Notice of the Final Oral Examination
for the Degree of Master of Arts

of

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BA (Hons) (University of Calgary, 2012)

“Sport, Not Savagery: Resistance to Hockey Violence in BC Media, 1875-1911”

Department of History

Friday, August 21, 2015
1:00 P.M.
Engineering and Computer Science Building
Room 128

Supervisory Committee:
Dr. Christine O’Bonsawin, Department of History, University of Victoria (Supervisor)
Dr. Richard Rajala, Department of History, UVic (Member)

External Examiner:
Dr. Jamie Dopp, Department of English, UVic

Chair of Oral Examination:
Dr. Charlotte Schallié, Department of Germanic and Slavic Studies, UVic

Dr. David Capson, Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies
Abstract

A pervasive fiction has permeated a particular historical narrative regarding hockey’s history in North America. This narrative suggests that violence is woven tightly into the fabric of hockey, due to the prevalence of violent incidents in the history of the game. Many authors, especially those writing for popular audiences, have argued that simply because violent incidents have been recorded throughout the history of hockey, violence must have been condoned in the past, and therefore should continue to be a part of the game. The purpose of this study is to examine the history of hockey violence in British Columbia by evaluating media reactions to violence, as published in newspapers across BC from 1875-1911. However, to describe the early years of organized hockey in Canada as simply being a less-evolved ‘blood sport’ is to marginalize the voices of those individuals that spoke out against violence during this time period.

This thesis evaluates the way newspaper reporters reacted to hockey violence during the first years of organized hockey in western Canada. To conduct this appraisal, specific attention is paid to the language used by reporters to characterize violent play, a lexicon shaped by sensationalist trends in Canadian media during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

In order to conduct this study, I begin by detailing media response to hockey violence in central Canada, thereby establishing a comparative framework with BC. Having consulted the relevant secondary literature and primary source materials, I argue that although violence, in various forms, has been a part of organized ice hockey since its earliest years, the desire to eradicate violence is just as old. By observing the treatment of violence in BC media from 1875-1911, this study supports the conclusion that violence in organized hockey is no older than attempts to eliminate violence from the game.