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The field of play : military and sport in Southern Alberta communities during the Second World War

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THE FIELD OF PLAY: MILITARY AND SPORT IN SOUTHERN ALBERTA
COMMUNITIES DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR

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Abstract

Prior to the beginning of the Second World War discussions of air force training between Britain and Canada, were ongoing, but never agreed upon. The declarations of war on Germany from Britain and Canada forced these discussions to a resolution as the air force was a crucial component of military operations. On December 17, 1939 the agreement known as the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan (BCATP) was signed. The agreement intended that Canada would train all of the Allied air force throughout the war. The repercussions of the agreement meant that communities across the country became home to training schools and air force personnel. This study employs geographic and relational aspects of community theory in the investigation of the role of sport in the relationship building process between military and civilian communities in Southern Alberta. Sport provided common ties and opportunities for social interaction in the relationship-building process between BCATP schools and Southern Alberta communities. Towns were losing many of the men and women who were playing sport as they joined the services and air force personnel were replacing them; thereby keeping sport at all levels from completely shutting down during the war. This study highlights the changes in the sporting landscape as military sport transitioned from a spectacle to becoming indispensable to local communities. Specific case studies of basketball and lacrosse in Macleod, hockey in Claresholm and Lethbridge, soccer in Medicine Hat and sporting charity events indicate the depth to which schools integrated into towns through sport. Situated within pertinent secondary sources from history, sociology and sport studies this study draws on six Southern Alberta newspapers, town council meeting minutes and archival data from the Nanton Bomber Museum, The Claresholm Museum, The Galt Museum and Archives and the Esplanade Heritage Centre.

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To all those who have fought for freedom in Canada, we Canadians are ever in your debt. The only reason we are able to do what we do in this country is because of your sacrifices.

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Table of contents

Approval/Signature.....	ii
Abstract.....	iii
Acknowledgements.....	iv
Table of Contents.....	v
Supplemental Information	
List of Figures.....	vii
List of Maps.....	viii
List of Abbreviations.....	ix
Body of Thesis	
Chapter One: The BCATP, Community and Sport in Southern Alberta ...	1
Setting the Scene.....	3
Literature Review.....	12
Justification.....	24
Purpose.....	27
Methodology.....	28
Method.....	30
Limitations.....	31
Delimitations.....	32
Chapter Outline.....	33
Notes.....	34
Chapter Two: The Integration: BCATP Schools in Southern Alberta	39
Medicine Hat: No. 34 SFTS.....	46
Lethbridge: No. 5 EFTS; No. 8 B&G.....	48
Macleod: No. 7 SFTS.....	50
Claresholm: No. 15 SFTS.....	52
High River: No. 5 EFTS.....	53
Pearce: No. 36 EFTS; No. 3 AOS; No. 2 FIS.....	55
Vulcan: No. 2 FIS; No. 19 SFTS.....	56
Canadian Regionalism.....	57
Initial Sport Interaction.....	59
Notes.....	63
Chapter Three: The Amalgamation: Air Force Sports in Southern Alberta	
Communities.....	68
A historical Narrative of Small Town Sport, 1939-1944.....	71
The CAHA and the Early Seeds of Military Sport, 1939...	72
Learning the Game: The Inclusion of Military Personnel into Civilian Leagues, 1940.....	73

Exhibition Games, Military Rules, and the Promotion of British Sports, 1941.....	74
Integration of Civilian and Military Sport, 1942.....	77
City Leagues, Service Leagues, and Stricter Military Rules, 1943.....	82
Saying Goodbye through Sport, 1944-1945.....	89
Case Studies.....	92
Macleod: Basketball.....	92
Macleod: Lacrosse.....	94
Hockey in Canada.....	95
Claresholm: Hockey.....	96
Lethbridge: Hockey.....	100
Medicine Hat: Soccer.....	103
Notes.....	107
 Chapter Four: The Fundraiser: Raising Money through Sporting Charity	
Events.....	115
Notes.....	140
 Chapter Five: Conclusions and Recommendations.....	144
Recommendations for Further Study.....	148
Notes.....	151
 Coda: A Reflection of the Research Process.....	152
 Bibliography.....	156

List of Figures

Figure 1	Cartoon from Windy Wings, 1942.....	98
Figure 2	Cartoon from Windy Wings, 1942.....	97
Figure 3	Cartoon from Windy Wings, 1942.....	97
Figure 4	Miss Helen Cantwell, 1941	128

List of Maps

Map 1 Alberta BCATP Schools, 1940-1945..... 45

List of Abbreviations

A/V/M or AVM		Air Vice Marshall	
CFI		Chief Flying Instructor	
C/O or CO		Commanding Officer	
F/C or FC		Flight Commander	
F/L or FL		Flight Lieutenant	
F/O or FO		Flying Officer	
P/O or PO		Pilot Officer	
S/L or Sqn. Ldr		Squadron Leader	
S/P or SP		Sergeant Pilot	
W/C		Wing Commander	
WD		Women's Division	
AOS		Air Observer School	
B & G		Bombing and Gunnery School	
EFTS		Elementary Flying Training School	
FIS		Flying Instructor School	
SFTS		Service Flying Training School	
WAAF		Women's Auxiliary Air Force	
RAAF		Royal Australian Air Force	
RAF		Royal Air Force	
RCAF		Royal Canadian Air Force	
RNZAF		Royal New Zealand Air Force	
No. 5	EFTS	Lethbridge	July 22, 1940-June 1941
		High River	June 1941- December 15, 1944
No. 31	EFTS	DeWinton	June 18, 1941-September 25, 1944
No. 36	EFTS	Pearce	March 30, 1942-August 14, 1942
No. 7	SFTS	Macleod	December 9, 1940-December 1, 1944 June 9, 1941 -March 30
No. 15	SFTS	Claresholm	1945
No. 19	SFTS	Vulcan Medicine	May 3, 1943-April 14, 1945
No. 34	SFTS	Hat Pearce	April 8, 1941-November 17, 1944 September 1942-June 6,
No. 3	A.O.S.	(from Regina)	1943
No. 8	B & G	Lethbridge	October 13, 1941-December 15, 1944
No. 2	FIS	Vulcan Pearce	August 3, 1943-May 1943 May 1943-January 20, 1945

Chapter One:

The BCATP, Community and Sport in Southern Alberta

In 1944 London, England was host to a football game between the United States Army Central Base Pirates and the Canadian Army Mustangs. The game was held at the White City Stadium, built for the 1908 London Summer Olympics. It was played following American rules in the first half and Canadian Rules for the second half. The Mustangs came out victorious in front of a packed house in a game that went in to the second half scoreless.¹ In Canada, similar games among military personnel were taking place in front of civilian crowds. Towards the end of October 1940 there was strife between the western and eastern football teams, due to variations in rules, the impacts of the war, and loss of players and money, which created a situation that was leading to the cancellation of the Grey Cup game. However, the president of the Sport Service League² in Canada saw an opportunity to raise some money for the war effort. He organized for two rugby games, one with western rules and the other under eastern rules, to take place between the East and West championship rugby (football) winners to determine who would be awarded the Grey Cup on November 20 and December 7 in Ontario. All of the surplus earnings from the game went towards the Canadian Soldiers Sports Fund.³ Sport did not die during the war, but it did change.

During the Second World War, Canada had the opportunity and responsibility of training the Allied air force under the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan (BCATP) agreement established between Canada and Britain in 1939. The plan brought air force training schools to all parts of Canada. Seven Southern Alberta communities, Medicine Hat, Lethbridge, Claresholm, Macleod, High River, Pearce, and Vulcan, were selected as

places for air force school operations.⁴ The BCATP brought the military closer to more Canadian civilians than ever before. The economic relief that the schools brought to Southern Alberta post-Depression allowed for immediate acceptance of air force personnel into the communities.

The revelation that there were so many BCATP schools in Canada during the Second World War was an eye opener for me. There were dozens of communities who now found themselves with military neighbours. I found myself wondering what impact the newly formed military schools would have had on the local communities. Of course, my interest being in sport, I began to consider what role sport played in the unification of civilians and military personnel, and how both communities were able to influence each other through sport. Drawing on George Hillery Jr.'s conclusions, this study of Southern Alberta explores notions of community and the impact sport had through three themes: area, common ties and social interaction,⁵ thus, forming the central research question: How did sport influence/impact the relationship that developed between Southern Alberta civilian communities and the BCATP schools that came to reside there during the war?

As military and civilian communities began to interact and build relationships, sport became a bond through which civilians and military personnel found common interest. With young men and women leaving to join the war effort, sport leagues, especially the senior leagues which were the main sport entertainment, started to suffer. Military personnel began to fill the places of those who had left, and eventually took over as the main source of sporting entertainment. Sporting charity events, including civilian and military participation, also became popular in Southern Alberta as a way of raising money for Canada's war efforts and supporting other Allied countries. Sport provided

common ties and opportunities for social interaction in the relationship-building process between BCATP schools and Southern Alberta communities. The air force kept sport at all levels from completely shutting down in Southern Alberta during the war. The acceptance of the air force into city and town leagues was one way for morale among civilians and military to remain high. This project targets two narratives missing in Canadian and Southern Alberta history: first, a history of the seven BCATP schools which were stationed here, and second, the sporting activities in which they participated. The first narrative serves to set up the initial issues surrounding the placement of the BCATP into already established civilian communities. The second highlights the many ways in which the civilian and military communities interacted and kept sport alive for each other throughout the war. Also included is an in-depth analysis of the role of sport in charity events, which acknowledges the growing trust and reliance the two communities had with each other.

Setting the Scene: Southern Alberta, the BCATP and Sport in Canada

Southern Alberta, as part of Western Canada, endured a difficult period during the Great Depression. As part of the hard hit Western Canadian agricultural community and a producer of grain and cattle, Southern Alberta suffered during the 1930s.⁶ Initially, as the war began, many men joined the service to get off of the relief rolls, however, as the economy picked up and the need for wheat increased “there were many who resented being called on to the colours.”⁷ Part of this resentment came because farms and ranches were showing a profit for the first time in ten years. Throughout the duration of the war 325,728 servicemen and women from Western Canada committed to join the fighting.⁸

Prior to the Second World War Canada only maintained a small regular military force. Having such a low level of commitment to the military created a large problem when the war started. Not only did the country have to try and recruit a large number of civilian citizens into military service, they were all inexperienced and had to be trained quickly.⁹ The Royal Canadian Army Services Corps (RCASC) remained at home in Canada throughout the first winter months.¹⁰ The RCASC had many different types of training schools. Alberta was home to seven of them, including Suffield in Southern Alberta. What is much more difficult to track is where specific battalions trained, as they were constantly changing geographic locations throughout the war.¹¹ The Royal Canadian Naval Service (RCNS) had only two stations in Alberta during the war, in Calgary and Edmonton. Considering that there is no ocean in contact with any Alberta borders the small number makes sense. The two stations in Alberta were for recruiting and initial training. It was the east coast bases that were much more prominent, Halifax being the most important and prestigious.¹²

Several researchers argue that the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) played the most prominent role of all the military groups in Alberta during the Second World War.¹³ The RCAF was working to carry out the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan. Prior to the start of the Second World War there had been “[d]iscussions between the RCAF and the RAF...ever since the British began their rearmament program in the early thirties.”¹⁴ The discussions became much more meaningful and focussed once “[i]t was realized that thousands of pilots, navigators, and other airmen would need to be trained.”¹⁵ Prime Minister Mackenzie King signed the “Agreement Relating to the Training of Pilots and Aircraft Crews in Canada and Their Subsequent Service” on

December 17, 1939.¹⁶ The Prime Minister decided to take on the training of Allied pilot trainees and sign the agreement for two reasons. The first was to lower the number of Canadian lives lost compared to the First World War by keeping them at home. The second reason was to generate a new sense of nationalism by creating “the greatest air training centres of the world...air forces whose co-ordinated strength will be overwhelming.”¹⁷ Hatch reports that with this agreement stipulations came from the Canadians to the British and vice versa. The Canadian government had two conditions for Britain: that they buy more Canadian wheat and “the amount of Canadian credit extended to the United Kingdom for war purchases would have to be restricted.”¹⁸ On the other hand “[t]he British asked that they be given priority over all other war programmes in Canada.”¹⁹ Perhaps this is why there is so little information about the integration of the RCASC and RCNS into Canadian life, because the BCATP program was given priority over all other war programs and plans. This training plan was intended to train the majority of Allied aircrews which resulted in trainees from Norway, Australia, New Zealand, India and other countries of the Commonwealth coming to Canada.²⁰

The BCATP included several different types of training schools for the different types of technical jobs needed in the air force. Canadians and Americans wanting to join the air force did so by reporting to a recruiting office. Once recruited an individual would be sent to a Manning Depot, which was responsible for outfitting and examining the future airman as well as planning out his future service and which schools he would attend.²¹ Post-examination, a four-week mandatory initial training in fundamentals took place, which included air force law, math, flight theory and physics, mechanics, air armament, aerial navigation and physical training. As the war progressed this training

session was increased to ten weeks so the airmen were better prepared once they moved on to other schools. When the training was complete an airman could set his sights on becoming a pilot, air observer, or air gunner, each with his own specialized set of training. Since there were three different essential programs needed for training three different types of airmen, several varieties of schools developed each contributing to a part of the airman's training.²²

Ted Byfield notes that the initial training times allotted at each of the different schools changed as the war progressed.²³ As the war continued officials were able to get a better sense if more or less time was needed in each of the training phases.²⁴ Pilots had a twenty-one week training plan at the beginning of the war: four weeks in initial training, seven weeks at an elementary flying training school (EFTS) and ten weeks at a service flying training school (SFTS).²⁵ The EFTS's were civilian run and operated by local flying clubs associated with the Canadian Flying Association. Flying instructors of the member clubs usually only worked on weekends and had another job until the war forced them, willing or not, to begin training pilots full time.²⁶ RAF trainees joined the Canadian and American trainees at this stage. Airmen received air and ground instruction at an EFTS.²⁷ Pilots then moved on to an SFTS, which was operated directly through the RCAF. At this stage airmen from Australia and New Zealand came to Canada to complete their training as part of the Allied forces.²⁸ Pilots were introduced to flying "fast low wing monoplanes," and "aerobatics and formation flying, navigation night flying in planes equipped with machine guns and bombs," and a variety of other flying techniques.²⁹ Air observers spent twenty-six weeks in training in the early part of the war. They started with four weeks in initial training, twelve at an Air Observer School (AOS),

six at a Bombing and Gunnery (B & G) school and finished with four weeks at an air navigation school. The wireless operator air gunner also started their twenty-six weeks with four in initial training: eighteen at a wireless school, and four weeks at a B & G school. AOSs were “operated by already established civil air operators.”³⁰ B & G schools were operated by the RCAF, specializing in “air-to-air and air-to-ground” live ammunition practice.³¹ New instructors also needed to be trained. Students selected for training at a Flying Instructor School (FIS) were selected because they were top in their graduating class of pilots and recommended by their instructors to the Chief Flying Instructor. Officials thought that the best pilot trainees would also make the best instructors. However, one instructor reported that in more than one case “many of them were so dedicated to getting overseas that they in fact made poor instructors, simply because they didn’t want to instruct.”³²

Before the Second World War the only involvement women had in the Canadian military was as part of the Nursing Service.³³ As the war started women once again, as in the First World War, began to take over for men in the work place. Although some women wanted to join the armed forces, neither the public nor the Prime Minister were willing to consider doing so.³⁴ Carolyn Gossage also suggests that the idea of women in uniform was unpopular for some, especially for “the hard-core “career soldier” types within the military” who thought “it was a preposterous notion-a nightmare!”³⁵ However, not everyone was at issue with women joining the military; there were those who realized that women may be needed in the armed forces.³⁶ The Canadian government started to feel pressured about allowing women into the services because RAF airwomen started asking if they could work on BCATP stations in Canada. The RAF also strongly

suggested that a Canadian women's auxiliary force should be organized.³⁷ The air force was the first military division to allow women to join, although the army was not far behind, in June of 1942.³⁸ Women in the air force were known as the WD's, short for Women's Division. Airwomen enlisted at recruiting centres, just as the men did, and were then assigned to different stations. The women had to meet four requirements to be accepted: be between the ages of eighteen and forty, at least five feet tall and meet weight requirements, have completed high school and have no criminal record, they also could not have children.³⁹ Airwomen took over "as telephone operators, stenographers, bus drivers and maintenance workers."⁴⁰ The only time women flew aircraft were those who already had flight experience and they were used to ferry planes for the RAF.⁴¹

Across Western Canada, Conrad reports that there were ten aircrew and pilot training facilities in British Columbia, seventeen in Alberta, fifteen in Saskatchewan and nine in Manitoba. Seven of the schools were located in Southern Alberta.⁴² The RAF had been "straining all its resources to establish a program to train 125 pilots a year" whereas the new plan in Canada was being "asked to produce 1,460 aircrew every four weeks."⁴³ Canada could handle this increased expectation of close to 1500 aircrew per four weeks, especially with the open and clear skies and prairies of Western Canada which were perfect for air training.⁴⁴ The bases had to be built from scratch, which meant that "there was a great pressure to have the landing runways, hangars, barracks, classrooms, and other facilities completed in a great hurry."⁴⁵ For many of the communities becoming a part of the BCATP "was the best news they had heard in ten years."⁴⁶ The initial impacts for BCATP towns was economic because "the BCATP construction...create[d] hundreds of short term jobs."⁴⁷ Construction workers were the first who arrived in town and were

“free-spending men with healthy appetites.”⁴⁸ Next came “the air base staff, accompanied by the wives and children...[t]hen, finally, the airmen themselves, the students, splendid young fellows, the cream of the crop...they’d have cash in their pockets and the inclination to spend.”⁴⁹ Local citizens benefitted as many of them took non-military jobs on the bases, and businesses gained increased revenue from the extra people in town.⁵⁰ Even though provincial and municipal governments had “to pay the costs for services to the local schools” they knew the costs were worth the price of boosting the economy.⁵¹

As the schools moved into communities airmen began to take up sports, usually under the encouragement and organization of the commanding officer. They were entering a Canadian sporting landscape that had experienced major changes since the First World War. The impact of the First World War was felt in the sporting world for both men and women, and the debate between professionalism and amateurism continued to be an issue. Canadian sport historians Don Morrow and Kevin Wamsley note that “[m]en returning from the First World War brought their deep emotional scars into family and public life.”⁵² One of the consequences was an increase in violent sports like hockey and boxing. Another consequence was the increased mindfulness for occasions to celebrate nationalism through sport. After the increased opportunity to work during the First World War, Morrow and Wamsley argue that women became more visible in the public sphere.⁵³ As the inter-war years progressed, women ventured into most of the established sports sometimes under the umbrella of men and sometimes creating their own clubs and associations.⁵⁴ Even though they did break barriers in participation in sports, women could not control the media. Morrow and Wamsley describe that “[n]ewspaper accounts of sport competitions judged women by beauty, then by character

and deportment, and last by performance.”⁵⁵ However, “[t]he war years demanded strong, healthy women workers in the labour market.”⁵⁶ The need for physically fit women not only in the work force, but also for service in the military, continued to further break down barriers which had been deteriorating since the First World War.⁵⁷

