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The Influence of the Rivalry between Fort William and Port Arthur on the Development of Sport in Thunder Bay

Fort William and Port Arthur-located adjacent to one another at the western end of Lake Superior-were two communities that developed an intense rivalry. This was still evident when the two amalgamated in 1970 to form the city of Thunder Bay. Although the rivalry was damaging to many facets of life in the twin cities, it was generally beneficial to the development of sport. This purpose of this paper is to examine this issue.

The competitive atmosphere between the two rival communities inspired athletes to higher levels of performance and provided spectators with a socially acceptable means of releasing inter-civic hostilities. Each city constantly sought to better the other on the ice or playing field. In no other sport was this rivalry more evident than in hockey. Still, when a Lakehead team advanced to the final rounds of the Allan Cup, fans from both cities rallied behind that team and took great pride in its achievements. Driven by a desire to outperform the other city, the twin communities excelled in amateur hockey. With one Memorial Cup, four Allan Cups and another five trips to the Allan Cup finals during the 1920s and 1930s Port Arthur and Fort William established themselves as dominant forces in Canadian hockey.

Teams from Lakehead were isolated in Northwestern Ontario and although some athletes did travel to compete in Winnipeg, Toronto, Duluth and Minneapolis, these trips by train or boat took considerable time and were expensive. Consequently, the two cities looked to each other for convenient competition. The rivalry also stimulated the development of sports facilities, for when one city laid out a park or athletic field, the other was soon to follow. This competitive atmosphere nurtured numerous elite athletes, both amateur and professional, and Thunder Bay became a popular venue for national and international sporting events.

Very little has been written about the role Northwestern Ontario has played in the development of sport in Canada. This investigation of the influence of the Port Arthur and Fort William rivalry on sport in Thunder Bay, the largest community in the region, is an initial attempt to draw attention to its wealth of sport history.

Sources for the paper include local newspapers (the *Daily Times-Journal* and *News Chronicle*), City of Thunder Bay archives, Thunder Bay Parks and Recreation archives, the Northwestern Ontario Sports Hall of Fame archives, and interviews.