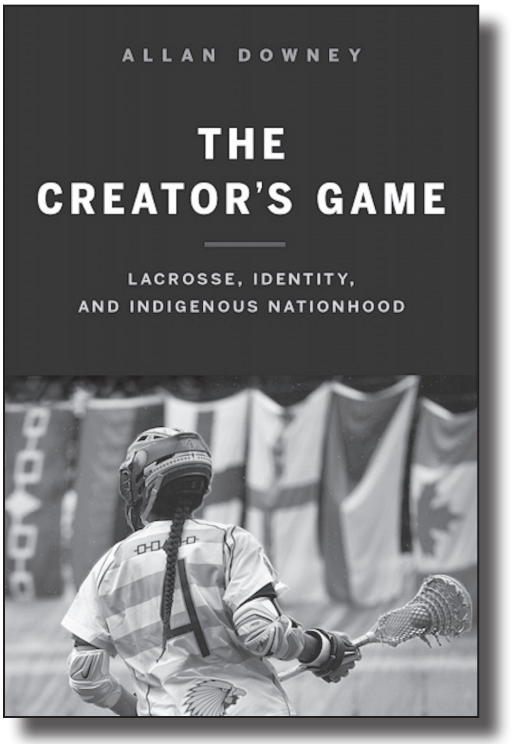
Allan Downey's study of lacrosse, *The Creator's Game*, opens with a story shared by Hodinöhshö:ni' Faithkeeper Dao Jao Dre Delmor Jacobs in 2011. A creation story of lacrosse told from the Hodinöhshö:ni' Longhouse perspective, the narrative provides the title and structure for the book. The story, Downey explains, "sits within several interconnected histories... and demonstrates the centrality of lacrosse in Hodinöhshö:ni' culture and the Longhouse epistemology" (3). Likewise, *The Creator's Game* contains a series of interconnected histories linking sport, identity, and nationhood that reveals the many ways that lacrosse is important to Indigenous communities across North America (though most of the histories considered in *The Creator's Game* take place around the Great Lakes and in the Pacific Northwest).

Downey's own life story embodies these interconnecting and transcontinental histories. He is Dakelh, a citizen of Nak'azdli

Whut'en, Lusilyoo Clan, though he was raised in Waterloo, Ontario, not far from Six Nations of the Grand River. A skilled box lacrosse player in high school, Downey became a proficient field lacrosse player while on athletic scholarship to Mercyhurst College. He was later drafted by the Arizona Sting, a short-lived member of the National Lacrosse League. In addition to taking him across Canada and the United States, lacrosse, Downey reveals, has "allowed me to further empower my identity as Dakelh by reconnecting me with our nation's knowledge systems [and] stories" (24).

The Creator's Game is rooted in Indigenous epistemologies, methodologies, and sources. Downey purposefully centres Indigenous experts and knowledges through the use of oral history, interviews, and stories, with an eye to creating an "Indigenous-centred historical methodology" (25). Downey conducted twenty-one formal interviews with Elders, Hodinöhshö:ni' Faithkeepers, athletes, families, and broadcasters. He reproduces long excerpts from these interviews "to avoid detaching the oral history from its web and to provide as much context as possible" (30). He complements oral records and community-produced texts with archival records, not to validate community stories, but "to understand how the various forms of evidence speak to each other" (29).

The title of each chapter includes the word lacrosse or a variant thereof from Indigenous nations across the country, revealing the ubiquity of stick and balls games in Indigenous culture. For example, Baaga'adowewin (Anishinaabeg Nation), Metawewin (Nêhiyawak Nation), and Sk'éxwa7 (Sḵwx̱wú7mesh Nation). Even as it hints at the wider history of lacrosse, *The Creator's Game* focuses the Hodinöhshö:ni' variant of lacrosse. This reflects the historical geography of modern lacrosse—thanks



to white boosters in Montreal an interpretation of the Hodinöhshö:ni' game became the dominant form in settler Canada communities in the 1880s—and the fact that Hodinöhshö:ni' were consistently a part of the game's history in the period covered by *The Creator's Game*, 1880-1990. The use of Indigenous terminology for lacrosse, like the use of the self-determined name of Indigenous nations to which the word belongs, is an act of reclamation. Likewise, Downey is reclaiming traditional forms of storytelling in *The Creator's Game;* each chapter opens with a story featuring 'Usdas, a cultural hero and Trickster-Transformer that figures prominently in Dakelh oral history. 'Usdas enables Downey to "better frame Indigenous perspectives and the history of Indigenous athletes' continued participation in the game," (23) while also "navigating the ambiguities, contra-

dictions, and uncertainties in the historical record."

For Downey, lacrosse is theory. "Lacrosse," he writes, "embodies, and fits within, a series of layers of sophistication and complexity that predate and extend beyond the comparatively new field of post-colonial studies" (22). This reflects the nature of Indigenous sport more generally, which cannot be easily slotted into Western frameworks: "In Indigenous worldviews, sport spills over into all spaces and embodies the concept of Indigenous holism... it is part of the interconnectedness of the spiritual, physical, intellectual, and emotional, informed by the specificities of each nation's language, culture, ceremonies, and socio-political relations" (27). Though Downey touches on the spiritual and political significance of lacrosse for Indigenous communities, the focus in *The Creator's Game* is on competitive lacrosse, or lacrosse as sport, out of respect for the communities who shared their understanding and experiences of lacrosse with him.