The debate concerned with professionalism and amateurism in Canadian sport had been raging since the early 1900s. Leading into the Second World War amateurism was hanging by a very thin thread. Professional sport, the use of paid players, began in the early 1880s.⁵⁸ The First World War had a profound impact on how professional athletes were viewed. Initially, professionals were seen as dirty athletes for accepting money and looking for compensation. However, the distinction with which these athletes fought in the First World War forced “amateur administrators to reconsider their definition of an amateur.”⁵⁹ Professional sport flourished between the first and second wars, to the detriment of amateur sport.⁶⁰ Metcalfe pinpoints the withdrawal of the Canadian Amateur Hockey Association from under the umbrella of the Amateur Athletic Union of Canada in 1936 as the beginning of a very slow death for amateur rule in Canada.⁶¹ Morrow and Wamsley argue that by the 1930s “open professional sport...was a fixture in the Canadian sporting landscape; yet, amateurism was still the prevailing ideal in most competitive sports.”⁶² The Depression was responsible for the erosion of amateurism in sport, particularly in hockey, baseball and football.⁶³ Amateur leaders were pleased with the increasing number of sport participants during the 1930s. People could play many sports with very little financial investment, and it provided optimism in a time of hardship. On the other hand, the hard times meant that fewer people had the money to register with amateur sport bodies. The Depression “irreparably damaged the material

and ideological conditions on which amateurism was based.”⁶⁴ People could no longer afford to live or play by the amateur code.⁶⁵

Southern Alberta news reports suggest that the status of amateur athletes was a concern when the war started. In November 1939, the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) accepted a proposal to protect the amateur status of an athlete under two conditions: “if while in the services of His Majesty, the king, he competed with or against a professional” or “[i]f he competes with or against a professional “in the service.””⁶⁶ Scott Young, a Canadian Press writer, argued that the war was bringing sport back to amateurism and away from professionalism. Young explained this was due to decreases in gate money and publicity, as well as the difficulties of giving athletes meal and expense money. Due to these circumstances, Young argued that the big time sports entrepreneurs disappeared from the sporting scene and were replaced by honest men who were driven by the love of the game and more interested in coaching teenagers and providing equipment for youth sport than making money. Young hoped that these would be the men to lead Canadian sport postwar.⁶⁷ Unfortunately for Young, sport did not stay in the amateur realm postwar, instead professionalism continued to erode amateurism. Professional sport flourished, attracting the best players and producing the best competition.⁶⁸ During the Second World War professional sport struggled due to loss of players and gate money, however, leagues and events did continue to operate throughout the war.⁶⁹

Literature Review:

Community is a word that has been used in so many ways in our everyday vernacular, and it is a word that will be used frequently in this project to define civilian and military groups of people according to their location, interests, and interactions. Many scholars suggest that there is no tangible definition of community.⁷⁰ Community theorists recognize that the word community is, and has been “bandied around in ordinary, everyday speech...which when imported into the discourse of social science causes immense difficulty.”⁷¹ The word community can imply many different meanings in many different situations. In 1995, George Hillery Jr. compiled a list of ninety-four definitions of community.⁷² According to Ruth Sutter the term community transitioned into a word that also explains behaviour and by the 1970s “[g]radually it was turned into an analytic concept.”⁷³ Hillery Jr. found that the most common theme among all ninety-four definitions dealt with people and how they related to each other in terms of “area, common ties, and social interaction.”⁷⁴ This study draws on the research of community theorists David Minar and Scott Greer, Robert McIver, Joan Kuyek, Anthony Cohen and Robert French, as it fits into the three categories Hillery Jr. found most prevalent: area, common ties, and social interaction.⁷⁵

Community as Area

Charlotte Wolf argues that a community needs to “share a common territorial area” in order to operate.⁷⁶ Minar and Greer give further insight into why area is so important to a community suggesting that geographic proximity creates “contacts on which feelings of commitment and identity are built.”⁷⁷ Minar and Greer also explain that

“the mere fact that they live together gives rise to the common problems that push them toward common perspectives and induce them to develop organizational vehicles for joint action.”⁷⁸ “They” and “them” refer to anyone within geographic range of a community’s boundaries. The physical closeness of members of a community forces them to interact and deal with common conditions. This in turn develops a sense of combined identity and commitment to those who share a defined physical space.

Community as Common Ties

Joan Kuyek argues that “where there is no sense of common purpose, there can be no community.”⁷⁹ The character of a community is defined by the relationships that develop through shared activities and “[o]ut of these conditions grow attachments to the social group, and these attachments form the basis on which people respond to its collective demands.”⁸⁰ Interaction takes place first and then the common bond follows which allows for them to act as a collective group. Hillery Jr. supports this contention writing that “the reality of a community in people’s experience thus inheres their attachment or commitment to a common body of symbols.”⁸¹ In this study nationalism and sovereignty are the main symbols. The war was not being fought in Southern Alberta; however, civilians were doing many things, such as rationing and accepting the BCATP, to support Canada and the war effort. Civilians and the military were committed to these two symbols. Robert MacIver suggests that common ties develop because we, as humans “seek, clearly or dimly, from the prescience or instinct, some fulfillment of ourselves or others, that we relate ourselves to one another in society.”⁸² People in geographic proximity to each other are looking for something that can connect them to

the other people they live close to. It does not matter what interaction is going to take place or the result of the connections forged, humans need to be connected, and MacIver suggests, that interaction happens and common ties develop because of this need.⁸³

Anthony Cohen also defines a community as members having “something in common with each other,” but also as having something that “distinguishes them in a significant way from the members of other putative groups.”⁸⁴ Thus, a community must include similarities and differences; similarities amongst individuals in a community, and differences from other communities.⁸⁵

Community as Social Interaction

Minar and Greer argue that:

community is indivisible from human actions, purpose, and values. It expresses our vague yearnings for a commonality of desire, a communion with those around us, an extension of the bonds of kin and friend to all those who share a common fate with us.⁸⁶

Social interaction is a result of common ties, which encompasses more than just those in our immediate circle of friends; it includes everyone within the geographic boundaries because we are interdependent on each other.⁸⁷ The boundaries of a community are “constituted by people in interaction.”⁸⁸ It is through the interaction of the community members that the boundaries that set apart the community are created.⁸⁹ French also notes that “the community appears to be different depending upon one’s perspective in viewing it.”⁹⁰ This means that different members in the same community may not comprehend, or see, the community the same way. These definitions of community will serve as a framework to identify, define and analyze the different types of communities that existed

in Southern Alberta during the Second World War and the impact of the sport driven interaction between them.

Hillery Jr. and other community theorists focus on defining the boundaries of a community. What they do not discuss is how a community changes. Peter Burkes explains that:

The term 'community', then, is at once useful and problematic. It has to be freed from the intellectual package in which it forms part of the consensual, Durkheimian model of society...It cannot be assumed that every group is permeated by solidarity, communities have to be constructed and reconstructed. It cannot be assumed that a community is homogenous in attitudes, or free from conflicts.⁹¹

Communities are not static. They can and do change. Communities are not homogenous, they are full of individuals who think, act and believe differently. This is true of Southern Alberta communities during the Second World War. They had to change out of necessity and adapt to the rigors of supporting the war as well as the new presence of the military.

Cooperation and Integration

Sources report that cooperation and integration between bases and local communities was commonplace.⁹² It is also a common theme in the literature that RAF bases did not benefit from or experience close relations to local communities to the same level as the RCAF bases. One reason is perhaps because of cultural differences, and another is the types of sports the British liked to play. Cricket and soccer did not gain as much civilian attention as RCAF troops playing hockey and football.⁹³ Conrad argues that, in general, the closer the base was to a community the higher the degree of interaction.⁹⁴ However, Dunmore and Conrad disagree, on whom from the bases actually interacted with the community. Dunmore argues that training took up an airman's time,

which meant that the students definitely did not spend much time in nearby communities. The permanent staff, which included instructors, mechanics, clerks, cooks, administrators, and tradesmen, were a different story. Dunmore does account for positive relations between the two groups. He also acknowledges that problems happened, “but they were the exception rather than the rule.”⁹⁵ Conrad, on the other hand, argues that “servicemen and women of the Training Plan were quickly integrated into the activities of the towns and cities near the schools.”⁹⁶ Conrad also notes that there were strains, but “good will prevailed on both sides.”⁹⁷ Conrad explains that the RCAF wanted to increase morale, which would lead to better discipline. To do this the RCAF promoted a range of cultural and recreational activities in the host communities.⁹⁸

Conrad, drawing on newspapers and daily diaries, provides the most detailed information concerning the role of military sport in local communities.⁹⁹ Myers provides less detailed supplementary information, gleaned from newspapers.¹⁰⁰ Airmen and women integrated into community sport in several different ways. They took vacant positions on teams left by locals who had left to join the war effort elsewhere. This meant that teams could continue to play instead of folding due to insufficient numbers. Hockey and baseball were the most popular sports because they could incorporate the highest number of participants. Conrad suggests that the incorporation of airmen and women into sport helped the military training schools gain acceptance into the communities faster.¹⁰¹ RCAF teams had inter-squad games and games against other schools; they also, at times competed in local leagues against community teams.¹⁰² Sport days occurred with some regularity.¹⁰³ These sport days would take place on base, or at the schools, so the locals were able to see where they were training.¹⁰⁴ Conrad argues that “[s]ports had an

important role in the relations that had developed between the air training stations and the nearby communities.”¹⁰⁵

There are several other studies concerning military sport and the impact it has on surrounding communities in the United States, Britain and Canada. Steven Bullock looks at the role of morale in the American military, J. D. Campbell wrote about the role military sport in British society, Tony Mason and Eliza Riedi focus on the perceived benefits and weaknesses in the British Armed Forces, John Maker analyzed the role of Canadian military sport in physical education, Robert Day researched the impact of military sport in the colonial community of Halifax while Colin Howell analyzed the state of sport in Halifax during the Second World War. These studies provide the background for this project. They highlight how sport was utilized as a tool to forge relations between civilians and the military. They also highlight the influences of sport on the geography of the local communities, the emotions and hardships shared between the two communities, and the shared experiences that occurred between the two communities as a result of sport.

In *Playing for their Nation: Baseball and the American Military during World War Two* Steven Bullock focuses on the role sport, particularly baseball, played in fostering morale during the Second World War.¹⁰⁶ Bullock notes “the rapid mobilization necessitated by the war increased the number of soldiers and sailors employed by the American military and brought droves of baseball crazed men into the Armed Forces.”¹⁰⁷ Bullock argues that leaders recognized how important baseball was to the men who were training with them and used it as a tool in boosting morale. Bullock states that “[m]orale among servicemen had long been recognized by the American military as a decisive

factor in the efficiency and effectiveness of its soldiers.”¹⁰⁸ Soldiers struggled to adjust to the military way of life and for many it was their first time away from home. They were told when and where to do everything, from eating to shaving, and they lost their civilian rights. Sport eased the transition from civilian life to a military one.¹⁰⁹ Bullock also argues that sport increased morale through periods of inactivity. On home soil this occurred when units were waiting to be transferred overseas.¹¹⁰ Bullock acknowledges a “widely held assumption...that Americans were more skilled than other nations’ soldiers in the art of grenade throwing...a result of ‘their ball-tossing background.’”¹¹¹ Some officials actually incorporated baseball into their training program. As a negative to military personnel playing sport, Bullock notes that injuries did occur from the soldiers playing sport.¹¹² He did not mention what would happen to a soldier who sustained an athletic type injury.

Campbell focuses on the role of sport in the life of an officer. He explains that sport was more than just a leisure activity pre-WWI.¹¹³ Sport took on extra meaning for the British military in the 1860s due to “social reform movements, educational theories, and changes in British cultural norms.”¹¹⁴ Campbell argues that sport has always had a place in the military because many sports, at that time, had “originated as a means of military training.”¹¹⁵ Campbell explains that sport affected a military man’s career both in and out of the Army. In the Army, physicality was “an essential part of the successful combat leaders make up.”¹¹⁶ Individually soldiers were evaluated through their participation in sport. Sports were also used as a tool to keep officers in combat ready shape, condition them to an outdoor lifestyle, and develop leadership skills. Out of the Army, officers used sport as a tool for making connections among the upper classes.¹¹⁷

Campbell argues that sports days were held, however they were just demonstrations, and the public did not participate.¹¹⁸ “Sport came to dominate the lives of soldiers in this period to an enormous extent,” a claim Campbell makes based on the amount of scores, statistics, and details of events that were included in regimental newsletters.¹¹⁹ Campbell also makes note of the entrance of sport jargon into military language and vice versa.¹²⁰ Campbell suggests that there have been “contemporary observers [who] felt this dominance of the ‘games ethic’ in the military to be unhealthy.”¹²¹ However, in response Campbell argues by saying that participation in sport did not have any long term negative effects on the performance of the soldiers.

Similar to the arguments Bullock and Campbell make, Mason and Riedi, in *Sport and the Military: The British Armed Forces 1880-1960*, attempt to lay out how sport in the military was perceived at different times in the history of the British Armed Forces.¹²² They illustrate how the meaning of sport, and its uses to the army, changed over the years. Mason and Riedi report that officers recognized the role of sport in relief of boredom, as a link to previous civilian life, as a distraction from the “horrors of war”, and the role of sport for the morale of individual soldiers, the military as a whole, and for civilians.¹²³ Sport also “provide[d] a common language and frame of reference which all men could be expected to understand.”¹²⁴ The military recognized that participation in civilian sport at times improved the level of civilian sport and at other times improved the level of service sport.¹²⁵ They also concur with Bullock and Campbell in the numerous ways in which civilians and military interacted through sport, which included soldiers playing on community teams, civilian versus military teams, and military versus military teams with civilian crowds. They conclude that “it was no surprise that many military

teams chose to test themselves in a civilian sporting landscape.”¹²⁶ The military knowingly used sport to interact with communities by helping build and maintain facilities, and organize charity events. A large number of athletes, especially football players, were recruited into the army through promises of running recreational programs for units.¹²⁷

Mason and Riedi inform readers of a man by the name of William Pickford, who was involved in the Football Association as well as a regular columnist for more than one newspaper. Pickford is credited as a large reason why the military got involved in local communities in the early 1900s and also why the Navy created their own football association.¹²⁸ Pickford was just one example of someone behind the scenes pushing the military into sporting interactions in local communities. This is also an example of the role organizations played; Mason and Riedi argue that a significant amount of organization was needed for long term involvement and teams who were successful “were well managed.”¹²⁹ There is also recognition of the role sport played post-war in the lives of returning soldiers. The armed services helped veterans find jobs, and many of them made their way into civilian sport.¹³⁰ In 1941 the War Office justified the wide spread use of sport in the military for three reasons: it provided health and amusement, encouraged team spirit within fighting units, and it taught men how to win and lose gracefully.¹³¹ There were some interesting stories compiled through the use of newspapers, military publications, and government archives for Mason and Riedi’s British project. One such example is of a soldier whose only war injury came as a result of playing football. The injury was bad enough to keep him from being sent to fight, however in the official records the injury is not recorded as a result of playing sport.¹³²

They also reported that footballers were recruited with the promise of running recreation programs within the individual units.¹³³ These two stories involve deception and bribing, two things not discussed in the other sources.

Canadian military sport has been looked at in regards to its effects on physical education by John Maker in his article “Hand grenades and hockey sticks: the positive influence of the military on physical education and sport in Canada, 1900-1945.”¹³⁴ Maker describes the group of Canadian men, mainly young, who were overseas during the Second World War as “a powerful incubator of Canadian sport.”¹³⁵ Similar to Bullock, Maker also discusses the role of sport in keeping up morale. A large number of Canadian men were sent over to help with the fight in France, but then France surrendered in May of 1940. This meant that the army would not be engaged in any fighting for some time, and sport was used to keep discipline and morale high.¹³⁶ Soldiers competed in sport on a daily basis within their formations and units and they were also spectators when army teams played civilian teams.¹³⁷ Leaders used sport to help maintain a competitive edge during periods of inactivity.¹³⁸ Like Conrad, Maker researched what he calls War Diaries. He makes reference to official War Diarists “comment[ing] with pride if their unit’s team managed a victory against a brother unit.”¹³⁹ Maker concludes his article with a statement urging researchers to “remember other unrecognized contributions that Canada’s men and women in the uniform made to the nation.”¹⁴⁰

Day, in his study of the British Garrison in Halifax during the nineteenth century, argues that the British Garrison had an enormous social impact on Halifax.¹⁴¹ Military personnel were stationed in the Maritimes to defend the territory and preserve the colonial society.¹⁴² Civilians enjoyed watching whenever military personnel competed

with each other, however, greater community interest was produced for events that pitted military against civilian athletes.¹⁴³ Military participation in sport “added a dimension of skill that contributed to the development and promulgation of a particular sport in the community.”¹⁴⁴ Day, similar to Conrad and Myers, also reports that a sports day was held at the Garrison and that the event was reported in the *Nova Scotian*, although it was only soldiers competing for the viewing pleasure of civilians.¹⁴⁵ Day suggests that playing sport was not the only role the military played in community-level sport. The troops were often used to police sporting events, which “contribute[d] to the good order of the day.”¹⁴⁶ The troops also played a important role in sporting facilities. Soldiers helped construct and maintain facilities, and occasionally lent military facilities for community sport events. Day argues that facilities were fundamental to the progression of community-level sport, thus the military was integral to the development of sport in Halifax.¹⁴⁷ Military officers were able to build positive relations with the community through sport. Day concludes his list of positive impacts by adding that military personnel contributed to the development of community sport by offering their prestige and expertise.¹⁴⁸

Colin Howell, in his study of baseball in the Maritimes, acknowledges the ‘garrison town’ status Halifax was known for. He explains that “wartime Halifax offered little in the way of excitement or hospitality” and that “servicemen and their families were perturbed by the indifference of the city’s population to their concerns.”¹⁴⁹ However, the indifference was in part due to the long history of incongruous and rowdy behavior of “‘footloose soldiers’ and sailors” who had come and gone.¹⁵⁰ Despite these uneasy relations between the military and civilian community members, Howell reports

of an active sporting scene. One in which “[h]ardly a day passed without a scheduled game of baseball, football, or hockey.”¹⁵¹ The influx of military personnel to Halifax, which doubled the size of the city, included a number of highly skilled first-class athletes, many of whom came from careers in professional leagues such as the National Hockey and Major Baseball Leagues. Howell explains that Halifax had such a high number of servicemen at any given time because the city was one of the launching sites for military personnel to head overseas. Due to the conditions of the Second World War in Halifax, imported and local sporting talent played together to create a situation where local citizens got to see world-class sport played on a regular basis. The addition of imported players into the local sporting scene led to the pursuit of outsiders to improve local teams instead of relying on the home-grown talent post-war.¹⁵²

Morale is the common theme running throughout the literature involving sport and military, and the main argument for why sport has been so closely linked with the military. Officers utilized sport for increasing morale in several ways: to help the actual physical training of a soldier, as a link to previous civilian life, as a way to help units connect, and to take up time, especially while waiting to be sent into action. Mason and Riedi, Day, and Howell also acknowledge that civilian morale benefitted from military sport. These sources also highlight several benefits civilians experienced due to military sport. The biggest of which was the impact on sporting facilities, building new ones and also maintaining old ones. The military also provided increased skill level and expertise to community sport, they could officiate and police larger sporting events and also help with charity events. The role of sport in relations between civilians and military is also touched on, and how it was used to build positive relations between the two. There was

also the idea that sport could be used to further political agendas. What all the researchers acknowledge in some way is that sport was used as a go-between for military and civilian communities and that it was a positive relationship builder.

