

The Philosophy of Lacrosse

As the vast majority of the participants in our sport are children, youth and their parents, the CLA feels that we need to understand the reasons for their involvement and why we as a sport organization should encourage that participation. The following philosophical statement is intended as the underpinning of a program which will build on this platform to promote fair play, drug free sport, and standards of competition.

The Fundamental Question

When all the complex questions had been reduced to their basics, we found that the fundamental question remains:

Why do we want children to play sports, and more specifically, to play Lacrosse?

What is the intrinsic value of sport that makes it a desirable commodity in our culture? Is there merit apart from the opportunity to succeed in professional sport, which is a long shot for most people who are involved in sport, or the Olympic platform, which is even further beyond the reach of most athletes or children and their parents? What motivation is there for every parent to encourage the participation of their child in sport?

The Essence of Humanity

Among the aboriginal peoples of North America there is a philosophy of human nature which holds that humanity is defined by three facets: mind, body, and spirit. Success in the life experience is achieved through the proper conditioning of physical, mental and spiritual aspects of the individual. The mind must be developed to be active and flexible. The body must be developed to be strong and agile. The spirit must be developed through a strong moral code that guides our actions throughout our lives. It is our responsibility to ensure that our children develop as humans by giving them the opportunity and the encouragement to develop each of these facets in themselves. As humans ourselves, we must continue to visit and develop these aspects throughout our lives.

From this philosophy we can extract the intrinsic value of sport to our culture. Surely it is desirable that we strive to help our children grow to be healthy, alert, and strong persons. We try to achieve this in many ways; health plans for our families, education for all our children, and our religions and our laws that strive to create moral codes by which we live and interact with each other.

Ctd. on page 2

Sport has the distinctive character of being able to address all three of these facets, mind body and spirit, through one activity.

The Body

By the very nature of most sports, children who participate are physically active. They build physical fitness and develop their coordination, balance and judgment about their bodies. Through their involvement in these physical activities they develop body awareness and learn to push and extend their capabilities to new heights.

Physical development does not always have to be measured against an absolute standard but may be measured against personal standards. In this way success, achievement and development are attainable for all.

The Mind

As the participants develop and progress through the learning stages of sport, their abilities to understand, evaluate and make judgments on skills, techniques and strategies also develop. We help the athletes to develop their cognitive abilities from stages of rote understanding (execution by the numbers) through comprehension, instinctive execution, and into innovation. Sport helps to develop judgment and analytical skills in its participants. Through sport athletes develop confidence in their capabilities and sport can help to build positive self images.

The Spirit

Sport is inherently well suited to teaching children values, morals, and rules of behaviour. We must not make the mistake of believing that these items are inherent to sport. Sport is a tremendous tool by which we can transmit on many levels the guidance to develop a strong moral code. This teaching must occur on a conscious level and not be assumed to be a fundamental part of participation. We must clearly define the moral parameters that we wish to establish as a foundation, communicating and reinforcing these through words and actions. Through sport we can transmit the values of fair and honest competition, and respect for rules and authority. We can also help participants develop a guideline for social interaction that they will carry into all other aspects of their lives.

The Value of Sport

Throughout history the presence and prevalence of sport as part of civilization is striking. The consistency of sport as an inherent part of culture lends credence to the belief that there are fundamental principles at play. Quite apart from the overwhelming dominance of professional sport, sport as entertainment, highly specialized sport or an international platform of elite performance, sport is a pervasive part of every Canadian's life. It is a tool by which we can help to develop a society of healthy, active citizens and transmit to our children and youth fundamental principles, social skills and moral values