

Hockey is where we come from!

Somewhere in our souls is a spiritual Canada. Most probably,
Its bedrock is of snow and ice, winter and the land. And if
We were to penetrate it a little deeper, chances are we would find a game.
? from Home Game by Ken Dryden and Roy MacGregor

Judge Thomas Chandler Haliburton, the creator of Sam Slick, was the first person to describe the evolving sport of hockey in the first part of the 1800s when he reminisced about his boyhood time at King's College in Windsor, Nova Scotia: "boys let out racin', yelpin', hollerin', and whoopin' like mad with pleasure ... hurley on the long pond on the ice."

Hurley was a field sport originating in Ireland and transplanted to colonies like Canada. Winter presented both a problem and an opportunity. Playing hurley with a ball on a frozen Canadian landscape offered many challenges such as reduced speed and control; then someone moved it to the frozen ponds of Hants County, added some skates and a wooden disc or "puck": hockey was born. It has known many names: hurley-on-ice, wicket, ricket, break-shins, and alchamadajk (Mi'kmaq for hurley on ice).

The sport spread with evangelical speed from the upper reaches of the Annapolis Valley to Dartmouth and Halifax, and Pictou County. The rules evolved as did the sport until the first organized game of hockey was played on March 3, 1875 in Montreal.

When you read the stories of our Canadian hockey greats like Gordie Howe, or you talk to our local hockey greats, you will hear similar stories about the love, the pure joy, and delight of the game. You will hear how they played every chance they got, and how the time flew by and how the community came together on cold, winter evenings to cheer on the home team. This is the game we celebrate here in Bancroft: this is Bancroft! That love for the game has kept on growing, not just here but all over, it has now become an international sport with supporters placing bets on their favorite teams and players, with bookies that use agent payment solutions for pay per head agents to make everything streamlined and easier, the list goes on. All of this shows how far hockey has come and how it will keep on going.

It was Monday evening at about 6 p.m. and my dad was checking the Beer Store parking lot for the "boys." And sure enough there they were: the Lowry boys, Mark McGhee, and others. The Jr. D Jets had finished their season on Sunday, but it took less than 24 hours to start a game of pickup in a parking lot, using clumps of snow for goalposts.

It is in the spirit of this game that Hospice North Hastings and St. Paul's United Church have come together to celebrate Hockey Day in Canada on Feb. 13 at 11 p.m. at the parking lot across from the TD Bank, followed by hot dogs at the Playhouse and the movie, Skating to New York. Come out and join in the fun.

For those of you who truly believe that hockey is Canada's religion, come out and have fun in worship for Holy Hockey Sunday, Feb. 14, at both St. Paul's United in Bancroft (9:45 a.m.) and at Carlow United in Boulter (11:30 a.m.). Come out and celebrate the heritage of hockey and wear your favourite hockey jersey.

Submitted by Lynn Watson, Minister