Justification for the Study:

It is evident in newspapers and archives that sport did not stop during the war. Both World Wars, though particularly the Second World War, with the BCATP, created a unique situation in Canada. Having so many training bases and schools on home soil close to civilians had not happened since the colonial days, and it has not happened since. Since the military is not a significant part of Canadian identity, it has not been a focus of Canadian scholarship to the degree as the United States or Britain. For the most part, community-level studies of the sporting relationship between military and civilians in Canada is absent in historical literature. There are a respectable number of resources which include the impact of war on sport in Canada; however, there are fewer resources which investigate the role of sport in military and civilian communities during the Second World War.

Sport at many levels was affected by the entrance of Canada into the war. Sport during the Second World War continued on with more success, especially baseball, boxing and hockey at the professional level, than it did during the First World War.¹⁵³ Even though professional leagues did not cancel any seasons due to too many men joining the war effort, there were many other ways that sport at all levels felt the impact of the war.¹⁵⁴ For example, one casualty of the war was the Edmonton Grads, a women's basketball team, who are the world champions and still hold many records today.¹⁵⁵ In

1940 they were pushed out of their practice and playing facility by the RCAF, and were disbanded that summer.¹⁵⁶ Another temporary victim of the war was the Amateur Athletic Union of Canada, who ceased their operations for the duration of the war.¹⁵⁷ Similarly, the Brier, the national championship for curling, was postponed for the 1943, 1944, and 1945 seasons after the government decided “suspension was in the best interests of the nation.”¹⁵⁸ On the other hand, the Acting Minister of National Defence encouraged continued play of football for the Grey Cup during the war.¹⁵⁹ The National Hockey League contributed 90 members to the armed services by 1942, which affected roster sizes.¹⁶⁰ Even the Toronto Maple Leafs owner Conn Smythe joined the war effort by taking over leadership of a battalion. Referees were short staffed, and overtime rules were changed so that trains would not have to wait for games to finish.¹⁶¹

A total of seven sources were found linking Canadian military sport to participation in community sport during the Second World War. Falla describes the transition in 1942 of the entire first line of the Stanley Cup winning Boston Bruins to the Allan Cup¹⁶² winning Ottawa RCAF.¹⁶³ Best explains how military participation allowed Canadian football to continue through the war. It looked like play for the Grey Cup was going to be suspended. The military recognized the growing importance of the game across the country and the role of the Grey Cup for promoting morale for those who played and watched. Military stations started organizing their own teams to compete for the Cup. The Cup was contested and won by military teams in 1942, 1943, and 1944.¹⁶⁴ Cosentino also touches on football during the war describing the Hamilton Wildcats, who were a team of civilian and military players who won the Grey Cup in 1943.¹⁶⁵ The coach Brian Timmis said the win is “a title that has been won by the armed services, and the

people who gave them the arms to fight with. On my Hamilton team are airmen, sailors, war workers and army reserves, all doing a job for peace.”¹⁶⁶ Conrad, Dunmore, Howell and Myers explain that many sports were played by military personnel in communities. According to Conrad these sports included golf, swimming, boxing, wrestling, track and field, tennis, soccer, and cricket.¹⁶⁷ Dunmore describes Canadian airmen taking “an active interest in local baseball and hockey activities.”¹⁶⁸ Howell reports that hardly a day went by without some sort of athletic contest taking place.¹⁶⁹ Myers reports that “[t]hroughout the year they played baseball, basketball, hockey, rugby and many other sports.”¹⁷⁰ Myers, of the seven sources, is the only one to have any specific information concerning Southern Alberta. She reports that the “airman’s hockey team from No. 15 SFTS near Claresholm was credited with rekindling interest in hockey in that district.”¹⁷¹

During the Second World War the National Physical Fitness Act was passed in 1943 “to promote physical fitness for Canadians through various programs linked to sports and athletics.”¹⁷² Frank Cosentino argues that “[t]hroughout the war years, the public seemed to desire sports entertainment. As the war’s intensity grew, Canadians needed increased diversions.”¹⁷³ There are hints as to what sport meant during war: involvement of the military to keep sport going, the desire for a morale booster, the legislation of physical activity from the federal government.¹⁷⁴ The sources that include references to military, civilian, and sport relationships are scattered and lack depth. They are deficient in their analysis of how the communities were impacted through sport by the military and vice versa. Through the lens of community-based theory, this project fills this void, offering an in-depth analysis of role sport had in the relationship between BCATP and towns in Southern Alberta.

Purpose:

There is a plethora of archival information available for this project, and as of yet it has not been organized or critically analyzed for its relevance in Southern Alberta. As seen in the literature review, there have been studies suggesting the importance of sport to military and civilian relationships. The main goal of this project is to highlight the impact of those relationships on the civilian and military communities in Southern Alberta during the war. Supplemental research questions for this project are based on the previous research conducted in this area. How much did morale improve through sport? How did sport ease tensions between the military and local communities? What concerted efforts were made by the Canadian government to use the sporting relationship between civilians and the military to further political agendas? How did the military improve the sporting scene, for example, skill level, coaching, knowledge of a sport or officiating, in local communities or vice versa? How often was sport used to fund military charity events to raise money for the war effort? How did the military help fill any voids in terms of sporting equipment or facilities? How did these contributions continue to have an impact after the war? What were the negative impacts of military sport on the bases or schools and/or in the local communities? These questions provided the starting point and direction for this project, and the guideline for the selection of the relevant archival information.

During the Second World War many local amateur sport leagues across Canada, and around the world, were put on hold as athletes were needed for military service. In Canada, the Canadian Service Leagues often filled the void offering alternative sporting matches. These leagues provided military men and women a sporting outlet during the

challenging times of war. Similarly, these leagues offered local communities a much needed distraction. Current historical scholarship regarding competitive sport, local communities, Canadian military, and the Second World War is very scattered. It tends to focus on individual sport histories.¹⁷⁵ This project fills a gap in existing research, and builds on research conducted by Peter Conrad and Robert Day. The use of a qualitative model, focusing on newspapers and archival data, offers a more nuanced examination of the impact of sport and recreation on military practices and local communities. Finally, this thesis project is extremely important as a history of the sporting interaction between local communities and military bases and the impact they had on each other in Canada, which has not been an area of focus by Canadian sport historians. This project makes a significant contribution to current understandings of sport and recreation practices in the Canadian military

Methodology:

Sport Historian Douglas Booth argues that historians concur that the discipline is rooted in evidence. What they do not agree on is “the objectives of history, the meanings of facts, the construction of facts, methods of procedure, the role of theory, the basis of theory, [or] the form of presentation.”¹⁷⁶ Using Alan Munslow’s work, Booth lays out three models of historical investigation. The three models are reconstructionism (those who attempt the past as it actually happened), constructionism (those who analyze patterns and trends by asking how and why), and deconstructionism (those who reflect on a past which may be fragmented and partial).¹⁷⁷ This project utilizes all three models. Reconstructionists spend their time “interrogating, collaborating, and contextualizing

sources to verify them as real and true.”¹⁷⁸ Reconstructionists do this because they maintain that they are unbiased, and that the process is objective. The presentation style is often in the form of a narrative.¹⁷⁹ While I am not suggesting that I offer an unbiased or objective account, this project is presented as a narrative. There are no secondary, or primary, sources which encompass a collective history of military sport at the community level in Southern Alberta. Constructionists, “[l]ike, deconstructionists... believe that empirical evidence provides the ultimate source of knowledge about the past.”¹⁸⁰ However, they do not present in narrative style, rather, they rely on theory. All questions they ask are framed so that the answers support the theory. They claim support for the use of theory because it sets out boundaries for the selection of evidence. It identifies interrelations of human experience, and it is antithetical to abstract thinking. It is impossible to eliminate any of the researchers’ assumptions.¹⁸¹ This project is based in the reconstructive model of narrative. Two narratives describe the seven towns and the air training schools in Southern Alberta and the sporting interaction that went on between the two communities. The study is also based in the constructionist model of theory. The research questions and the data selected in the construction of the narratives are based on the boundaries of the designated community theory. Deconstructionism is generally associated with postmodernism.¹⁸² Like constructionists, Booth argues that “deconstructionists do not promote interpretations of grand histories.”¹⁸³ Booth also argues that “[h]istorical data does not naturally organize, let alone write, narratives; nor are decisions about emplotments simple technical matters.”¹⁸⁴ This is where deconstructionists get meticulous; they question the epistemological and ontological assumptions that are being made.¹⁸⁵ Throughout the process of collecting, analyzing and

writing for this project an attitude of deconstructionism was present in an honest attempt to acknowledge the data used in creating the narratives and selecting the case studies.

This is not the interpretation of a grand history.

Method:

Evidence for this project was gathered through archival sources and newspaper accounts. Newspaper accounts were the starting point for this research and were accessed through online databases and microfilm. Three local museums in Nanton, Lethbridge and Medicine Hat, as well as local city and town halls in Lethbridge, Macleod, Claresholm, Vulcan and High River were the access points for archival information. The information gleaned from the newspapers and archives, along with secondary sources are utilized to develop the military-civilian community narrative and the importance that sport played. Newspaper and archival data have been used to reconstruct the narrative. The narrative centres on the events, people, and places that are important in defining the three themes of community.

Booth explains that reconstructionists see archives as “neutral sites of knowledge.”¹⁸⁶ However, deconstructionists see archives as “sites of power.”¹⁸⁷ Even though a narrative is being reconstructed, it is important to acknowledge what deconstructionists have to say about using the archives. Archives do contain gaps in information because sport clubs are inconsistent and often anonymous when submitting information into archives and governments have also manipulated and destroyed records.¹⁸⁸ Indeed, holes in the public archives for this research are present because of the short amount of time air force trainees and personnel spent in Southern Alberta. The

trainees were only in Southern Alberta for less than six months, and many of the personnel for less than the duration of the war. A lot of their personal items and information came and left with them.

Newspapers are what Jeffery Hill labeled as the “the staple – in the task of reconstructing the history of sport and games.”¹⁸⁹ He, somewhat reluctantly, admits that if used judiciously, newspapers provide a great foundation when it comes to writing a history. Newspapers can provide a sport historian with such information as dates, times, venues used, results, players, teams, coaches, officials, as well as editorials which are useful for determining the social context.¹⁹⁰ Hill explains that newspapers in the late 1800s and early 1900s spoke “for the people of the community it served.”¹⁹¹ This is something to be aware of when reading the narrative, as newspapers are the main source of information, particularly for the smaller communities. Stacy Lorenz, focussing specifically on the role of the media in sport in Western Canada during the early 1900s, argues that “daily newspapers...constructed a community of interest around sport in Canada.”¹⁹² He makes the case that newspapers helped develop a greater interest of sport in communities because individuals could have more consistent, up to date information.

Limitations:

The amount of information that is available is a limitation for this historical study. Lethbridge and Medicine Hat were the only two communities in Southern Alberta with daily newspapers. Claresholm, Macleod, Vulcan and High River had weeklies, and Pearce did not have a newspaper at all. Information for Pearce had to be gleaned from other newspapers. Even with the limited and differing amounts of information from

community to community, there was a lot of information to work with; so much that it is impossible to give a full account of all the events which occurred. The local archives presented a limitation due to very little being deposited or collected from the BCATP. The plan was in place for a short time period, and those who trained in Southern Alberta did not stay very long, and did not leave things behind to be collected and preserved. Another limitation was the inability, due to distance and funding, to access the military archives, which would have allowed for a better balance between civilian and military primary sources. This leaves the narrative very one-sided. For this project, and perhaps even longer projects, it would be impossible to access and analyze all available data.

The other limitation for this project in utilizing mostly newspaper material is the obvious lack of articles pertaining to women. Wayne Wanta highlights a study conducted that showed 90 percent of sports coverage in newspapers is devoted to men, and it was not until 1992 that women surpassed animals.¹⁹³ The fact that sports coverage in newspapers is mostly dedicated to men limits that amount of analysis and information that can be presented about women in this study.

Delimitations:

The study is delimited by the years 1939 to 1945. The year 1939 was the year Canada declared war on Germany and began to set up training schools and bases on home soil.¹⁹⁴ In 1945 the war with Germany and Japan officially ended. The sole purpose of the BCATP was to train Allied men and women to win the war, which was accomplished. The training schools and bases were shut down. Many of the bases that

included air strips were converted into airports, and turned over to civilian use. Military personnel were able to return to their homes and become civilians again.¹⁹⁵

Chapter Outline:

This thesis is a project that is building on and filling a gap in of a limited body of research and literature. Drawing on Conrad and Day as the starting point, this project expands on the role of sport in the relationship between local communities and nearby military bases and schools. The second chapter lays out a detailed description of each of the Southern Alberta communities who hosted a BCATP school. Emphasising the geographic details of the military communities as well as the initial non-sport common ties which were present and some of the early problems chapter two sets up the early sporting scene and the interactions between the towns and schools. Chapter three lays out the historical narrative of sporting events and how they fit into the three community themes identified by Hillery Jr. The chapter also includes specific case studies from Macleod, Claresholm, Lethbridge and Medicine Hat which highlight how sport helped the BCATP schools and civilian communities integrate. The fourth chapter focusses on money through laying out the different scenarios in which monetary concerns helped the military and civilian communities interact.

Notes

¹ Dave Best, *Canada: Our Century in Sport* (Markham: Fitzhenry Limited, 2002), 57.

² There is little to no information about the Sport Services League in Canada. Very few secondary sources make reference to it. As there has not yet been a full study conducted in Canada concerning sport during war, particularly the Second World War, the absence of the league from the literature is understandable. It does, however, come up often in the primary research in newspapers.

³ Frank Cosentino, *Canadian Football: The Grey Cup Years* (Toronto: The Musson Book Company, 1969), 120-121.

⁴ For the purpose of this project Southern Alberta is considered south of Calgary. There was one more school south of Calgary in DeWinton, however the school was very close to Calgary and was named the South Calgary Airport post-war. The school also had very little sporting interaction with the rest of Southern Alberta.

⁵ George A. Hillery Jr., "Definitions of Community: Areas of Agreement," *Rural Sociology* 20 (1995): 111-123.

⁶ F. H. Auld, *Canadian Agriculture and World War II: A History of the Wartime Activities of the Canada Department of Agriculture and its Wartime Boards and Agencies* (Ottawa: Canada Department of Agriculture, 1953); J. Arthur Lower, *Western Canada: An Outline History* (Toronto: Douglas & McIntyre, 1983).

⁷ Lower, 109.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 110.

⁹ C. P. Stacey, *Official History of the Canadian Army in the Second World War Volume 1: Six Years of the War in Canada, Britain and the Pacific* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1967), 110.

¹⁰ Arnold Warren, *Wait for the Wagon: The Story of the Royal Canadian Army Service Corps* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Limited, 1961), 166.

¹¹ Stacey.

¹² Gilbert Tucker, *The Naval Service of Canada: It's Official History, Volume 2: Activities on Shore During the Second World War* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1952).

¹³ Peter Conrad, *Training for Victory: The British Commonwealth Air Training Plan in the West*. (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Book, 1989); Spencer Dunmore, *Wings for Victory: The Remarkable Story of the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan in Canada* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1994); F.J. Hatch, *Aerodrome of Democracy: Canada and the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan 1939-1945* (Ottawa: Directorate of History Department of National Defence, 1983).

¹⁴ Dunmore, 21.

¹⁵ Reginald Roy, "Western Canada during the 2nd World War," in *For King and Country: Alberta in the Second World War*, ed. by K. W. Tingley (Edmonton: The Provincial Museum of Alberta, 1995), 112.

¹⁶ Hatch, 1.

¹⁷ William Lyon Mackenzie King, "The British Commonwealth Air Training Plan," Broadcast by Right Honourable W.L. Mackenzie King, P.M., Sunday December 17, 1939 (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1939). In *Department of National Defense*, 1-2, in F.J. Hatch, *Aerodrome of Democracy: Canada and the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan 1939-1945* (Ottawa: Directorate of History Department of National Defence, 1983), 1.

¹⁸ Hatch, 17.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Conrad, 13.

²¹ "The British Commonwealth Air Training Plan," *Pamphlet*, Nanton Bomber Command Museum, 1; Ted Byfield, *The War That United The Province* (Edmonton: United Western Communications, 2000).

²² *Ibid.*

²³ The number of weeks at each of the different schools included here are the number of weeks in the early part of the war. Each of the schools contributed to the airman's training in different ways.

²⁴ Byfield, 113.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 3.

²⁶ James N. Williams, *The Plan: Memories of the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan* (Stittsville: Canada's Wings, INC., 1984), 35.

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- ²⁷ Byfield, 110.
- ²⁸ Ibid, 116.
- ²⁹ “Complete Description of Macleod Service Flying Training School,” *Macleod Gazette*, August 8 1940, 3.
- ³⁰ Williams, 35.
- ³¹ Ibid, 121.
- ³² Ibid, 97.
- ³³ Ruth Roach Pierson, *They’re Still Women After All: The Second World War and Canadian Womanhood* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1986); Byfield.
- ³⁴ Byfield, 136.
- ³⁵ Carolyn Gossage, *Greatcoats and Glamour Boots* (Toronto: The Dundurn Group, 2001), 37.
- ³⁶ Ibid, 37-38.
- ³⁷ Ibid, 39.
- ³⁸ Gossage, 53; Rierson, 22-25; Byfield, 138.
- ³⁹ Gossage, 53-54.
- ⁴⁰ Byfield, 114.
- ⁴¹ Byfield, 144.
- ⁴² Conrad.
- ⁴³ Roy, 113.
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- ⁶⁸ Metcalfe, 39.
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- ⁷² Hillery Jr.
- ⁷³ Ruth E. Sutter, *The Next Place you Come to: A Historical Introduction to Communities in North America*, (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc, 1973), 175.
- ⁷⁴ Hillery Jr., 118; Theorists Colin Bell and Howard Newby warn against Hillery Jr.'s article arguing that community can not mean so many things, either it is a place or it is not. However, they do not offer their own solid definition of what a community is, they simply offer their voice to the many who are dissatisfied with the many definitions of community. See Colin Bell and Howard Newby, eds., *Community Studies: An Introduction of the Local Community*. (New York: Praeger Inc., 1972), 21-29.
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- ⁷⁷ Minar and Greer, 47.
- ⁷⁸ Ibid, 47.
- ⁷⁹ Kuyek, 13.
- ⁸⁰ Minar and Greer, 60.
- ⁸¹ Hillery Jr., 16.
- ⁸² MacIver, 95.
- ⁸³ Ibid, 95.
- ⁸⁴ Cohen, 12.
- ⁸⁵ Ibid.
- ⁸⁶ Minar and Greer, ix.
- ⁸⁷ Ibid, 3.
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- ⁸⁹ Cohen, 13; French, 3.
- ⁹⁰ French, 3.
- ⁹¹ Peter Burke, *History and Social Theory, 2nd Edition* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), 60.
- ⁹² Conrad; Dunmore; Myers, 251; Hatch; Roy.
- ⁹³ Conrad, 63; Dunmore; Myers.
- ⁹⁴ Conrad, 49 & 51.
- ⁹⁵ Dunmore, 214.
- ⁹⁶ Conrad, 49.
- ⁹⁷ Ibid, 95.
- ⁹⁸ Ibid.
- ⁹⁹ Daily Diaries, also referred to as War Diaries, are journals kept by one soldier, or many of the soldiers in each unit, Conrad
- ¹⁰⁰ Myers.
- ¹⁰¹ Conrad, 61.
- ¹⁰² Myers, 250-251.
- ¹⁰³ Conrad, 63; Myers, 250; These sport days also included activities that were not sport oriented.
- ¹⁰⁴ Conrad, 62; Myers, 251.
- ¹⁰⁵ Conrad, 67.
- ¹⁰⁶ Steven Bullock, *Playing For Their Nation: Baseball and the American Military During World War Two* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004).
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- ¹²⁰ Ibid, 50.
- ¹²¹ Ibid, 51.
- ¹²² Tony Mason and Eliza Riedi, *Sport and the Military: The British Armed Forces 1880-1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).
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- ¹²⁵ Ibid, 176.
- ¹²⁶ Ibid, 148.
- ¹²⁷ Ibid.
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- ¹²⁹ Ibid, 166.
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Chapter Two

