



Since 1993, Indigenous teams have traveled to Edmonton each spring for the Alberta Native Provincial Hockey Championships, a Hockey Alberta sanctioned event with certified coaches. Calling Lake has participated since about 2001; as in many other communities, kids keep this tournament in their sights all winter as they play shinny or pond hockey and attend camps and clinics. At times, communities share players to give everyone a place on a team – and to fill their own rosters or snag top talent. The 2015 championship team played under the Calling Lake banner, with about half of these kids from Calling Lake. One might call it our coming out of winter.

Exploring the history of sport in Calling Lake

No matter when they came or from where, the people of Calling Lake have always engaged in sporting activities and games of chance as time permitted. What did they play, and did the games change over time?

Those questions and more are behind an effort to learn about the history of sport and recreation in Calling Lake as part of celebrating our heritage as a community.

Researchers tell us that traditional games played by First Peoples in what is now western Canada included lacrosse, a game invented by Indigenous peoples as far back as the seventeenth century. Canoe racing also owes its roots to Indigenous cultures. Other traditional games included tug-of-war and hide-and-seek – running and playing hard prepared youth for hunting, as did playing with toy bows and arrows and peashooters. In another game, snow goose, one boy would swing a wooden or stone target around in the air as others tried to hit or catch the target while sitting or kneeling.

Were those games and more played here? Did the games evolve as European fur traders and voyageurs found their way to Calling Lake, whether for the trapping or fishing season or to live? If we were to go back to those times, what would we find folks doing for fun? Perhaps our Elders can help us learn more.

Traditional toys & games, anyone?

We would like to learn about homemade toys and favourite games used in decades past in and around Calling Lake. We've heard that children played with a toy made of antlers and leather string, and we're wondering if that might be similar to "ring the stick," a game using a willow stick attached to a hoop. Also that children played with homemade toys such as carved wooden dolls. If you have memories of those or any other traditional toys, please contact the history team at callinglakehistory@gmail.com



Calling Lake History Gathering
A project of the Calling Lake Community Society
AUGUST 2023



Around 2010, Calling Lake began hosting the Bannock Cup for the community. It's "all hands on deck" for the Bannock Cup. Kids and adults, guys and gals get involved – as players, referees, concession workers and more. What started as a tinfoil-wrapped cup is now a replica Stanley Cup. But make no mistake it is the Calling Lake Bannock Cup. In January of 2020 an Indigenous team from Australia came to challenge for the cup, and a great time was had by all. In return, a team from our region traveled to Australia in 2023. This picture is one of hundreds in our archives celebrating our community time with "The Bannock Cup."

Talent and tenacity: multiple claims to fame

Organized sport in Calling Lake as we think of it today developed within the past 100 years. Softball, baseball and ice hockey were brought into the community by settlers and others who came to work or live, be it for a short time or a lifetime. As numbers swelled and more folks homesteaded near enough to gather for a competition and return home in a day, facilities were cobbled together, from ballfields to indoor recreation centres.

Ball teams and hockey teams came together as well, using men, women, boys and girls to fill the rosters for fun, and for competition. Once Calling Lake got what we often refer to as World Class facilities, we made use of them to get adults and kids alike off the street, so to speak. And what better place to hang out than at the rec centre, the hockey rink or the ball diamond.

As we hunt and gather our sport history, we are learning of talented individual athletes, competitive teams and remarkable events. We have gathered school sport history as well, including track and field highlights. Our claims to fame included "arms for hire," as other teams borrowed our talent to improve their chances in tournaments. Ball pitcher Dick Nipshank comes to mind, and he is not alone.

Events of note include our Annual Bannock Cup and Elite Hockey camps as well as an Australian Indigenous hockey group we hosted in 2020.