The history of lacrosse in Canada has been the subject of a number of monographs, which while important, have largely focused on the settler history of lacrosse. While *The Creator's Game* maps the shifting relationship between lacrosse and settler Canadian identity, it is primarily concerned with Indigenous peoples' relationships with and experiences of the game. The opening chapter considers lacrosse as a contact zone in the nineteenth century. Early lacrosse contests involved Indigenous athletes performing for non-Indigenous audiences, though the game was quickly appropriated and transformed by Euro-Canadian enthusiasts into a symbol of Canadian nationalism, a project that also served the interests of the late-nineteenth-century state. Drawing on Audra Simpson's concept of nested sovereignties, Downey shows how Indigenous nations could use lacrosse for their own ends: "While non-Natives were devising an identity through the appropriated sport and lands, Indigenous peoples themselves negotiated, adapted, and performed their own identities as individuals, nations, and eventually as a pan-Indigenous community through lacrosse." (50)

In chapter two, Downey reveals how the transformation of lacrosse into a Euro-Canadian game was so successful that it was deemed an appropriate tool for advancing the civilizing and assimilationist goals of residential schools from Ontario to British Columbia. Bureaucrats and school administrators could not have envisioned how lacrosse would be further transformed and deployed by Indigenous peoples, communities, and nations. In chapter three, *The Creator's Game* travels to the Pacific Northwest to show how S<u>k</u>w<u>x</u>wú7mesh, who learned the game in residential school, "used lacrosse to unify and strengthen their nation" (120).

Readers of *Ontario History* will be particularly interested in chapters four and five; they centre on lacrosse in Hodinöhshö:ni' communities. Banned from competitive field lacrosse in 1880, Hodinöhshö:ni' nevertheless played a key role in the survival of the sport through the promotion of box lacrosse. Conversely, lacrosse was central to strengthening a shared Hodinöhshö:ni' identity, though the game also unearthed tensions between those who professed Christian faith and those who lived within the Longhouse tradition. Especially in the 1980s, lacrosse, in the form of the Iroquois Nationals, emerged as a powerful representation of Hodinöhshö:ni' nationhood and a mechanism through which the nation asserted its sovereignty, though here again, there were divisions, in this case revealed by efforts to

establish a women's team.

Earlier this year, *The Creator's Game* was awarded the 2019 Canada Prize in the Humanities and Social Sciences by the Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences, and rightfully so. In addition to telling important stories about sport, identity, and nationhood, Downey pushes the conceptual and structural bounds of scholarly publishing with a monograph that at once centres and embodies Indigenous methodologies and knowledges.

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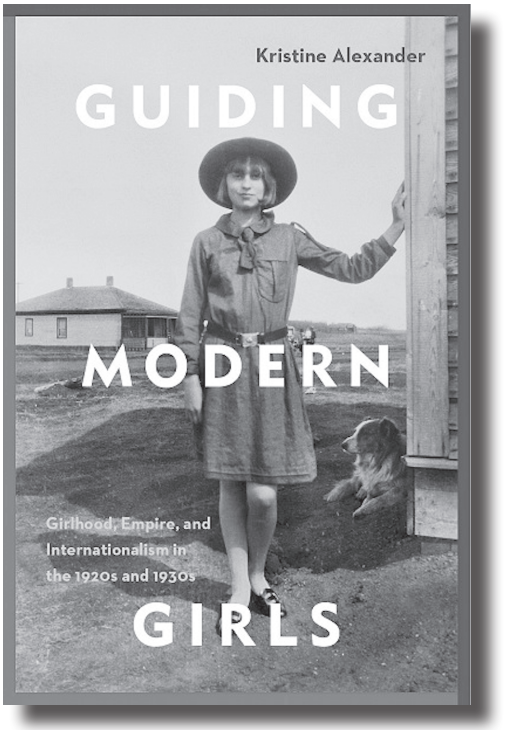
Guiding Modern Girls

Girlhood, Empire, and Internationalism in the 1920s and 1930s

By Kristine Alexander

Vancouver: UBC Press, 2017. 283pp. $34.95 paperback. ISBN 9780774835886. $85.00 hardcover. ISBN 9780774835879. $34.95 EPUB. ISBN 9780774835909. $34.95 PDF. ISBN 9780774835893. (www.ubcpress.ca).



While my parents enrolled me in ballet rather than Brownies, Girl Guiding continues to be an important cultural touchstone for children around the world. It is for this reason that Kristine Alexander's new monograph, *Guiding Modern Girls*, is a long-overdue intervention. Alexander's book draws on the fields of ethnography, girlhood studies, the history of children and youth, and imperial/transnational histories, to trace the Girl Guide movement during the interwar period in Britain, Canada, and India. In this text, Alexander argues that the Girl Guides of this era combined older gender, class, and racial hierarchies with a new emphasis on self-sufficiency and capability as part of the larger cultural shift towards conservative modernity. By tracing these threads across the heart of the British Empire, a white settler society, and a British colony, Alexander is able to illustrate how debates about young women reflected, and were embedded within, larger discussions about race, class, imperialism, and internationalism.

The book itself contains six distinct chapters. Though the first chapter is a detailed history of the Guiding/Scouting movement as a whole, the remaining chapters are organized thematically. Chapters two and three focus on the training that girl guides received both for their future roles as wives and mothers as well as responsible global citizens. Chapters four and five ex-