The Integration: BCATP schools in Southern Alberta

“It’s incredible that the Air Training Plan got underway so quickly and so effectively. Canada had an extraordinary number of people trained in an extremely short time. How they got so many together to operate the thing reflects a great deal of credit on the people that did the initial organizing. I personally walked out of civvy street and in less than a year was flying on operational aircraft. That’s quite an achievement, and certainly says a lot for the calibre of Canadian ability.”¹

- Airman, RCAF

“Trainees were brought from literally around the world and put through the programs. It was an incredible job, an ingenious concept, to decide that Canada was big enough and had all the requirements to establish and maintain a massive training program to arm the Allies with Airmen.”²

- Airman, RCAF

“Although people didn’t make a point about it. I think patriotism was definitely a factor – unspoken perhaps, but we did have a cause to fight for. I felt it was something necessary.”³

- WD, RCAF

In the lead up to the Second World War, Albertans found themselves in some very difficult economic situations. The Depression and the weather created almost unliveable conditions.⁴ The BCATP was an added bonus for Southern Alberta, bringing in thousands of new people which helped boost local economies. Not only were trainees and military personnel brought from around the world, many Canadian trainees also found themselves in parts of the country with which they were unfamiliar. Cities and towns across Canada, though they welcomed the BCATP, were forced to accept new foreign military based groups into their established communities. Elementary, service, instructor and gunnery training schools brought all types of airmen to Southern Alberta; airwomen joined them in 1942. As schools were built and inhabited there were benefits and problems which presented themselves. Social interaction, which came from the

issues the initial common ties created, created the possibility for sport to become a common tie between the schools and towns in Southern Alberta. The schools wanted to include sport in their training programs for the physical and morale benefits and the schools called on the towns to help them get started.⁵

This chapter offers a narrative of each of the seven Southern Alberta communities, Medicine Hat, Lethbridge, Claresholm, Macleod, Pearce and Vulcan, and the BCATP schools which they hosted. Drawing on Hillery Jr.'s suggestion that geographic proximity and a shared physical space led to social interaction and an increase in common ties, this chapter highlights several important factors that laid the groundwork for sporting practices to influence the relationship between the two sets of communities. Burke also suggests that solidarity infuses communities, however, in order to remain cohesive construction and reconstruction should be taking place over time.⁶ The following narrative highlights three of the initial common ties that prompted the necessary construction and reconstruction so that civilian communities could accommodate the military: the war, an economic boost and a housing crisis. The war, being an international fight that was felt in every home, was the initial common tie. Robert MacIver argues that people understand themselves better by relating to others.⁷ It is convenient and easy for people to interact and relate to others who are close to them. The war brought a new group of people, the military, into the social interaction sphere of Southern Alberta towns. The war was common ground, or as MacIver might explain, the object through which people were able to relate to one another even though military life was so different from civilian life.⁸ Civilians dealt with shortages and rationing, as well as watching their loved ones join the fighting. The only reason the BCATP came into

existence was because of the war. Having BCATP bases stationed so close to towns only brought the war that much closer to home. The military was figuratively in the backyards of civilians. Civilians watched airmen train and then get sent off to war. However, with the addition of BCATP schools, towns also experienced immediate economic boosts. The influx of people benefited the economy, while simultaneously creating a serious housing crisis for the families of airport personnel who were permanent staff. Problems such as the housing crisis are to be expected within the confines of a geographically close community. In fact, according to Minar and Greer, common problems allow communities to develop “common perspectives and induce them to develop organizational vehicle for joint action.”⁹ The following narrative depicts what joint action was taken in the construction of solutions for the housing crisis.

Before getting into the details of each of the communities and the schools that resided there, it is important to introduce the situation in which Southern Alberta found itself in the lead up to the Second World War. The stock market crash in 1929 was a pivotal and life-changing event for those living in the province.¹⁰ It was a disaster, which “triggered an instant, shattering decline on all the markets on which Western Canada depended on for prosperity.”¹¹ Historians Tony Cashman and James MacGregor describe the immediacy of the Depression suggesting there was no preparation for harder times because there was no warning.¹² Casual labourers were the first to feel the impact followed by the skilled workers and then everyone else. MacGregor suggests that these workers were too proud to go on relief at first, however most had to submit to needing help for survival.¹³ Cashman explains that it was additionally demoralizing for the young people looking to get a job. Prior to the Depression the West had attracted younger

people looking for work. With the onset of the Depression however, they migrated to Ontario or the United States.¹⁴ Conditions in Alberta worsened with the onset of severe weather conditions of record breaking heat and high winds blowing dust. According to MacGregor, 1936 was the first year in which “the whole area from Lloydminster to Lethbridge produced a negligible crop.”¹⁵ Once the weather had ravaged the area, grasshoppers finished off any remaining living crop.¹⁶ Even with the horrid conditions endured by Albertans, and many others, Cashman argues that the people did not become depressed. The people did not let their spirits break, rather they “retained [their] character as the great “next year” country.”¹⁷

Contrary to the arrival of the Depression which was dramatic, everyone knew it was over, however, “none could recall exactly when it left.”¹⁸ Cashman argues that it was over before the start of the Second World War.¹⁹ Canadians were familiar with war because of what they had been through in the First World War, yet they were still not prepared to enter the Second World War.²⁰ This war was the first, Byfield explains, in which the “sky” finally became an equal in the war to the land and sea.²¹ Cashman explains that Canada went through a process as they set out for the first time to rear a citizen navy and air force to supplement the already existing citizen army.²² The start of the war forced Britain and Canada to work out a deal regarding the air force.²³ There were many advantages to placing training schools in the Alberta, the open skies of the prairies being the largest benefit.²⁴

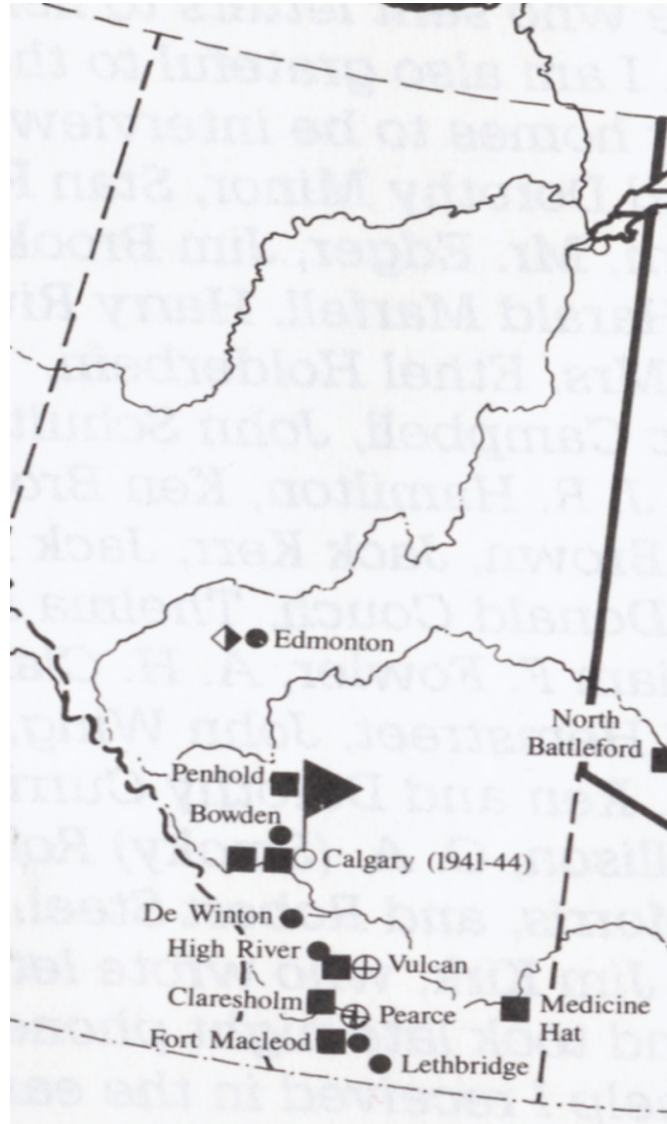
Local newspaper reports suggested that Southern Albertans had a different opinion about being ready for the war than what some historians have argued. Citizens felt that Alberta was in a much better position to contribute to the war effort this time as

compared to the First World War. This was due, in part, to “a general strengthening of the economy of the prairie provinces which had one of the best wheat crops in years” as well as an increase in petroleum production in the year leading up to the war.²⁵ Local communities, especially Lethbridge, Medicine Hat and High River reported that Southern Alberta was ideal for playing host to the BCATP. Arguments for placing schools in the area ranged from having ideal flat land terrain and ideal weather for year-round training to little interference from commercial flying and, in Medicine Hat, available accommodations.²⁶ The air training program was initially signed to a three year contract calling for “26 elementary flying schools; 16 service flying training schools; 10 air observer school and 10 bombing and gunnery schools. These would be scattered throughout Canada and announcements were made as working plans for each air field was approved.”²⁷ The original agreement between Canada and Britain was set to be in place until March 31, 1943, with extension or termination at any time if both countries mutually agreed.²⁸ However, the BCATP was successful, enough so that the contract was extended until 1945. By 1940, a “[t]otal of \$2,680,740” was dedicated to the air plan in Southern Alberta.²⁹

With the onset of the war, citizens went from one all-encompassing life changing event, the Depression, to another. Cashman describes how the war “rapidly became a way of life as activity revived in the West.”³⁰ As Spencer Dunmore relates, the plan continued to boost the reviving economy. New people were coming into town to build the schools; they needed places to stay and to eat. When the school personnel arrived they, along with their families, became permanent residents in local towns. The airmen brought with them money to spend, and a desire to spend it. Many problems, including housing and a

shortage of employees, became issues. However, compared to what Albertans had been through in the 1930s these were welcome problems.³¹ High River was the only Southern Alberta town to anticipate and prepare for some of these difficulties. However, they did have the advantage of knowing a while in advance that they were getting a school, so they had a lot of time to prepare for it.³² The *High River Times* reported what potential economic benefits the town would receive due to the added population.³³ Lethbridge experienced an increase in business and the *Lethbridge Herald* reported that many were surprised that population numbers had not risen higher in conjunction with the increased strength of the local economy.³⁴ Vulcan had difficulty meeting the new economic demands due to the presence of the new school.³⁵ On the other hand, after the closing of the school, citizens in Macleod were saddened by the “noticeable difference in the activity of the town.”³⁶ The economy increased because there was an influx of people into these communities: construction workers, airmen, school staff, and all their families.³⁷ This created a serious housing crisis in many of the communities.³⁸ This was the beginning of the reciprocal relationship between the towns and schools. Local towns benefitted economically from the influx of air force personnel and their families. The schools benefitted from the efforts of town and city councils to provide accommodations for the air force personnel.³⁹ Byfield acknowledged a “new sense of unity among Albertans,” which developed because of the war.⁴⁰ The BCATP played a large part in this unity. Sport would begin to contribute to common ties in 1941. However, as the following narratives highlight, the complications of adding several hundred military people into civilian towns resulted in some problems. The necessity of solving these problems gave rise to the initial common ties and social interactions that developed.

Without these common ties and social interactions developing it would have been much more difficult for sport to become influential in helping further community relations to develop.



MAP 1: Alberta BCATP Schools, PETER CONRAD TRAINING FOR VICTORY: THE BRITISH COMMONWEALTH AIR TRAINING PLAN IN THE WEST. Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Book, 1989, xii.

Medicine Hat: No. 34 SFTS

Medicine Hat (also known as the Gas city) located in the south east corner of Alberta just west of the Alberta-Saskatchewan border (see figure 1), had a population of 10,571 in 1941.⁴¹ In October 1939, the Medicine Hat Chamber of Commerce and Junior Board of Trade began lobbying the Honourable Norman Rogers, the minister of national defence, encouraging him to locate an air training school in the city. This occurred before the agreement between Canada and Britain was signed in December of the same year. A letter, drafted by the city council clerk, from Medicine Hat to Rogers outlined several advantages of placing an air training school in the city: ideal weather conditions, topography, no commercial flying and plenty of accommodations.⁴² Throughout the remainder of 1939, several letters of correspondence were exchanged between Ottawa and the city council in regards to hosting a training school.⁴³ Although the letters from Ottawa simply told citizens to be patient while waiting to hear about school placement and did not confirm whether or not the city would be host to a school, the city felt encouraged by the correspondence.⁴⁴ In December, city council received a letter from the Alberta minister of public works inquiring if they would be willing to have the RAF take over their airport for the duration of the war.⁴⁵ In January 1940, city council signed over the local airport to the BCATP.⁴⁶ Then they had to wait while the government inspected the facilities and considered what additional land they would be able to buy.⁴⁷ It took until April 13, 1940 before the word finally came that Medicine Hat had indeed been appointed as one of the sites where a training school would be built. Construction of the school facilities started in June of the same year.⁴⁸ Although not unheard of, it was uncommon for the RAF to take control of an air training school in Canada.⁴⁹ The first

group of RAF men to arrive at No. 34 had formed as a unit in Britain on February 26, 1941 before being transferred to Medicine Hat on March 11 of the same year.⁵⁰ The school was “tak[en] over by His Majesty,” and signed over to the RAF for the duration of the war in 1941.⁵¹ Just after the announcement that the station would remain in the care of the RAF, a reporter from the *Medicine Hat Daily News* wrote an article summarizing the school. The article provides an in-depth description of the high quality facilities and equipment, citing that “the buildings are well constructed and excellently heated...best care for equipment has been considered in construction of the base.”⁵² The article reiterates just how valuable No. 34 SFTS was, calling it “one of the best in the air plan.”⁵³ RAF personnel made a smooth transition into Canadian life: “[t]hey have taken to Western Canada; Western Canada has taken to them.”⁵⁴ The *Medicine Hat Daily News* reported that the RAF airmen, staff and their families also fit well into the community “leav[ing] no doubt as to the “oneness” of the British Commonwealth.”⁵⁵

On April 6, 1944 news came of the eventual closing of No. 34 SFTS. The news was unwelcome in Medicine Hat, however, it was just the beginning of a number of school closings, and was part of the overall plan.⁵⁶ By way of the *Medicine Hat Daily News*, the commanding officer (C/O) of No. 34 published part of a letter he had received from Ottawa detailing the closing down of the school. The C/O wanted to express his feelings in regards to his time spent in Medicine Hat. He highlighted that the city and school had “had many times to work together for...mutual benefit: both in office and ceremonial matters.”⁵⁷ The C/O also expressed his gratitude to Medicine Hat for the hospitality and assistance garnered by town organizations and citizens and assured them everyone who was at the base would take pleasant memories with them.⁵⁸ The C/O went

out of his way to write a letter directly to the citizens of Medicine Hat in a way that all would have the opportunity to read it. It is clear from the C/O's sentiments that the school found the relationship with the city to be useful, fulfilling and necessary. He also assumed that the feelings, which he wrote about, were mutual. No one wrote anything in the paper to disagree with what the C/O implied about the relationship between the city and school. Medicine Hat did not have a housing crisis, nor did the paper highlight any economic benefits they had gained because of the school being nearby. However, in this farewell letter it is clear that initial common ties were forged based on official and ceremonial matters. Having to deal with these issues created the basis for social interaction.

Lethbridge: No. 5 EFTS; No. 8 B & G

Lethbridge, a city of 14, 612 in 1941 and located closest to the Canadian/American border (see figure 1), had just built a new airport when the war started.⁵⁹ If Lethbridge was petitioning to get an air training school like Medicine Hat it was not recorded in the *Lethbridge Herald* or city records. Negotiations between the federal government and city council began as early as November 1939.⁶⁰ In January 1940, city council was prepared to sign over their newly built airport, even though it was not initially built for the plan. However, it was not until July 1940 that an agreement was signed.⁶¹ When the announcement was finally made, construction on the airport began and the school was open a month later. No. 5 EFTS started operations in July 1940. This was because the airport, Kenyon Air Field, was already established in Lethbridge and there was not as much preparation and construction needed. Being an EFTS meant that it

was civilian run by Lethbridge Flying Training School Ltd., under the direction of Robert Wilkinson who was the President of the Calgary Aero Club. It did not take long for officials to realize that the Lethbridge winds would be too much for flight training. In September, an announcement came from Ottawa explaining that the current EFTS would be moved elsewhere in Alberta and a Bombing and Gunnery (B & G) school would take its place. At the time, the new school was only the second Bombing and Gunnery school in Canada, as well as the largest air school in Western Canada.⁶² The EFTS had to stay at Kenyon Air Field through the winter of 1940/1941 before transplanting to High River in June of 1941. The B & G school did not wait for the EFTS to move out, instead beginning operations during the same winter. However, official operations of No. 8 were not acknowledged until the fall of 1941.⁶³ The official opening took place on November 8, 1941. Five thousand people witnessed a flying display and a parachute jump as part of the ceremonies.⁶⁴

The wind continued to be a factor in training. One staff pilot described the struggle of dealing with the wind in training: “there were occasions when running into wind on the target would take you half an hour...the target was gone past before you could even get near it.”⁶⁵ This time, however, the wind did not drive No. 8 out of town. In 1942 the school received their first addition of airwomen in the form of the Women’s Division.⁶⁶ The issue of accommodations did not become a concern in Lethbridge until the arrival of the B & G staff and students in 1941. Communications between the school and city council on the issue were not smooth. Council found out that the school was facing difficulties housing everyone from the War Service Council. When the council proposed some solutions no one responded, and so the issue was tabled.⁶⁷ In 1943 the

issue was brought in front of the council again as a problem facing all armed forces in Lethbridge. The idea was put forth that a temporary camp be set up that would be easy to take down at the conclusion of the war.⁶⁸ By December 1944, the B & G was no longer needed in the training scheme and was disbanded.⁶⁹ The remaining members of the school departed with a farewell letter from the *Lethbridge Herald* and several local businesses. The good-bye took up a whole page of the paper and extended thanks from the community to the school. Even though community members were happy that the war was over, they were sad to be losing a part of their community. They had this to say:

Your presence has meant a lot to us, stimulated our desire and effort for victory, and our thoughts for the post war years. Young and old, we have appreciated your worth and high purpose. Our thoughts and sincere wishes will follow you wherever you go, hoping for your protection and safe return to your homes soon. Good Bye and Good Luck!⁷⁰

What is clear from this letter is that the members of the school community were important to the city. Lethbridge civilians felt they were losing a special part of their community. The air force personnel had added value to the community. They had many common ties and strengthened them through social interaction. The end of the war meant that these common ties were being severed because military personnel needed to return to their homes. The severing of these ties was difficult in part because relations were broken and in part because towns and cities would have to reconstruct and redefine themselves.