We have heard tales of boxing, wrestling, football, sailing, skiing, swimming and more. Of impromptu games, including some passed down from earlier days, such as anti-I-over, murder ball (dodgeball with a twist), scrub (stickball), road

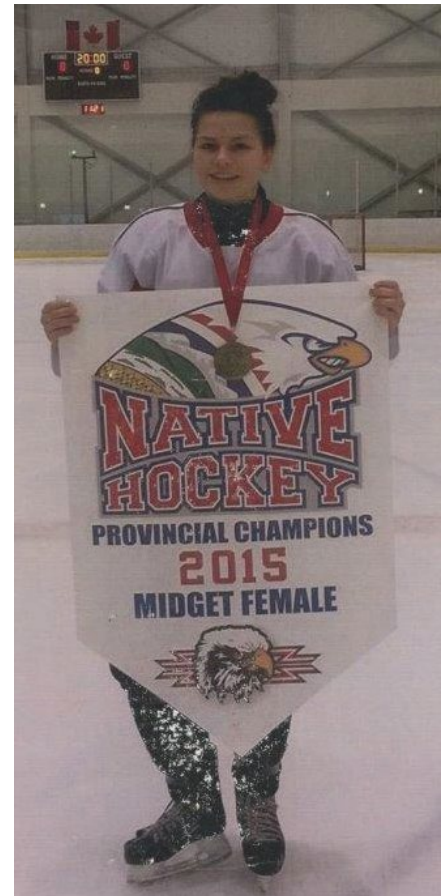
hockey, boxing and other martial arts. And of course hunting and fishing, summer or winter, whether for fun, profit or competition.

The pictures with this article speak a great deal about who we are and who we were. Please look over the pictures and the story that accompanies each one. We will also share the information we're discovering via Facebook, a website and print form. We are also

planning a display of equipment and photos that is sure to bring back memories. Watch for that!



Marvin Nipshank collecting more tournament trophies at Grouard in the mid-1980s



Mekwan Lightning of Calling Lake brandishing her team's 2015 championship banner

We invite you to help round out what we know about the history of sport and recreation in Calling Lake. Please share what you have in your attics and memory banks with the folks who have volunteered to lead the hunt:

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Saturday sailing races were a common sight in years gone by



Softball and baseball, fast pitch or slow, Calling Lake has played it all. We love our ball, as do many communities in the north. Here, the Double R Rangers show off their hardware in Widewater, where they took top prize. How many of these players do you know?

Memories of the Double R Rangers

Kevin Prather

As a kid growing up, I looked forward to a few things. Even when we didn't live in Calling Lake, my family did. And like the seasons, I knew what I'd be doing when the season changed. We'd be at the lake. The things I looked forward to in the summer were ball, the beach, fishing and bonfires. In winter, it was hockey night in Canada. Sliding or skating, or watching my uncles play hockey.

Even before I could play ball, we watched fastball. The Double R Rangers. Before that, the White Caps, but the Rangers is what I remember and love the most. Being a bat boy as a kid. Going to games. Growing up around the game and getting to watch my heroes play. I couldn't wait to be part of the team. Watching, learning. Practicing with them by catching fly balls.

Then I got old enough to play. Weekend tournaments. The rivalries. Jewels. Grosmont. The Labatt Blues. Colinton. Those are some of the things I remember. It was a family affair back then, being at a tourney. Players brought their wives and kids to the games.

My memories are only a snippet compared to some of the other guys I played with. I came in as a rookie, joining a bunch of great veteran guys who were already very, very good and known in the ball community. They won 11 tournaments out of 13 one year.

Today is a day I'm happy is here. Bringing back some of those memories. Of the players. The sponsors, Rudy & Rojowski. And the uniforms. Double R had the best uniforms in my opinion – the best uniform I ever wore.



Retro jersey designed in 2023 for our celebration of sport in Calling Lake

**Double R Rangers
1980 – 2005**

**Sponsored by Rudy
Wiselka & Frank Rojowski**

**Some team members
through the years**

Elmer Nipshank
Roy Jacobs
Marvin 'Dick' Nipshank
Brian Nipshank
Larry Cardinal
Charles 'Chucky' Beaver
Spencer Cardinal
Ken Cardinal
Bernie 'Flex' Cardinal
Johnny 'Scabby' Cardinal
Randy Auger
Irvin Cardinal
Gerald 'Cheetcho' Johnson
Chester Risby
Bimbo Courtoreille
Clarence 'Okemow' Cardinal
Brian 'Chub' Cardinal
Armin Cardinal
Kevin Prather
Basil Manossa
Melvin 'Puppet' Jacobs
Barry Jacobs
Dave Newman
Ross 'Russ' Cardinal
Randy 'Jaybird' Jacobs
Napolean 'Nap' Auger
Johnny Jacobs- Coach
Ricky Cardinal

Who else was on the team?