

The File Hills Colony: The Role of Sport in Making Culture

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Non-indigenous sport played and continues to play a part in the ongoing cultural redefinition of the aboriginal peoples and their descendants who populated the File Hills Colony in southern Saskatchewan. This social experiment which began as an appendage to the residential school programs was initiated in 1901 and continued for half a century.

The diligent efforts of Indian Commissioner Hayter Reed and Indian Agent W.M. Graham were combined with those of two Christian school administrators; Father Joseph Hugonard of the Qu'Appelle Industrial School at Lebret, and Katherine Gillespie of the File Hills Presbyterian Boarding School, which adjoined the Okanese Reserve, in the selection of colonists. Hayter Reed was anxious to have the early acculturation "gains" of the school experiences secured. He feared the return of the students to their reserves and families would result in a "relapse into barbarism" The ambitious W.M. Graham was highly motivated to create a model colony that would serve as a showpiece to demonstrate his solution to the "Indian problem." The File Hills Colony in southern Saskatchewan would emerge as a place where the

indigenous colonists were programmed to mate, pray and play in a Euro-Canadian way. There were baseball teams, sports days, brass bands and Union Jacks in abundance when the many dignitaries visited this Colony. The establishment of the sporting programs were often well received, but any attempt to eliminate indigenous approaches to these activities or to discontinue traditional cultural practices were opposed. The aboriginal descendants of the File Hills families continue to reflect in their culture the effects of this problematic colonial paradigm.