Macleod: No. 7 SFTS

Macleod is today known as Fort Macleod, located between Lethbridge and Claresholm (see figure 1), and is known for a North West Mounted Police legacy. Macleod was a town of 1,912 people at the time of the 1941 census.⁷¹ In February 1940,

the Canadian government bought three pieces of land totalling 137 acres in the town of Macleod.⁷² Citizens and the board of trade had been wondering how they were going to go to be incorporated into the BCATP, and the purchase of land was the clue they were looking for.⁷³ Macleod citizens were unsure if a “Calgary centre w[ould] be made to include the Macleod area or whether Macleod airport w[ould] be considered a part of the elementary flying school...being established at Lethbridge.”⁷⁴ The *Macleod Gazette* reported that the purchase of land was “[t]he first definite action on the part of the government which would indicate that they intend to go ahead with the establishment of an air training field in...Macleod.”⁷⁵ In May 1940 an official statement came from Ottawa announcing what Macleod citizens already suspected, they would become home to a SFTS. The school established in Macleod was a large undertaking for a SFTS, as it included fields in the nearby towns of Granum and Pearce in addition to the one in Macleod.⁷⁶ Because of the size of the operation, it was reported that the undertaking would be “one of the most important points in the Inter-Empire scheme.”⁷⁷

The project made it the largest development in the history of Macleod.⁷⁸ The initial officers and airmen arrived late in October 1940. The immediate presence of officers and soldiers in town was welcomed.⁷⁹ The official opening of No. 7 SFTS occurred on December 18, 1941. The air school, labelled the “Million Dollar Air School,”⁸⁰ by the *Herald*, attracted 2000 guests to the opening.⁸¹ The ceremony reminded visitors of the rich history Macleod had as the North West Mounted Police headquarters, and as such welcoming the training school was another opportunity for Macleod to be an important part of the British Empire.⁸² No. 7 was an integral part of Macleod until 1944. In April, as part of the nation-wide shutting down of schools, it was

announced that the air school would become an equipment holding unit.⁸³ On November 17, 1944 the school was officially disbanded and renamed No. 1 Repair, Equipment and Maintenance Unit (REMU).⁸⁴

Claresholm: No. 15 SFTS

Claresholm, a major stopping point on the Canadian Pacific Railway between Lethbridge and Calgary and located halfway between Macleod and High River (see figure 1), was a town of 1,265 citizens at the time of the 1941 census.⁸⁵ Claresholm received word they would be hosting a school in August of 1940 and official confirmation occurred in November.⁸⁶ Airmen arrived in Claresholm for training before there was a runway installed for flight training. However, buildings and classrooms had been built and were used for ground training instruction until the runway could be completed. Once the runways were completed the C/O reported using them from dawn till dusk.⁸⁷ The official opening took place on August 16, 1941, and drew 5000 spectators, which tied them with Lethbridge as the highest attended opening in Southern Alberta.⁸⁸ The August 14, 1941 edition of the *Claresholm Local Press* was devoted to the new SFTS. The paper provided articles educating civilians as to what trainees went through from recruitment to departure overseas, what the BCATP was about, how much money was spent on it, the expected economic impacts for Claresholm and requirements for staff and personnel of No. 15.⁸⁹ Everything a Claresholm civilian might need or want to know about No. 15 could be learned in this edition of the paper.

The housing crisis did not overwhelm Claresholm. In July 1941, the town council provided a section of land for air force men to place trailers, and although the airmen had

to “sign an agreement to vacate immediately should the property be required for other purposes” there is no record of this actually happening.⁹⁰ Having the space to put up temporary housing accommodations without having to go through a second party, like a landlord, or the bank, made an impact in the housing situation. Claresholm only got a few weeks’ notice regarding the shutdown of No. 15. They received word in a letter from M. P. K. G Hansell that No. 15 would be closing on April 15, 1945, but would continue to operate as a reserve training unit.⁹¹

High River: No. 5 EFTS

High River was home to 1,430 civilians, and had been a town since 1905, the same year that Alberta became a province.⁹² It is the northern most Southern Alberta town (see figure 1). Construction at the High River airport for the BCATP began in August 1940 with promises from town council for “co-operation to the fullest possible extent.”⁹³ High River relied on the *Lethbridge Herald* for information concerning the transfer of No. 5 EFTS. Through September and October of 1940 the *High River Times* based their reporting on articles from the *Herald* in predicting the transfer of No. 5 EFTS to High River. One article in the *Times* commented on the frustration that all the information they were able to glean was from other papers.⁹⁴ At this time the town council started canvassing the town to see what kind of housing resources would be available as well as inquiring with the air school in Lethbridge about how many people would be needing accommodations.⁹⁵ The air school remained in Lethbridge till the spring of 1941. Rumors reached High River that No. 5 had not been moved because the airport was going to “be taken over for some other and possibly more important use.”⁹⁶

This grand plan never came to fruition. It was not until January of 1941 that High River civilians received direct confirmation when D. K. Yorath, managing director of the Calgary Aero club responsible for No. 5 EFTS, came into town to give a personal interview to the *Times* and confirmed the transfer. Some other tidbits of information he shared included an opening date of early summer, that there would be 500 personnel, and the fact that when No. 5 opened in High River it would be one of three of the largest EFTS's in Canada.⁹⁷ The *Lethbridge Herald* reported that upon arrival in High River No. 5 would double in capacity compared to when it had been in Lethbridge.⁹⁸ There was an immense amount of preparation carried out in order to transfer the school without any loss of training time. When the school did transfer late in June of 1941 the *Times* extended a welcome to everyone associated with No. 5, including their “hopes that this town may speedily become “our town” to newcomers.”⁹⁹ The official opening was held September 23, 1941.¹⁰⁰

In October 1944, prior to the closing of No. 5, the High River Chamber of Commerce sent a letter to the Minister of Defence requesting that the BCATP school be kept open. The Chamber of Commerce felt they could make this argument because the EFTS was civilian operated, which required no RCAF personnel. High River also made this request in response to statements that came from a representative of the Defence Minister detailing that “flying clubs would be given a contract to provide elementary training and refresher courses for the R.C.A.F. as soon as the war was over.”¹⁰¹ The requests made by the Chamber of Commerce were futile as No. 5 was closed in November 1944. In High River the airmen brought an invigorating spirit with them and an eagerness to become involved “in all town affairs and become one with [the town].”¹⁰²

High River civilians felt this camaraderie and wished the best for all those air force personnel who were leaving.¹⁰³

Pearce: No. 36 EFTS; No. 3 AOS; No. 2 FIS

Pearce, located just east of halfway between Macleod and Claresholm (see figure 1), was so small that they were not included in the 1941 census record.¹⁰⁴ Pearce did not get their own school when they were first inducted into the BCATP. Land nearby was bought in 1940 as part of the organizing of No. 7 SFTS in Macleod. Most of the No. 7 operation was in Macleod; however the land in Pearce was designated as relief fields.¹⁰⁵ In 1941 Pearce found out they would be getting their own school.¹⁰⁶ In March of 1942 the RAF run No. 36 EFTS opened for a short five months. As with Lethbridge, reports suggest winds were a factor in the moving of No. 36.¹⁰⁷ Officially, the EFTS was moving out to make room for 1200 new RCAF officers and airmen for an Observers and Navigation school, No. 3, which was being transferred from Regina.¹⁰⁸ However, the full transfer never occurred and in 1943 staff and students started reporting back to Regina, with total shut down occurring in June of 1943. In April of 1943, No. 2 FIS, which had been transferred from Vulcan, settled in for the remainder of RCAF operations in Pearce.¹⁰⁹ The *Lethbridge Herald*, in commenting on the closing of the air school in Pearce on January 20, 1945 named the school as “The Western University of the Air,” a name that would influence the naming of the Pearce hockey team (the Professors).¹¹⁰ No. 2 was called this because the men training at this school were those who completed their pilot training at the top of their class and were required to learn how to teach others the basics before they would get a chance to go overseas.

Vulcan: No. 2 FIS; No. 19 SFTS

Vulcan, named after the Roman God of Fire, was a town of 732 at the time of the 1941 census and is located east and a little south of High River (see figure 1).¹¹¹ Vulcan experienced a very similar situation as Macleod in that there was a purchase of land before the announcement of the school. The main school land was bought ten miles south-east of Vulcan, with two more purchases in the neighbouring towns of Champion and Ensign. The purchase was made Monday, August 4, 1941, and was announced on August 21.¹¹² No. 2 FIS began operations on August 3, 1942. The school played host to over 200 airmen who received training in how to teach new recruits.¹¹³ The official opening did not take place until October 30, 1942, drawing a crowd of over 4000 from Southern Alberta despite the chilly day.¹¹⁴ By suggestion of town councillor Brown, “VULCAN” was painted on the roof of the skating rink as a visible guide for training pilots.¹¹⁵ Common ties came quickly in Vulcan when many of the trainees and personnel began “giving up their leaves to help farmers during the rush period” during harvest.¹¹⁶ The act of the airmen using their free time to help the locals strengthened the initial ties and bonds that were forming in the community. With so many young men leaving to fight in the war, farmers were shorthanded and needed all the help they could get, and the airmen offered their help without being asked. In 1943 No. 2 FIS was moved to Pearce while No. 19 SFTS took over in Vulcan. On April 27, 1943 No. 2 held a free concert as a gesture of their appreciation to the citizens of Vulcan and the surrounding area.¹¹⁷ On May 26 of the same year there was a combined ceremony for the closing of No. 2 FIS and the opening of No. 19 SFTS. No. 19 moved in on May 3, which meant that the two schools were operating together in Vulcan for just over three weeks.¹¹⁸ March 29, 1945

was the final graduation ceremony, followed by operations being terminated on April 15; however, the base would continue to be operated by the RCAF as a storage unit.¹¹⁹ Interestingly, in his closing remarks, the Air Vice/Marshal (AV/M) appealed to all airmen that as they became civilians they “would see to it that the Navy, Army and Airforce would maintain an armed force so that never again would we be in the position in which this war found us.”¹²⁰ As noted earlier in this chapter, Canada was not ready for the war. The AV/M did not want Canada to be so unprepared for war again. As with Lethbridge, the *Advocate* featured a goodbye from the council and citizens of Vulcan. It was not so much of a thank you, but more of wishing the departing airmen and their families the best. The farewell included praise for the ways in which they conducted themselves in town, as well as referring to the departing people as friends.¹²¹

Canadian Regionalism: An Easterner’s View of Western Canada

In almost all of the above towns, local newspapers reported that the RCAF/RAF air schools and towns engaged in cooperative activities. Many were disappointed to see the schools disband because of the friendships and economic benefits associated with them. In Medicine Hat, at the closing, a school official wrote a letter to the editor of the paper thanking the town for the positive interactions and support airmen had received. In Lethbridge and Vulcan the town wrote thank-you and farewell letters to the schools through the newspapers. Articles in local newspapers describe smooth, compatible and friendly town and school relations. However, there was at least one disgruntled airman who did not feel the same warmth and welcome. A Toronto man, stationed at No. 15 SFTS, wrote an article for the station newspaper, *Windy Wings*, detailing his displeasure

at how he had been treated as an Easterner. He had been stationed in Alberta for three years when he wrote his letter. As his stay continued he began to resent, as an Easterner, being blamed for “all the misfortunes that...happened west of Fort Williams,” especially the weather.¹²² He agreed with locals that the West had a lot to offer, and if used correctly would pay off for them. He did, however, advise that locals “should get rid of their inferiority complex which prompts you to blame the east for your misfortunes.”¹²³ He continued to write that people in the east were grateful for small mercies, and that the weather is viewed “as an act of God.”¹²⁴ In closing he commented on his hopes that the war would do some good for the east/west division present in Canada:

Probably one of the greatest things that the war has done for Canada has been the fact that Easterners have been transplanted to the West and Westerners have been forced to suffer a period of incarceration in the East. Both will return with a better idea of each others troubles and the idea that there is no time for recriminations in the buildings of a Canada for all. Canada – a land in which we live in peace and happiness whether it be in Calgary or Toronto.¹²⁵

The airman’s comments make it sound as if the east/west contentions were mostly just an issue for westerners. He also implies that westerners really did not have any reason to be upset with Eastern Canada, and that the people he interacted with did not have any real arguments against the east. Ted Byfield argues that the war made Albertans more welcoming to outsiders, an argument that the above airmen would probably not agree with.¹²⁶ The pre-war Alberta political landscape revolved around a “revolt against the old parties and eastern Canada”¹²⁷ Cashman describes the political landscape that existed at the federal level during the 1920s. The Progressive party, which was started by the farm organizations of Canada, became the official opposition in 1921. However the party was only “united in what they were against but hopelessly fragmented on what they were for.”¹²⁸ That union was based on being unified against the East. Both provincial and

federal politics in Alberta were consumed with trying to separate themselves from the East and have their voice heard. The airman from Toronto, even though Byfield felt that Alberta became more accepting, picked up on the political feelings of the province from the locals.

Initial Sport Interaction

Common ties and social interaction between schools and towns were initially developed because of geographic proximity and the immediate economic benefits and housing concerns. Sport became one of the avenues for interaction and integration between the schools and towns. There was no backlash in Southern Alberta against playing sport during the war, or the military using sport as a training tool,¹²⁹ instead there was recognition of the value of sport. For example, in 1939, Sydney Gruson, a Canadian Press writer from Toronto, confirmed that sport in Canada would carry on as somewhat normal, with a few adjustments. He reported that “[s]port leaders have taken the view that athletics are an aid to the public morale in wartime and more than one civil officer has agreed.”¹³⁰ Civic leaders were on board to let sport continue and sport leaders were more than ready to continue promoting and organizing it. In 1940 Canadian Press writer Edwin Johnson acknowledged two benefits that those who were “responsible for turning out the finished soldier” thought sport provided.¹³¹ First, it was part of the general training in order to physically and mentally strengthen soldiers and second, the contribution sport made to morale and team spirit was invaluable.¹³² Dick Matthews, a *Lethbridge Herald* writer, reported that in a poll conducted by Esquire in 1942 sport was considered the most valuable form of entertainment. Matthews also described a new discovery military

leaders had made, that sport was a useful tool for fundraising.¹³³ In a recruiting advertisement for men wanting to become parachutists being physically fit was a prerequisite.¹³⁴ On two different occasions in 1943 No. 15 SFTS students were urged to stay physically fit. In a graduation ceremony Group Captain Flinn told his students to uphold their fitness level because:

upon this fitness and the mental alertness it engenders might depend on their vary lives during the moments of combat, and during the moments of combat, and not only their own lives, but the lives of their comrades who might be in the aircraft.¹³⁵

This is the kind of physical and mental hardening that Edwin Johnson discussed. Sport played a part in getting the men ready to perform at their best to keep themselves and their comrades alive. Just a few months after Flinn's address, the sports section of the *Windy Wings* also made a case for keeping physically fit. The message was the same, urging the women to keep their bodies fit so they could work better because "a person...cannot do his best work if he feels dull and under the weather."¹³⁶ Near the end of the war Canadian press writer Syd Thomas wrote a piece comparing war directly to hockey and football. He described the process of one team's probing, thrusting, and lunging at each other to find "an opening for him, in many cases these attempts are marred by the opposition, but ultimately the attacking side discovers a weak point, throws its entire weight in this sector and achieves a break through."¹³⁷ The article argued that the tactics of war were very similar.

In several of the Southern Alberta towns, councils made an effort to help the schools with sports and entertainment.¹³⁸ Initially schools had to call on civilians to help with recreation programs, which included sports, music, theatre, and spaces for letter writing and reading. No. 5 in Lethbridge was the first school to request the help of

civilians to supply the recreation program. When it was determined that the EFTS would be staying through the 1940/41 winter, the managing director of the school, Dr. Yorath, made an appeal to Lethbridge citizens for help. Dr. Yorath wanted help giving the students a way to relax from all the hard work of training. He was looking for an organization to step in and help organize activities at the school because the EFTS was some distance from Lethbridge.¹³⁹ There was no follow up article, and it is unclear how much this request influenced the role of Lethbridge citizens in helping set up the Southern Alberta Hockey League, or the bowling league school personnel participated in throughout that winter.

When it was officially announced that Macleod would be getting a school, the Macleod War Auxiliary Service Council, made up of the Board of Trade, town council, Canadian Legion, and other organizations, met to discuss what role they could play in providing recreation to military personnel for a more pleasant stay.¹⁴⁰ One proposal that came out of this meeting was to “appeal to the general public to assist in this regard.”¹⁴¹ In High River there was a combination of what occurred in Lethbridge and Macleod. Flight-Lt Gladden suggested that the “friendly spirit of district people” could help ease the trainees’ transition into military life by helping organize recreation activities.¹⁴² The town council had also committed in assisting to “link up the social and sport life of the town with that of the air school...which [would] bring together the young trainees and the local young people in dances and sport.”¹⁴³ Claresholm relied upon the Knights of Columbus to help No. 15 with recreational activities. They used two buildings at the airport; a hut that the Knights of Columbus were in charge of for reading and writing, and the recreation hall.¹⁴⁴ In Vulcan, plans for recreation were made when school personnel

arrived, however they were put on hold “due to the rush of work brought on only by a bumper crop.”¹⁴⁵ Instead airmen ventured out to help fill the shortage of farm labour.¹⁴⁶

The initial connections between schools and towns in Southern Alberta during the war came from being in the same geographic area, which created a housing crisis, but also boosted the local economies. As the schools became settled they initially had to rely on the local towns to help them with their participation in sport. They needed equipment and facilities, which civilians did their best to help provide. Had the locals not helped, the schools likely would have found ways to play sport, however it would have taken a much longer for them to get their hands on the equipment they needed and they may never have had the money or time to construct facilities. The early sporting help towns provided to the stations allowed the military to become a factor in the Southern Alberta sporting community more quickly than they would have trying to do it on their own. This initial local help was paid back as the Air Force would later fully support and keep senior sport in Southern Alberta alive. The prompt involvement of the locals in military sport also helped build a positive common tie for social interaction in the initial days of the relationship between the two communities, which set up all the sport and recreation activities described in the next two chapters.

