

Casey Gelderman

Professor Mundy

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The Creators Game

The first lacrosse stick I ever picked up was my dad's old stick from when he played in high school. My brother, sister, and I would play around in my front yard whenever it was a nice day out. This is how I learned to play lacrosse. I didn't start playing on a team until I was in seventh grade. I suppose I built up enough skill and confidence to try out for the middle school team in seventh grade after spending many hours in my yard practicing. It wasn't long before our next door neighbors noticed I was dabbling in the lacrosse world. Both girls were long time lacrosse players who handed down their old sticks to me. I didn't realize it then, but I had accepted an invitation into a whole new community. Players pass down their knowledge, experience, and values when they pass down their sticks. It is an invitation to join the lacrosse community.

Native Americans were the first people to play the game of lacrosse, but the game has drastically changed since that time. The Native Americans referred to lacrosse as "The Creators Game" which was really about their culture, religion, and preparation for battle. Their games lasted for many days, and were played on fields that were up to several miles long. Obviously, there have been drastic changes in the way the game is played today. Lacrosse is no longer focused on religion, but there definitely a lacrosse culture that still exists. Players can carry around the pride that lacrosse is one of the first sports ever played in America. The rules of the game have also changed drastically, and the addition of women's lacrosse is another

accomplishment the lacrosse community is proud of. In 2012, the movie Crooked Arrows, was released. It was about a Native American community and it showed how Native American families were still very tied to lacrosse and how important it was to their culture. It allowed the Native Americans to reconnect with their culture through the game of lacrosse by affirming the historical importance to modern day lacrosse players.

Like many fellow Long Islanders, I grew up surrounded by lacrosse culture. Both my brother and sister played since they were very young, so our family was very involved in lacrosse. Lacrosse players have their own unique style, and that is something that lacrosse players find unifying. The community takes pride in dressing the same, for example, players wear pinnies, longer shorts, and you can't ever dare to play without wearing midcalf socks. Young girls often expressed their individuality by wearing big bows in their hair. By becoming a US Lacrosse Member you receive a magazine every month, and you see pictures of the best players in the country, which makes young players want to dress just like the players that they look up to. A player's stick is also something that has a distinctive style. Young players want the coolest color, or the tie-dyed head, and they can even get their name painted on. As players get older they decide to pick a stick that matches their team colors. When you get to a really high level team, such as a college team, the whole team gets matching sticks. The appearance of the stick is very meaningful to lacrosse players, but the model of the stick also shows how the community is evolving.

The model of the lacrosse stick is something that has drastically changed since the Native Americans first made their sticks from the resources that they had available to them. Now, a new stick can cost up to \$200 for me. Lacrosse is getting more and more popular, and new versions of sticks are being released constantly. As the materials are improving, the cost is shooting up, and

lacrosse has become a very expensive sport to be a part of. Many can argue that lacrosse tends to be an middle/upper class sport that is mostly a white sport played on the East Coast. Lacrosse is not even a sport played in gym class because it is so expensive and requires a lot of equipment. Iroquois, who lived in modern day New York, were the major Native American troop to start the game of lacrosse, which is why the game is very popular on the East Coast. Also, there are rarely any adult teams and there are no professional teams since lacrosse is so young. Players pass their sticks down to people to try and get them to join the sport and join the young community. Players invite others to play the sport because they want to grow the sport to make it more popular all over the country, and not just the East Coast.

By passing your stick to invite others to join lacrosse, you are also introducing them to all the expenses that come with the sport. Lacrosse can be an upper/middle class sport because there are so many things that you need to spend money on in order to participate in the sport. Expenses for the average lacrosse player include, tournaments entry fees, hotel rooms, gas money, clothing orders, uniforms, equipment, and the time invested. People don't worry about all that they spend to bring their son or daughter to a tournament, or how much it costs to get the best equipment. The more you spend on lacrosse the better chance you have of getting recruited, which pays off in the end when you get a scholarship to play college lacrosse.

Lacrosse has been used as a way to assist students to getting into college, and today the recruiting process for lacrosse is started so early. Consequently, players are verbally committing to colleges before they even get into high school. It is not unheard of to find eighth graders who have verbally committed to go to Division 1 universities such as University of North Carolina, Northwestern, Florida, and Notre Dame. Popular lacrosse clubs advertise their player's college commitments on their websites as a way to boast. This is another aspect of the culture that is

passed down, because getting recruited for lacrosse is something that has very high priority for lacrosse players. For example, according to Newsday Long Island List of College Commits, the sport that has the most commits for the class of 2015 as of November 2014 is boys lacrosse followed by girls lacrosse. Most or all of lacrosse tournaments are specifically designed to put players in front of college coaches so that they can get recruited. By passing down your knowledge and experience, players learn the rules to how to navigate this very complicated process. Recruiting has become very competitive, and it is so important because it allows people to establish their status in the community.

Another major part of the passing down and growing lacrosse is the mentality of women. Lacrosse is a sport that involves a lot of contact, and it is clear why the game used to be a preparation for war for Native Americans. Although there have been several rules created to prevent injuries, there are still many injuries occurring due to the fast pace of the game, and the rising skill level. A major debate now is if female lacrosse players should wear helmets. Many people are worried that the sport has become too physical, and there is too much contact for females to not have protective gear. Women are often viewed as fragile, weak, or not meant to get physical. Men have less players on the field compared to women, and they draw/face off is taken differently. The lines on the field are different and the rules regarding checking and hitting are different. These are just a few examples of how different the rules are for the men and women's game. Sports such as basketball, volleyball, and soccer are nearly the same rules between males and females. Since the rules are so different boys and girls cannot play together which leads boys to dismiss the girls game and not respect it.

Lacrosse brings people together every time a new team or new season is started. If you join a travel team or play in college, you will show up to the first day of practice and only have

one thing in common with your whole team, and that is lacrosse. You will share the love of the game, and the passion and dedication you have towards the sport. Here at Pace University, lacrosse has brought together nineteen freshmen that are all from different towns, different schools, and different cultures. The one culture we have in common was the lacrosse culture. No matter where we are from, or what language we may speak at home, we all speak the same language on the field. Lacrosse has the power to bring people together, because this doesn't just happen at Pace University, it happens with hundreds of teams every year. Each string in a lacrosse stick is individual just like each player is an individual. The strings of a lacrosse stick bring the whole stick together, and a lacrosse stick can tie together a whole community.