Notes

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- ¹ James N. Williams, *The Plan: Memories of the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan* (Stittsville: Canada's Wings, INC., 1984), 215.
- ² *Ibid.*, 218.
- ³ Carolyn Gossage, *Greatcoats and Glamour Boots* (Toronto: The Dundurn Group, 2001), 70.
- ⁴ James G. MacGregor, *A History of Alberta* (Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers, 1972), 261-272; Ted Byfield, ed., *The War That United The Province* (Edmonton: United Western Communications, 2000), 5.
- ⁵ Compared to the garrison town of Halifax, the situation in Southern Alberta was reversed. In Halifax the military allowed for, and contributed to, the growth of civilian sport. In Southern Alberta civilians allowed for, and contributed to, the growth of military sport. In doing this for military towns, the situation switched to resemble that of Halifax where civilian sport was being supported by military sport by the end of the war, See Chapter Three for more details on how this happened.
- ⁶ Peter Burke, *History and Social Theory, 2nd Edition* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), 60.
- ⁷ Robert M. MacIver, *A Sociological Study: Being an Attempt to Set of the Nature and Fundamental Laws of Social Life* (New York: Benjamin Bloom Inc., 1991), 95.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*
- ⁹ David W. Minar and Scott Greer, *The Concept of Community: Readings with Interpretations* (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1969), 3.
- ¹⁰ Tony Cashman, *An Illustrated History of Western Canada*, (Edmonton: M. G. Hurtig Ltd., Publishers, 1971), 206; MacGregor, 261.
- ¹¹ Cashman, 206.
- ¹² Cashman, 206; MacGregor, 261.
- ¹³ MacGregor, 262-263.
- ¹⁴ Cashman, 219.
- ¹⁵ MacGregor, 271.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁷ Cashman, 219.
- ¹⁸ Cashman, 25.
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.*
- ²⁰ Cashman, 225; MacGregor, 275; Byfield, 118.
- ²¹ Byfield, 108.
- ²² Cashman, 226.
- ²³ Byfield, 109. Talks had been ongoing since 1936.
- ²⁴ For a more in-depth discussion of the benefits, see Cashman; MacGregor; Peter Conrad, *Training for Victory: The British Commonwealth Air Training Plan in the West* (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Book, 1989); Spencer Dunmore, *Wings for Victory: The Remarkable Story of the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan in Canada* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1994).
- ²⁵ "Western Canada in Better Position to Assist War Efforts then in 1914," *Lethbridge Herald*, June 21, 1940, 2.
- ²⁶ "Southern Alberta Suitable for Air Force training," *High River Times*, October 26, 1939, 6; "Advantages of City as Training School for Aircraft Pilots" *Lethbridge Herald* October 30, 1939, 1; "Medicine Hat Builds up Strong Case for Air Training Base Here," *Medicine Hat Daily News*, November 27, 1939, 5.
- ²⁷ "Air Training Plan Develop Slowly With Definite Aim," *Macleod Gazette*, April 11 1940, 1.
- ²⁸ *Ibid.*
- ²⁹ "Total of \$2,680,740 for Air Plan in South Alta.," *Lethbridge Herald*, June 13, 1940, 1.
- ³⁰ Cashman, 226.
- ³¹ Dunmore, 205.
- ³² See page 52.
- ³³ "Confirmation That Airport Activity Will be Started with Building Next Spring," *High River Times*, December 12, 1940, 1.
- ³⁴ "Lethbridge Census: Disappointment Figures Not Higher," *Lethbridge Herald*, September 16, 1941, 7.
- ³⁵ Genevieve Sales, "New No.2 F.I.S. Station Surrounded by Rich Grain-Growing District," *Lethbridge Herald*, October 28, 1942, 11.

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- ³⁶ “No. 7 SFTS Closing Slackens Business and Social Life,” *Macleod Gazette*, October 26, 1944, 2.
- ³⁷ Dunmore, 214.
- ³⁸ “Big Development at Pearce for Observers School,” *Macleod Gazette*, August 6, 1942, 2; “Vulcan Airport Commences Operation – Housing Becomes Problem,” *The Vulcan Advocate*, August 6, 1942, 3; “Canvass Town to Ascertain Available Accommodation in Event of Airport Opening,” *High River Times*, September 26, 1940, 1; “The British Commonwealth Air Training Plan,” *Claresholm Local Press*, August 14, 1941, 2.
- ³⁹ *Minutes 1941-1944*, Town of Claresholm Town Office; *Minute Book: Town of High River July 1, 1925-December 31, 1945*, Town of High River Town Office; *Minutes of the City Council of the City of Lethbridge*, City of Lethbridge City Hall; *Fort Macleod City Minutes*, Fort Macleod Town Office.
- ⁴⁰ Byfield, 135.
- ⁴¹ *The Eighth Census of Canada*. (Published by Authority of the Hon. James A. MacKinnon, 1946).
- ⁴² “Monday, October 2, 1939,” *City of Medicine Hat Council Minutes 1939*, 110, Esplanade Arts and Heritage Archives; “Medicine Hat Builds Up Strong Case For Air Training Base Here,” *Medicine Hat Daily News*, November 27, 1939, 5
- ⁴³ “Ask for Training School for pilots in Medicine Hat,” *Medicine Hat Daily News*, October 13, 1939, 1; “Advantages of City as Training School for Aircraft Pilots,” *Medicine Hat Daily News*, October 30, 1939, 1; “Medicine Hat Builds Up Strong Case For Air Training Base Here,” *Medicine Hat Daily News*, November 27, 1939, 5. *City of Medicine Hat Council Minutes 1939*, Esplanade Arts and Heritage Archives.
- ⁴⁴ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁵ Monday December 18, 1939,” *City of Medicine Hat Council Minutes, 1939*, 142-143. Esplanade Arts and Heritage Archives.
- ⁴⁶ “Monday, January 24, 1940,” *City of Medicine Hat Council Minutes 1940*, 13, Esplanade Arts and Heritage Archives.
- ⁴⁷ “Monday, March 18, 1940,” *City of Medicine Hat Council Minutes*, 36-38, Esplanade Arts and Heritage Archives.
- ⁴⁸ “Work at Local Airport Opens June 1st” *Medicine Hat Daily News*, April 13, 1940, 1.
- ⁴⁹ Conrad, 12.
- ⁵⁰ David Carter, *Prairie Wings: RAF Service Flying Training School Medicine Hat 1941-1944* (Elkwater: Eagle Butte Press, 1998).
- ⁵¹ “Local Airport Leased to His Majesty for the Duration,” *Medicine Hat Daily News*, March 4, 1941, 1; “Tuesday February 4, 1941,” *City of Medicine Hat Council Minutes*, 18, Esplanade Arts and Heritage Archives.
- ⁵² “No. 34 S.F.T.S. Valuable Air Base: Local School is One of the Best in Empire Air Plan,” *Medicine Hat Daily News*, March 24, 1941, 1.
- ⁵³ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁴ “Britishers Fit into Community Life of Medicine Hat City,” *Medicine Hat Daily News*, March 24 1941, 1.
- ⁵⁵ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁶ “Closing of Air Schools Done According to Plan,” *Medicine Hat Daily News*, April 6, 1944, 1; Byfield.
- ⁵⁷ “A letter from G-C A. ap Ellis,” *Medicine Hat Daily News*, November 10, 1944, 2.
- ⁵⁸ *Ibid.*; “Monday, May 15, 1944,” *City of Medicine Hat Council Minutes*, 60, Esplanade Arts and Heritage Archives.
- ⁵⁹ *The Eighth Census of Canada*.
- ⁶⁰ *Minutes of City Council of the City of Lethbridge 1939*, City of Lethbridge City Hall, 223.
- ⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 25 & 143.
- ⁶² “Bombing School Here Largest in West” *Lethbridge Herald*, September 17, 1940, 1; Kilford.
- ⁶³ “Elementary Flying School Remains Here,” *Lethbridge Herald*, October 2, 1940, 7; “Elementary Flying School Moves to Make Way for Bombing Station,” *Lethbridge Herald*, June 27, 1941, 6; “Bombing School Here Opens Middle October,” *Lethbridge Herald*, September 13, 1941, 7.
- ⁶⁴ “No. 8 Bombing and Gunnery School Opening Attended by Five Thousand; Air Commodore Cowley Presents Wings,” *Lethbridge Herald*, November 10, 1941, 7.
- ⁶⁵ Williams, 126.
- ⁶⁶ “Preparing for Arrival of Airwomen at No. 8 Station,” *Lethbridge Herald*, June 5, 1942, 7.
- ⁶⁷ *Minutes of City Council of the City of Lethbridge, 1941*, City of Lethbridge City Hall

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- ⁶⁸ *Minutes of City Council of the City of Lethbridge, 1943*, City of Lethbridge City Hall; City council minutes do not specify if the camp was set up.
- ⁶⁹ "Last B. and G. School Class," *Lethbridge Herald*, December 1, 1944, 7.
- ⁷⁰ "We Are Going to Miss You: When No. 8 B. and G. is Closed," *Lethbridge Herald*, December 2, 1944, 9.
- ⁷¹ *The Eighth Census of Canada*.
- ⁷² *Minute Book, 1924-1946*, Fort Macleod Town Office.
- ⁷³ "Air Training Field Now Assured for Greater Macleod," *Macleod Gazette*, April 25, 1940, 2.
- ⁷⁴ "Air Training Plan Develop Slowly with Definite Aim," *Macleod Gazette*, April 11, 1940, 6.
- ⁷⁵ "Air Training Field Now Assured for Greater Macleod," 2.
- ⁷⁶ "Location of Air Training Centre is Announced," *Macleod Gazette*, May 2, 1940, 1.
- ⁷⁷ "Flying School to be Established Here to be Big Undertaking," *Macleod Gazette*, May 9, 1940, 1.
- ⁷⁸ *Ibid.*
- ⁷⁹ "Arrived at Airport: Officers and Advance Party Arrived Here Last Friday Night," *Macleod Gazette*, October 31, 1940, 1.
- ⁸⁰ "Million Dollar Air School is Now in Operation Instructing War Pilots," *Lethbridge Herald*, December 16, 1940, 8.
- ⁸¹ "Service Flying Training School Opened," *Macleod Gazette*, December 19, 1940, 1.
- ⁸² *Ibid.*, 1. Those conducting the ceremony emphasized the significance of Macleod being chosen based on its' history.
- ⁸³ "The Future of No. 7 SFTS., Macleod," *Macleod Gazette*, April 27, 1944, 5.
- ⁸⁴ "No. 7 SFTS Disbanded on Friday, Nov. 17," *Macleod Gazette*, November 16, 1944, 1.
- ⁸⁵ *The Eighth Census of Canada*.
- ⁸⁶ "Claresholm to be an Air Training Centre???", *Claresholm Local Press*, August 8 1940, 1; "The Claresholm Service Flying Training School will be Gigantic Undertaking," *Claresholm Local Press*, October 31, 1940, 2; "Official," *Claresholm Local Press*, November 14, 1940, 1; The town council minute book for 1935-1940 was lost in a fire.
- ⁸⁷ Williams, 94; City Council Meeting Minutes from 1935-1940 were lost in a fire, so it is difficult to get a better idea of how town officers felt about the addition of the school to the community.
- ⁸⁸ "No. 15 S.F.T.S. is opened at Claresholm: Thousands Attend Colourful and Graduation Exercises on Saturday," *Lethbridge Herald*, August 16, 1941, 7.
- ⁸⁹ *The Claresholm Local Press* Vol. 15 No. 42 August 14, 1941.
- ⁹⁰ *Minutes 1941-1944*, Claresholm Town Office, 12.
- ⁹¹ "No. 15 to be Reserve Training Unit," *Claresholm Local Press*, April 5, 1945, 3.
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Chapter Three

The Amalgamation: Air Force Sport in Southern Alberta Communities

“Whether resonating at the level of nation, local or individual constituencies, it is evident that sport constitutes an important component of the “mattering maps” of our everyday lives.”¹

- David L. Andrews

Sport was on the “mattering maps” of individuals during the war. It played a very important part in the evolution of the BCATP schools integrating into the local towns and cities in Southern Alberta. Sport helps support, as well as define, the actions of a community, bringing the definition out of theory and into the real world.² Sport is a shared activity which promotes attachment to a group “forming the basis on which people respond to its collective demands” and defines the character of a community.³ A historical narrative of sporting activities identifies how area, common ties and social interaction within communities in Southern Alberta promoted attachment. It also serves to highlight parallels to the case studies discussed in chapter one concerning sport, military and civilians. Morale, facilities, skill and expertise are all evident in the narrative. Specific case studies of basketball and lacrosse in Macleod, hockey in Claresholm and Lethbridge, and soccer in Medicine Hat offer further detailed insight into how certain sports created community character and became significant to the relationship between the schools and towns.

Hillery Jr. argues that area is the most common theme of community.⁴ It is the physical space of a community that enables opportunities for the organization of sports competition. There are many different kinds of leagues, local, regional, provincial, national, international, all of which are organized based on where an individual lives and by whom they live. Minar and Greer’s discussion of the “they” and “them” people of a

community is magnified through sport.⁵ Similarly, Richard Gruneau and David Whitson argue that the “sense of ‘place’” attached to community is “understood simply in geographic terms.”⁶ In sports it is more commonly referred to as “rooting for the home team.”⁷ There becomes two sets of ‘they’ and “them”, the home team, and the other team, or rather ‘us’ and ‘them’. Teams are most often organized based on geography. Danielson suggests “[s]ports are an important connection between people and the places where they live,” and those connections are strong because of the number of people who root for the home team.⁸

Rooting for and investing in the home team allows individuals to experience sport on an individual and collective level as they become part of a group with parallel interests.⁹ Hillery Jr. suggests an important part of common ties are symbols, an idea which is shared by Gruneau and Whitson, who explain that “[c]ultural symbols like flags and anthems, as well as games and their associated traditions” are important in representing a community.¹⁰ Sport teams and individuals become a common tie in a community. Ken Dryden and Roy MacGregor also address the importance of sports to common ties; reminiscing that “[e]very community needs a place to gather, to act and feel like a community, to remind itself of why it is a community, to strengthen its resolve to fight those forces that threaten its existence,”¹¹ This is accomplished through gatherings in the local arena, the local baseball diamond, soccer pitch, lacrosse box, and basketball court.¹²

Community members need to have something in common with each other, but they also need to have something that distinguishes them from other communities.¹³ Sport was played in each of the seven Southern Alberta communities that are a part of

this study. This statement as a standalone means that all the communities had a common interest in sport. Gregory P. Stone argues that at the national level certain sports have become synonymous with certain countries, for example, rugby and New Zealand, soccer and England, baseball and the United States.¹⁴ This same pattern occurred at the local level in Southern Alberta. For example, Medicine Hat became attached to soccer, Macleod to basketball and lacrosse, Claresholm and Lethbridge to hockey. Communities in Southern Alberta became attached to and known for certain sports, which differentiated them from each other. Usually these attachments emerged due to team success in representing the community. Allen Guttmann suggests that there is no “better way to symbolize community than to have everyone assemble, not by external coercion but because it was, after all, the thing to do”¹⁵ This is how differentiation occurred in each community. Certain sports became attached to certain communities because the participants and spectators came out willingly and supported it. Guttmann explains that, certain physical performances of sports “live in the memory like the lines of a poem.”¹⁶ Winning will do that. The memory of the event continues to give the participants, spectators and athletes, a reason to stay connected. Sports “are [a] demonstration of possibility.”¹⁷ The initial common tie between the schools and towns was the war; however, sport also became a common tie. During the war sport was a sign of continuity. If sports symbolized possibilities, it is because they were played before the war, continued on in the face of war, and they would remain thereafter. Sport represented a degree of normalcy and the possibility of what life would return to after the war.

Social interaction is a result of common ties. Sports offer “[o]pportunities to gather in arenas and theatres and to be part of large and heterogeneous crowds in which our own

excitement is amplified by the passions of those around us.”¹⁸ It also has the ability to open channels of communication.¹⁹ Sport was something that could be discussed between the town and the school, as well as at the school and town water coolers. It was, as Mason and Riedi explain, “a common language and frame of reference which all...could be expected to understand.”²⁰ As Janet Lever argues, it was “a reason for solidarity,”²¹ a reason to stand together, and against other communities. A reason to get together Saturday evening for an RCAF sponsored boxing event or Monday night for playoff hockey. Minar and Greer argue that communities are the manifestation of the human need for kinship, friendship and communion.²² Sport provides a way to analyze how communities came together in solidarity and communion. Southern Alberta towns and schools were interacting and had to work at becoming unified and sport was a major part of the process.

A Historical Narrative of Small Town Sport, 1939-1944

A narrative of schools and towns in Southern Alberta during the Second World War highlights how geography allowed for common ties and social interaction through sport to develop into solidified communities. Included are parallels to the conclusions of other researchers in their studies of military and sport. This narrative speaks to how the military and civilian communities were brought together, and gives insight into how sport helped the two integrate and find common ties. This section contributes to the work by Conrad, Bullock, Day, Howell, Mason and Riedi who, in their respective studies discuss morale, facilities, injuries, added skill and expertise, and the different ways in which military personnel participated in civilian sport and vice versa.²³

Gregory P. Stone wrote: “[i]t is assumed that people identify with the team because of this collection of players. It is also acknowledged that another member of the organization such as the owner influences team identification.”²⁴ In Southern Alberta it was not because of the individual players that civilian communities identified with local school teams. One of the frustrations schools dealt with was that airmen did not stay at one school for very long, thus the teams had constantly changing faces. Consistency came from the station commanders and some permanent staff, and the unavoidable fact that a war was going on. As the war started, sports were not completely cancelled, there was an effort made to keep life ‘normal’ on the home front.²⁵ As the war continued the role of station teams in Southern Alberta shifted from exhibition and a novelty affair to becoming the backbone and lifeline of local sports. Without school teams and participants some sports would have declined until the end of the war. It is also important to note that some sports, notably soccer and women’s basketball, were actually revived thanks to the local station members. Another note is that Medicine Hat did not often join in sporting activities with the rest of Southern Alberta.²⁶ Their inter-station battles took place more so with Saskatchewan stations and Calgary.

The CAHA and the Early Seeds of Military Sport, 1939

Early in the war, in October 1939, Sydney Gruson, a Canadian press staff writer from Toronto, updated Canadians on the status of sport. Gruson acknowledged the uncertainty of what sport would look like in the future, especially “if the conflict was to last any length of time.”²⁷ Gruson explained that sport and civic leaders were of the opinion that sport was needed for the morale of the people. Gruson detailed some

cancellations and adjustments for some of the major sporting bodies and then followed up by relaying an announcement from the Canadian Amateur Hockey Association (CAHA). The CAHA “waived the resident rule for all players engaged in military service and allow[ed] professionals to play with or against amateurs if they [were] in military service. Service teams [would] be allowed to enter Allan Cup playdown.”²⁸ Military men would be able to play in hockey leagues no matter where in the country they were stationed. The CAHA also directed their local branches to help the military organize inter-unit leagues.²⁹ These changes to the rules came very early in the war. Canadians learned from the First World War that the fighting was most likely not going to be over by Christmas, and that longer term solutions for adjusting to daily life during the war were needed. Sport very quickly adapted to war-time living; amateur leaders in Canada, in particular, realized that the benefits of sport were more important than this ideological need to keep amateurs from playing with professionals.³⁰

Learning the Game: The Inclusion of Military Personnel into Civilian Leagues, 1940

By April 1940, Alberta softball took similar steps as the CAHA to include military men into their league. League officials decided to waive all fees and registration certificates for any military entries.³¹ The early 1940s also saw a promise from Canadian defence officials which specified “that, barring unforeseen emergencies, no more ice hockey rinks [would] be taken over for troop quarters next winter.”³² No Southern Alberta rinks had been taken over by 1940, however, rinks in other parts of Alberta had been and it was possible that many more could have been without the ruling. This ruling to relocate any troops staying in local arenas and the commitment to stay out of hockey

arenas in the future acknowledges that Canadian officials realized the importance of sport on the home front.

There were not many airmen, and no airwomen, in Southern Alberta by 1940. No. 34 SFTS, Medicine Hat was established in June, No. 5 EFTS, Lethbridge in August, and No. 7 SFTS, Macleod in October. Based on when these three schools were established, they missed the winter and spring sports, and were too late for the summer sports; however by late 1940 there were plans in place for basketball and hockey action. In Medicine Hat, the locals invited No. 34 to add a team to the 1940/41 basketball league post-Christmas.³³ The airmen did not enter a team. According to a *Medicine Hat Daily News* reporter this was because the RAF members did not know how to play the game, instead they took the opportunity to learn the game during this season.³⁴ Hockey was the first sport to see action that included civilian and school members; in fact it was the only sport to see real action among airmen during 1940. In December 1940, Macleod was the first town to have a school team join the local civilian league.³⁵ Initially the town wanted to organize a league for the entertainment of the air force men.³⁶ Hockey also got started in Lethbridge in December with an exhibition game between No. 5 EFTS and the local militia unit.³⁷

Exhibition Games, Military Rules, and the Promotion of British Sports, 1941

By 1941, hockey was still fairly unorganized. The school teams played in a number of exhibition games. Their opponents included senior civilian town teams,³⁸ civilian junior and intermediate teams,³⁹ and army teams,⁴⁰ as well as exhibition matches between school teams.⁴¹ These exhibition matches brought communities “spirited

game[s],”⁴² characterized by “fast hockey.”⁴³ The *Lethbridge Herald* reported that there was some sort of military hockey league organized for the winter of 1941, but there is very little information. Playoffs were in March, Macleod air force and the Lethbridge military all-stars played in the final.⁴⁴ The league did not attract a lot of newspaper attention. The early hockey games, and the energy that the air force teams brought, were the beginning of creating connections through sport within the communities.⁴⁵ Similar to hockey, baseball in 1941 consisted of mostly exhibition games. All the games were school teams against civilian senior teams.⁴⁶ No. 7 SFTS Macleod was scheduled to enter a team into the Lethbridge city league, however right before the season opener an Ottawa ruling confined air force personnel to competing only against service teams.⁴⁷ Despite this regulation, there were exhibition baseball games that continued between air force and civilians. In Macleod, this ruling was, for the most part, ignored. Box Lacrosse, a new sport to Macleod, was introduced in the summer of 1941. The air force entered a team in the local league and played against the local Macleod teams. By June 1941, the rule against playing civilian teams was repealed.⁴⁸ The repeal came fairly quickly, within two months.⁴⁹ The resistance from air force and civilian sporting participants was too much for officials in Ottawa to ignore.

The RAF airmen stationed in Medicine Hat began their education and promotion of British sports in Canada in February of 1941 by staging a boxing show.⁵⁰ The show “featured scientific boxing of the English style” which included some participants who “held championships from the Old Country.”⁵¹ A large crowd of civilians, airmen and soldiers seem to have enjoyed the introduction of a new style of boxing.⁵² The RAF airmen and personnel in Medicine Hat did not just set out to teach Canadians a new sport;

they also willingly learned Canadian games. The airmen of No. 34 Medicine Hat played a few exhibition hockey games in 1941.⁵³ However, it was basketball that appears to have caught the attention of the airmen from overseas, perhaps because there was no added skill of learning to skate involved. The Medicine Hat basketball city league had extended an invitation to the school to enter a team for the 1940/1941 season; however the station declined as they did not have enough players who knew how to play the game.⁵⁴ To learn the game, sports and pilot officer (P/O) Taylor at No. 34 organized to have the first game of the city championships played in the recreation hall at the school so that station personnel unfamiliar with the game could see it. Players from the two city teams were bussed out to the school.⁵⁵ School trainees, personnel and officers watched the game with interest. Within the week the station started their own practices.⁵⁶ As the sports officer, P/O Taylor went through quite an effort so that he could start getting the RAF men into city leagues. It was his hope that the RAF could learn from Medicine Hat citizens and in return add to the “Canadian sporting fraternity.”⁵⁷ P/O Taylor was making a conscious effort to create common ties and initiate social interaction between the school and the town.⁵⁸ A week after the championship game the winning city team played the No. 34 SFTS basketball team and beat them soundly, doubling the airmen’s points.⁵⁹ However, just a month after the defeat No. 34 played another city team and only lost by four points.⁶⁰ Local sports writer Bob Tuffs observed the speed with which the RAF men learned to play the game commenting that “[i]f the air pilots...learn to shoot Nazi Raiders as they learned to shoot “baskets” in basketball Hitler’s air force might as well fold up right now.”⁶¹ No. 34 also introduced soccer and cricket to Medicine Hat during the summer.⁶²

Only one sport day was hosted in 1941, in Claresholm. This was a time when personnel at the station were allowed to come into town and mix with civilians in a more personal way. There was a program of sports, but it was more than just showing up for a game and leaving when it was over. Sport days took longer and often included food, games, and dancing. It provided more of an opportunity to socialize through sports. Rodeo and stampede days were also events that allowed for more interaction based on the time and activities. Rodeo was something new to many of the airmen, not just those from Britain. The RAF men at No. 34 Medicine Hat were reported as being very enthusiastic about the event, leading one of them to say: ““That’s what I call a man’s game!””⁶³

Integration of Civilian and Military Sport, 1942

By 1942 the schools had found a home in town sport as participants in civilian leagues. By early January efforts were being made in all the military branches, led by local sports officers, to include military personnel in as many sports as possible.⁶⁴ In addition to hockey, station personnel began competing in basketball, baseball, soccer, lacrosse, boxing and sport days, swimming, golf, bowling and shooting. As the new swimming pool in Claresholm opened, station personnel got more involved. Not only did the school use the pool several times a week for training purposes, they also brought expertise and skill to the town.⁶⁵ Once opened, pool manager Fred Watkins and P/O Robert Hooper of No. 15 worked together to put on a swimming competition for the children of Claresholm. Hooper had been a member of the Canadian team which competed at the British Empire Games and the Olympic Games in Berlin, so he had expertise to offer the kids. At the end of the competition Hooper offered a demonstration

of his skills.⁶⁶ Using the pool facility was a common tie for the town and station as Watkins and Hooper worked together to bring social interaction through competition.

Station golfers, mostly officers, were invited to play at the local clubs in Medicine Hat, Lethbridge and High River.⁶⁷ Dick Matthews, sport writer for the *Lethbridge Herald*, made a plea to civilians in Lethbridge to loan out clubs they were not using so that men at No. 8 could use them to play. The Lethbridge Country Club's president, Joe Sutton, realized that "men in the armed forces cannot tote their clubs with them and find it very difficult to borrow clubs if they want to play a few games."⁶⁸ Sutton recognized it was not like sticking a ball glove in your bag to bring along. Matthews, in his efforts to get more people to loan their clubs, called the airmen "guests" and that "they long, even as you and I, to pound that pellet down the fairways."⁶⁹ It was not just the air force officials, like P/O Taylor at No. 34 Medicine Hat, who were trying to develop sport between military and civilians, there were also community members, Watkins, Matthews and Sutton, who were on board with helping the two communities integrate.

In 1942, the Macleod golf course was "operated and maintained very efficiently by No. 7 S.F.T.S."⁷⁰ The station was able to provide a service for an important part of the Macleod sporting community, and in so doing strengthened their ties. Macleod was the only town that experienced air force personnel caring for facilities. In 1944 the No. 7 also oversaw caretaking duties at the Arena in exchange for fifty percent use of facility time during the lacrosse season.⁷¹

Bowling became a regular feature from year to year. In 1942, in Lethbridge, No. 8 air force bowling teams started forming leagues and used the community bowling alleys. The league was given Monday night for their games.⁷² In 1942 the Lethbridge and

Medicine Hat shooting clubs began to interact with the air force schools. They would invite air force officials to shoot with them, as well as challenge the airmen to shooting competitions. The civilian shooting clubs went out of their way to include the military. These competitions were also held at the community shooting grounds.⁷³

Hockey in 1942 consisted of games in the Southern Alberta Service Hockey League (SASHL) running from January 4 to March 2 and ending in a best of three series between No. 15 and No. 7.⁷⁴ The games were played Sundays at the Arena in Lethbridge and included a team from No. 15, Claresholm, No. 7 Macleod, No. 8 Lethbridge and a Lethbridge army team.⁷⁵ The league was well received, drawing decent crowds. It was at this point that sports writer Dick Matthews came to the realization that the service league, along with the junior league, would be providing the bulk of hockey games during the next season. However, even though the SASHL had a short season in 1942, Matthews was confident that the league would be able to sufficiently fill in for senior hockey. Matthews expressed his opinion that having the air force team take over for the Maple Leafs would mean that hockey would continue on as before, the skill level may drop a little, however, the competition level and entertainment factor that the air force could provide would remain the same.⁷⁶ Macleod and Claresholm played in the final game of the playoffs with Macleod taking the championship in front of 2000 fans.⁷⁷ This is a good number of people considering the game was in Lethbridge and between two out of town teams. Hockey action also took place in High River in 1942. No. 5 EFTS had the most difficulty in keeping a team considering trainees spent the least amount of time at this type of school. Despite this trouble, the team played games in the district, although not with much success.⁷⁸

In Claresholm the WD's also played hockey. There is not a lot of newspaper coverage of the women sport and it is unclear if they had formed leagues in 1942, but they did have teams which played exhibition games and in charity events. Claresholm held two hockey fundraisers early in 1942, one which pitted the WD's of No. 7 and No. 15 against one another, and another that saw the No. 15 WD's line up against a contingent of Aussie airmen from No. 15.⁷⁹ Basketball saw two different scenarios. In Medicine Hat two RAF teams joined the regular city men's league from which they had learned the game in 1941, the league operated in early 1942 and again late in 1942.⁸⁰ In Lethbridge, the WD's joined the local basketball league, which "after a lapse of many years," was "staging a comeback."⁸¹ Games were played at the local YMCA.⁸² No. 8 airmen also joined the city league, with games taking place at the YMCA and the station recreational hall.⁸³ Both of the leagues in Lethbridge held exhibition games until the regular league play started in earnest in 1943.⁸⁴ The other scenario included four airmen station teams and the Raymond Union Jacks forming a league late in 1942, with regular season games also commencing in 1943. The league, along with the Jacks, included teams from No. 8 Lethbridge, No. 7 Macleod, No. 15 Claresholm and No. 3 Pearce.⁸⁵ Tom Foley, of the *Lethbridge Herald*, wrote somewhat downheartedly that "the B. and G. school will have to represent this city in basketball circles this year."⁸⁶ Foley seemed to express disappointment that more civilian sport was being lost.⁸⁷ On the other hand, and more importantly, Foley did refer to the station team as the representative of Lethbridge to the rest of province. It was the first occasion where a station team was referred to publicly by a civilian as being "us" instead of "them". It was a sign that the towns and schools were becoming more of a unified community.

Lethbridge and Medicine Hat baseball leagues added station teams in 1942.⁸⁸ In Medicine Hat the air force club won the league, while in Lethbridge the air force team was competitive until the end, losing in the championship final.⁸⁹ The issue of losing airmen due to postings was an ongoing headache for sporting officials at the schools. However for No. 34 in Medicine Hat, it was the best thing that happened during the 1942 season. Up until the midpoint of the season No. 34 was struggling and won very few games, but when some of the players were transferred and new ones showed up their season turned around and they began to win some games and move up in the standings.⁹⁰ The No. 8 WD's in Lethbridge made their entrance into city baseball in August, playing a charity game against the men's team from the station. The popularity of soccer in Medicine Hat and lacrosse in Macleod continued to build in 1942. The No. 34 Medicine Hat soccer team travelled to play civilian and military teams, while also staging inter-station games between different divisions and nationalities to entertain the citizens of Medicine Hat.⁹¹ Lacrosse in Macleod had a shorter season than anticipated because they were waiting for a new facility, a playing box, at the airport to be built. During the war years the town league in Macleod continued to grow every year which warranted the building of a new facility.⁹² The number of boxing events in Southern Alberta jumped significantly. Throughout 1942, Medicine Hat, Lethbridge, Claresholm, and Macleod hosted boxing events with attendance ranging from 1000⁹³ to 2500⁹⁴ spectators.⁹⁵ Events were hosted by civilians and schools, with personnel and town members participating as spectators and as boxers. These events were truly combined efforts. No. 7 SFTS Macleod hosted the only sport day in 1942, including children's races for half an hour before the

service events started. This was one of the few times when younger children and servicemen and women were brought together in sport.⁹⁶

Hockey surfaced again in August 1942 for the No. 8 Bombers in Lethbridge which was much earlier than the past two years. It became apparent in August that the senior hockey club in Southern Alberta, the Lethbridge Maple Leafs, would not be able to compete in the Alberta Senior League because the “club wound up in the red and with players on the rationed list they couldn’t scrape up enough pucksters even if they did wish to continue.”⁹⁷ It did not take long for No. 8 officials to volunteer their hockey team to take the place of the Leafs in the Alberta Senior League.⁹⁸ According to *Lethbridge Herald* writer Dick Matthews, many RCAF and army teams were organizing and preparing to enter senior hockey leagues across Canada in order to fill the void left by 13,000 civilian players no longer registered.⁹⁹ A four team league was organized with two Calgary clubs, army and air force, an army team from Red Deer, and the team from Lethbridge.¹⁰⁰ The 1942/43 season started in late November.¹⁰¹

City Leagues, Service Leagues, and Stricter Military Rules, 1943

In 1943, the No. 8 Lethbridge Bombers entered a team into the Alberta Senior Hockey League, but this was not the only hockey action in Southern Alberta. There was also a Southern Alberta Service League again, consisting of teams from No. 8, No. 15 Claresholm, No. 7 Macleod and No. 2 Vulcan.¹⁰² With the Lethbridge Arena being used for so much military hockey, not all the service league games were played in Lethbridge this season. One report put a game between Claresholm and Vulcan at the arena in Nanton.¹⁰³ All air force sports were higher profile in 1943. This was their biggest year for sports in the towns and the region. The air force teams were the town teams and the town

teams made up the Southern Alberta leagues. Three factors led to 1943 having the most sport interaction. First, civilian communities were more familiar with the school personnel and how they integrated into community sports. Second, it was the last full year before schools started to close. Thirdly, civilian communities had lost a significant number of their sporting members to the military community, therefore they needed the military to fill the void.¹⁰⁴

The basketball service league, organized in 1942, officially got underway with regular season games starting in January.¹⁰⁵ Another school, Vulcan, added a team to the league bringing the number of entries up to six.¹⁰⁶ The league was won by the Raymond Union Jacks; however they had some tough competition from the Macleod team.¹⁰⁷ City league play continued for airwomen in Lethbridge, although it seems to have folded in Medicine Hat.¹⁰⁸ There were random games played between airwomen. The Vulcan and Pearce airwomen played a game, the Vulcan airwomen played a civilian team from nearby Champion, Pearce and Lethbridge WDs also met in a game late in 1943.¹⁰⁹ In Macleod the airwomen were practising basketball in preparation for Women's Division League in 1944.¹¹⁰

Baseball, as a game that does not require a lot of equipment or a facility other than an open space to practice, was very popular in Southern Alberta during the war. There was a city league in Lethbridge during the summer of 1943 consisting of four civilian teams and No. 8,¹¹¹ there was also a fastball service league organized.¹¹² Another baseball feature of the summer was the Fastball Association Playdown for the Alberta title. Seven teams in Southern Alberta entered the playdown series. Each series was a best of three to see who would move on to represent the district. The seven teams included

two civilian teams from Lethbridge, an entry from No. 8, and an army team from Lethbridge, the Taber civilian all-stars, and two air force squads from No. 2 Pearce and No. 15 Claresholm.¹¹³ Capacity crowds were treated to a lot of baseball.¹¹⁴ Without the additional entries of the military teams, the Alberta Fastball Association playdowns would have been a much smaller event. The airwomen also, for the first time, created enough interest in their service league to warrant coverage in newspapers. No. 7 Macleod women played No. 2 Pearce in the final.¹¹⁵ There was plenty of baseball for the communities to participate in as players and spectators in 1943. To top off the baseball season an exhibition series was set up between the No. 8 Bombers and a combined air force-army team from Calgary. The *Lethbridge Herald* set the game up as a renewal of a long standing rivalry between Lethbridge and Calgary. It did not matter that the teams were military. The Bombers were Lethbridge's team, and they had to beat Calgary. The Bombers needed to win to disprove the long running tradition of Calgary disrespecting Lethbridge, for example, that "no good sports teams can come out of Lethbridge."¹¹⁶ It was officers at the station who responded by saying: "[w]e are set on proving that our teams always have been superior to any that the 'cow town' can muster."¹¹⁷ There was no talk of an air force, or military rivalry here, or who were the better soldiers. It came down to city versus city. The Army-flyers team insulted Lethbridge and their sporting history. No. 8 responded by referring to the glory of old Lethbridge teams and what they would do to Calgary. The *Lethbridge Herald* was also hanging the pride of Lethbridge on the Bombers, thus demonstrating the integration of the military and civilian communities.

Soccer in Medicine Hat reached a fever pitch in 1943 while the sport began to have some relevance to the other Southern Alberta communities. Soccer became popular

enough that it was utilized as entertainment for fundraising events,¹¹⁸ and the service league became a staple in the local newspapers. Initially just the Lethbridge, Macleod and Vulcan schools were playing each other, however, Claresholm entered a team later in the season.¹¹⁹ Both the service league and the No. 34 Medicine Hat team drew large crowds to games.¹²⁰ Pearce won the service league final and went on to meet No. 34 to determine the best Southern Alberta team. Medicine Hat beat Pearce as one of their many triumphs throughout their season.¹²¹ Soccer in Medicine Hat started out in 1943 much like it ended in 1942, playing games between different teams within divisions of the station. The only league play No. 34 engaged in was among teams at the station, which was drawing large civilian spectatorship.¹²² They took on other school teams by challenging them, or accepting challenges from civilian and military teams. No. 34 took on local army teams¹²³ and air force teams from as far away as Swift Current, Saskatchewan.¹²⁴ No. 34 went undefeated in 1943 cementing themselves as local heroes and became the most exciting and anticipated sporting event in Medicine Hat.¹²⁵

Boxing events and sport days were the most numerous in 1943. Six of the seven Southern Alberta schools hosted at least one boxing competition. These tournaments were one of the few times when Medicine Hat ventured westward to compete with the rest of the Southern Alberta schools.¹²⁶ The schools did a good job communicating with each other to organize a set of boxing shows throughout the year. The stations did not want to host boxing matches too close together for two reasons. First, each school would be sending fighters to the events hosted by all the other schools; they needed to keep the fighters fresh. Second, they wanted to have spectators coming from all over Southern Alberta to each event so they needed to keep them far enough apart to allow spectators to

save enough money to make the trips.¹²⁷ The schools were thinking about how they fit into the wider civilian picture in Southern Alberta, rather than just concerning themselves with entertaining the members of each individual school. Lethbridge had the privilege of being awarded the Alberta boxing championships in March, which they hosted in April.¹²⁸ Cardston had been the annual site of this championship, but “with the scarcity of civilian boxers, they would relinquish their hold on the provincial finals so that the wartime sport might fall into the hands of the services.”¹²⁹ Lethbridge officials did not have a lot of time to organize the tournament, however, the local Kinsmen club worked together with No. 8 to put on the event, with the final day of competition drawing 2500 spectators.¹³⁰ There were also six schools who hosted sport days in 1943.¹³¹ The sport days were not quite as inclusive as the boxing events. They were often held on holidays,¹³² or as anniversary celebrations for the schools.¹³³ They did include civilian spectators, but they were not usually allowed to compete as athletes like the boxing events allowed.

In 1943 the golf course in Macleod continued to be operated and maintained by No. 7 personnel and their efforts did not go unnoticed in town.¹³⁴ Airmen played more golf with civilians during the summer in challenge matches, air force versus civilians¹³⁵ and as entries to local tournaments.¹³⁶ In Claresholm, pool manager Fred Watkins renewed his relationship with the airport to host another swim meet, this time with help from P/O Terry MacCaulay.¹³⁷ Although not as experienced as P/O Hooper, MacCaulay still brought experience and expertise from his time on the Vancouver Wrigley aquatic team and as the winner of the Alberta distance championships in 1942.¹³⁸ The event included children’s races, with instruction from station members in the days leading up to

the event, and a full exhibition of swimming and diving skills from airmen and women in the afternoon.¹³⁹ 1943 was the culmination of the schools and towns working together to make sure sport was not lost to the war, an effort which was very successful.

In September, Ottawa military officials once again became concerned with the amount of time army and air force trainees were spending playing hockey. This time authorities did not pull military teams out of civilian play completely, but they did put strict rules in operation which called for “rigid curtailment of play-off games in league, inter-league and Allan Cup competitions.”¹⁴⁰ However, they were still “free to participate in open competition,” provided they followed four conditions which were sent in a letter to the president of CAHA.¹⁴¹ Newspaper articles never specifically stated why officials had made this decision; however, it was likely due to how much time army and air force schools were starting to invest in their teams. Teams were practising every day and then playing games on top of that. The conditions set forth did not curtail practice time, but it did limit the number of games teams would play during playoffs, as well as limiting the time that would be spent travelling, especially in the later rounds of the playoffs. The first condition limited leagues of more than six teams to only four playoff teams, the second limited leagues of six or less leagues teams to three playoff teams. The third condition kept playoff series to a best of three, and the final condition allowed any army or RCAF team that made it to the Allan Cup finals to play a best of five series. Authorities were not forcing these conditions on any civilian teams that might play in leagues with military teams, just that if army and RCAF teams were to play for the Allan Cup they would have to do so with these rules.¹⁴² The CAHA very quickly confirmed they would be happy to accept military teams under these conditions, and work to “cause as little interference as

possible with the training of men in the armed forces.”¹⁴³ The Lethbridge Bombers did not join the senior hockey loop as they had the season before. Instead they became participants in the Southern Alberta Service Hockey League which also included entries from No. 7 Macleod, No. 15 Claresholm, No. 19 Vulcan, and No. 2 Pearce.¹⁴⁴ The commanding officer at No. 8 wanted to “provide recreation for the schools in this area, entertainment for hockey fans of the south, and to repay in some measure the kindness of the civilian population of the various towns in which the schools are located.”¹⁴⁵ The schools recognized there was senior hockey missing in Southern Alberta and wanted to be able to fill the void as repayment for the common ties and social interaction they had gained with towns. The schools stepped in to fill the void of the missing Southern Alberta senior team, the Maple Leafs. The early games of the season in 1943 drew 1500 to 2000 spectators, however only 300 to 350 of them were civilians. The sports editor of the *Lethbridge Herald* expressed his disappointment in a very strong way. He accused Southern Albertan civilians of supporting hockey when it was all about “commercial preposition” and players who played for “purely monetary” gains.¹⁴⁶ He encouraged civilians to support, at decreased ticket prices, teams that were “playing purely out of good sportsmanship and willingness to satisfy fans,” none of them being paid.¹⁴⁷ He challenged each town with a team to embrace their school team as their team, and support them because “they are all in uniform for US.”¹⁴⁸ Prominent school and town community members were pushing to make the Service Hockey League an important thing in South Alberta. Both the sports editor and the commanding officer realized what the league could be in the absence of civilian senior hockey. They saw the potential for community development and that arenas in Southern Alberta could be home to what Dryden and

MacGregor described as “heterogeneous crowds in which our own excitement is amplified by the passions of those around us.”¹⁴⁹ In December, a harsher ruling from Ottawa came down specifically for RCAF teams who would not be allowed to compete in leagues which led to Allan Cup play. This had no impact on the league in Southern Alberta, however many leagues across Canada did suffer because of this ruling.¹⁵⁰

Saying Goodbye Through Sport, 1944-45

In 1944, the Ottawa ruling governing hockey was also extended to encompass all service sports. Authorities did not want military teams participating in any sort of play that led to Canadian or regional playoffs.¹⁵¹ As with the above ruling for hockey in 1943, once again time spent training, travelling and playing was taking too much time away from military training. The initial ruling called for a ban from participating in sport with civilians; however, local play with civilians in Southern Alberta did not incur any punishment. In Lethbridge and Medicine Hat civilian and air force teams continued playing baseball in city league play and playoffs all summer, and the men’s and women’s city basketball leagues in Lethbridge once again included entries from No. 8.¹⁵² In May, a large program of sports was drawn up for the Southern Alberta schools.¹⁵³ The inter-station sports program, as in 1943, came to dominate the sporting scene. Box lacrosse, soccer, boxing, basketball, baseball and hockey service leagues also played out their final seasons during the war without much grandeur. It was in 1944 that a disgruntled civilian, a Vulcan high school student, voiced an opinion referring to the local school as others and outsiders to the community of Vulcan. The concern came in a letter to the editor of the *Vulcan Advocate* complaining about the amount of time the air force hockey team, an

entry in the Southern Alberta Service Hockey League, was receiving in ice time. The writer of the letter did not like how the ice was left after the air force had practice, even though it was not the responsibility of the team to clean the ice. The protestor also did not like that other town teams were getting less practice time. However, no one from any of the actual town teams went to the media to publicly voice an opinion on the matter.¹⁵⁴ So, as much as sport did help the gaps between the military and civilian populations shrink, there was one individual in Southern Alberta who did not feel the bond, and in fact felt that sport was creating a problem. This letter raises an issue that may have been wider spread than just in Vulcan. It is possible, and likely, that there were other individuals, or groups of people, who did not agree with the amount of ice time, or facility time for any sport, that the air force teams were given. Especially if they felt the air force teams were taking time away from civilian teams.

By April 1944 many of the schools knew they would be shutting their doors to trainees and closing down throughout the year.¹⁵⁵ Boxing and sport days became a way for the schools to host the local community in a farewell nod of thanks. Attendance numbers at these events indicate that the locals knew they would soon be losing a part of their communities. For example, in February Macleod drew 1700 to their boxing card.¹⁵⁶ In April, No. 8 Lethbridge hosted their “grand finale of boxing and wrestling” which drew 2000 spectators to the station.¹⁵⁷ The sports days drew the largest crowds in the final year. Four thousand attended the sports days in Pearce in August. Large crowds also attended the Macleod sports day, which was specifically organized for “marking the closing of No. 7,”¹⁵⁸ and 4000 were at the No. 5 Labor Day sports day in High River.¹⁵⁹ At the time of the 1941 census High River only had 1430 residents and Pearce was not

even included in the 1941 census records as a town.¹⁶⁰ The fact that they had 4000 people attending events is a testament to how integrated into the local communities and districts the Southern Alberta training schools were.

With only three schools, Claresholm, Vulcan and Pearce, still in skeleton operations in 1945, civilian and air force sport interaction quickly vanished. It was similar to 1940 in that there were exhibition games, however, instead of a period of building, sport dropped off in February of 1945. Exhibition hockey and basketball with one final boxing card in Claresholm made up the sporting entertainment from the schools in 1945. For the short time schools were stationed in Southern Alberta, they made their impact; particularly in filling out and eventually shoring up mainstream sports like hockey, basketball and baseball, as well as introducing communities to lacrosse and reviving women's basketball. Both the towns and the schools were exposed to a higher level of expertise than they may have otherwise had, like basketball for the RAF in Medicine Hat and swimming in Claresholm. Without the addition of the air force trainees and personnel so many of the above sporting moments, as well as the ones to come in the case studies, would have been missed. Many of the leagues would have ceased to exist without the addition of the station teams. Sport would still have survived in Southern Alberta during the war without the addition of the air force. However, with the inclusion of school personnel, Southern Alberta sport was able to continue operating at a higher, more inclusive, level.

Case Studies

A few specific case studies highlight and bring to life the notion of community building through sport. Gregory P. Stone explains that certain sports did, and have, come to represent specific nations that “[s]port as a source of solidarity can be found wherever it is a representation of the collective community.”¹⁶¹ Certain sports “and their associated traditions, play an important role in representing communities...to the outside world.”¹⁶² Certain sports became synonymous with certain Southern Alberta towns and helps define the relationship between the town and the nearby school. Community boundaries, not including geography, which set communities apart from each other are created through the interaction of its members.¹⁶³ Sporting interactions between the schools and towns helped set each of the communities apart. Macleod embraced two sports, basketball and lacrosse, as their own with the integration of No. 7 SFTS. Hockey was popular in all of Southern Alberta; however, in Claresholm and Lethbridge hockey was the catalyst for community building. Soccer was a dead sport in Southern Alberta until the influx of RAF airmen, after which the sport took off in Medicine Hat and created strong bonds between civilians and station members.

Macleod: Basketball

The popularity of basketball in Macleod was due to the success of the station team, aptly named the Flyers, in service leagues, as well as having the opportunity to play the famed Raymond Union Jacks. A rivalry developed between the two clubs over the war years. The rivalry started in 1941 in Raymond when airmen of No. 7 travelled to Raymond to take on the Jacks in front of 700 in aid of the Red Cross.¹⁶⁴ This is the only

contact the two teams had in 1941. The Macleod school played more games in 1941, honing their skill against the likes of teams from Montana, Magrath and Calgary.¹⁶⁵ In 1942, a basketball service league was organized for the 1943 season. The league took in the Raymond Union Jacks.¹⁶⁶ There may not have been much action for the Union Jacks outside of Raymond in 1943 had a service league not been organized and an invitation sent to them.¹⁶⁷ The first meeting of the season was won by the Jacks by a mere seven points.¹⁶⁸ Seven points may not seem close, but in comparison to the other Jacks victories, doubling up Claresholm 51-25¹⁶⁹ and almost tripling No. 8 by a score of 101-38,¹⁷⁰ No. 7 had a very strong game against Raymond. Macleod had their own success beating teams in the league by substantial scores as well.¹⁷¹ Macleod and Raymond played each other in the closing game of the regular season. The Flyers scored their only win over the Jacks, but it was enough to immortalize the team and root basketball in Macleod at least until the end of the school's time in the town.¹⁷² The Flyers would lose to the Jacks a week later in the championship series, but the Flyers had done what other Southern Alberta teams could not during their dynasty, beat the Jacks.¹⁷³ The final series played out like a true rivalry, rough, including forty-six fouls.¹⁷⁴ The Raymond Union Jacks may not have played as strong a starting quintet during the war years, but they were Southern Alberta's and Alberta's team.¹⁷⁵ The Flyers, and Macleod, for the next year considered themselves basketball powerhouses in Southern Alberta. The *Macleod Gazette* touted the Flyers as being of Canadian championship quality.¹⁷⁶ No. 7 trounced, whipped, defeated, and beat their way through a perfect 1944 campaign until losing in the No. 4 RCAF Command¹⁷⁷ playoff finals.¹⁷⁸ The Flyers brought a swagger to Macleod

that the airport personnel not playing on the team and town civilians were proud to support.

Macleod: Lacrosse

Macleod also embraced box lacrosse with open arms. Lacrosse was played within the Southern Alberta Air Force Sports League;¹⁷⁹ but it was not embraced by civilians in other towns like it was in Macleod. The station and the town worked together in an effort to help lacrosse grow in Macleod and as such it became a common tie between the two. The sport gained traction in 1941 with games between No. 7 and the town. Initially there were a few disruptions in the form of the short air force ban against playing civilians and waiting for the arrival of ordered equipment to reach the school team.¹⁸⁰ Another disruption in 1942 caused a delay in the season while waiting for a new box to be built at the station.¹⁸¹ The construction of the new facility was a sign of the growing popularity of the sport. With the tightening rules against military personnel participating in civilian sport Macleod citizens were resigned to watching the station team instead of playing with them in 1944.¹⁸² The service league became a regular feature in the *Macleod Gazette* during the 1944 service league, and citizens of Macleod were expecting their team to do good things.¹⁸³ Although not everyone was happy about Ottawa limiting the amount of time civilians and school personnel could play sport together, the importance of the war was recognized. Civilians also recognized that if the airport personnel could not play sport with them, they could still watch it. There was a realization that the games were “good for the morale of the men” and the towns.¹⁸⁴ The Wolves, as the No. 7 team was called in 1944, went on a winning streak, similar to the basketball Flyers in 1944, until

being beaten by the Lethbridge No. 8 Bombers.¹⁸⁵ This final year, 1944, of station lacrosse in Macleod saw the formation of a junior team. The forming a junior team came from a promise made to members of the air force school to start up a youth team. The idea was realized by A. A. Neldow who, while on a vacation in Vancouver, was able to secure equipment from the British Columbia Lacrosse Association. This equipment, along with some help at practices from No. 7 lacrosse team members was the start of youth lacrosse in Macleod.¹⁸⁶ The town and school supported the growing sport together, and when the town was no longer able to play with the school they watched the school play, in return the school supported and developed a youth team. Without common purpose there is no community.¹⁸⁷ The two communities worked together as a combined unit to make lacrosse successful in Macleod.

Hockey in Canada

It is no secret that hockey is Canada's love affair sport. Ken Dryden, one of Canada's hockey legends, and Roy MacGregor describe hockey in Canada as being "one of winter's expectations....part community-builder, social connector," with the ability to cut "across social divisions- young and old, urban and rural, French and English, East and West, able and disabled."¹⁸⁸ Richard Gruneau and David Whitson explain that hockey "has a special relationship to the experience of life in Canadian communities and, indeed, to the very idea of community in Canada."¹⁸⁹ Hockey is part of the experience of living in a Canadian community and has become "the very idea of community."¹⁹⁰ Hockey was the first and last sport to be played between school and town members, it dominated the newspapers above any other military and civilian combined sport. As will be discussed in

the two case studies below, it brought out strong emotions in Southern Alberta citizens. Hockey was the key for outsider airmen to integrate into the town in which they were stationed. In Claresholm and Medicine Hat especially, there were extra efforts made by the non-Canadian airmen to learn and play the game that meant so much to Canada, and their efforts endured them to local civilians.¹⁹¹ The rivalry between Claresholm and Macleod in 1942 and the transition of the No. 8 Bombers into the senior men's hockey team in Lethbridge support the arguments made by hockey scholars about hockey in Canada.

Claresholm: Hockey

1942 was the first year of a real organized hockey league in Southern Alberta for the services. The league opened Sunday January 4, 1942 and closed March 2, 1942. A two month season changed how Claresholm citizens felt about hockey thanks to the No. 15 SFTS team. The *Claresholm Local Press* credited the air force team with reviving interest in the sport in Claresholm between their participation in the Southern Alberta Services Hockey League championship and playing hockey for charity events in town.¹⁹² What is compelling about the popularity of hockey growing in Claresholm is that all the service league games were played in Lethbridge.¹⁹³ Civilians had to travel to go to the games, and as they did No. 15 had a cheering section unrivaled by any other team during the regular season. The fans, civilian and military, were crucial to a win in the final weekend of the season to gain a playoff birth.¹⁹⁴ The final game of the season not only featured a game between No. 15 Claresholm and No. 7 Macleod, but also the No. 15 band and “enthusiastic...supporters who turned our [(Lethbridge)] arena into a madhouse.”¹⁹⁵

The Claresholm supporters irritated Macleod players and fans who had shown up and they vowed to be ready for the best of three playoffs series to determine the champion of the league. As one *Lethbridge Herald* writer noted “[n]obody seemed interested in who was going to win the series.”¹⁹⁶ It was all about who was supporting their team the best and loudest. It turned into spectator versus spectator, civilian and air force personnel alike. The series was played in Lethbridge in front of 1200 fans for the first two games and 2000 for the final game.¹⁹⁷ According to the 1941 census, Macleod had a population of 1912 and Claresholm 1265.¹⁹⁸ Between the two towns, more people were at the final game than lived in Macleod at the time. The number is also impressive factoring in the travel involved for fans of both teams to get to Lethbridge. It probably did help that special trains were scheduled, in addition to the train transporting the team to the game, to accommodate the fans.¹⁹⁹ Of all the case studies presented in this chapter, the reintegration of hockey into the Claresholm community is the best of example of the melding of military and civilians. Hillery Jr. explains that community ties are evaluated by “attachment and commitment to a common body of symbols.”²⁰⁰ Claresholm and Macleod civilians and military personnel were fully committed to their air force teams. Area is the most basic theme of a community, according to Hillery Jr., however the games were not even being played within their geographic shared boundaries. The community building block of shared space had progressed to the point commitment and shared identity.²⁰¹ The cartoons below are taken from the No. 15 station newspaper published monthly. Each of the cartoons highlight the support the team received, which was a hybrid of military and civilian personnel. Figure 1 and 2 illustrates that civilian and military supporters came together to cheer for the team, and that they were united behind

the team. Figure 3 identifies the distance by train that the fans had to travel to get to the games. Figure 3 also starts by saying that the team reached their objective, even though they did not win. This can be interpreted to mean that unity between the school and the station was one of the objectives. The ties that came through hockey and the social interaction both sides gained from it were so great that area did not hinder the importance of hockey to creating community ties.

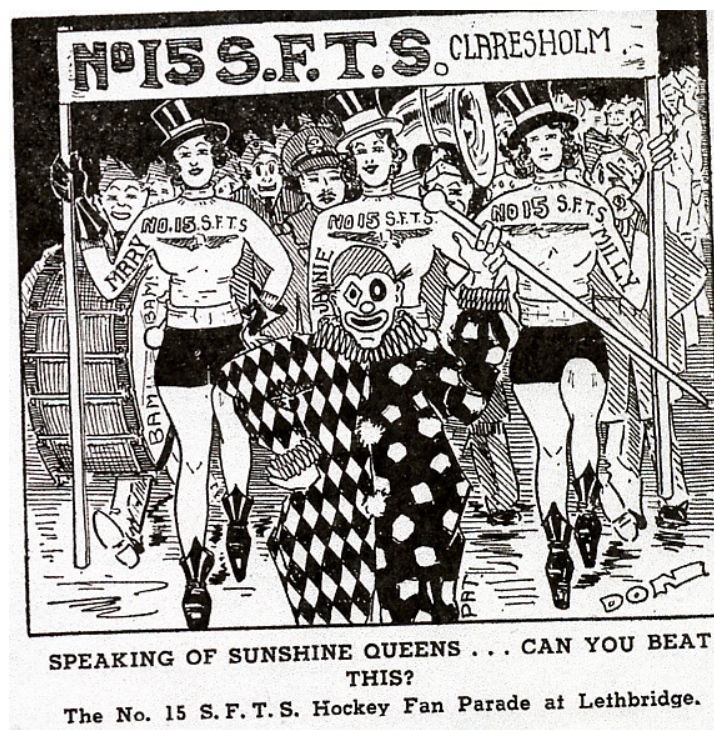


FIGURE 1: Cartoon from WINDY WINGS MARCH 1, 1942



YOU CAN'T KEEP A GOOD MAN DOWN . . . PARTICULAR AT A GOOD HOCKEY GAME

FIGURE 2: Cartoon from WINDY WINGS MARCH 1, 1942



WELL. WE ALMOST REACHED OUR OBJECTIVE!

FIGURE 3: Cartoon WINDY WINGS MARCH 1, 1942

Lethbridge: Hockey

It became apparent during the summer of 1942 that the Lethbridge Maple Leafs, annual entry in the Alberta Senior Hockey League, would not be able to ice a team for the coming 1942/43 season. Officials from No. 8 B & G quickly stepped in to volunteer a team to take the place of the Maple Leafs.²⁰² By October the Bombers, wearing the old Leafs colours, had officially been accepted into a four-team league including army and air force teams from Calgary and an army team from Red Deer.²⁰³ A week later the Bombers dropped out of the league due to a lack of players.²⁰⁴ When the headline “No Hockey Lethbridge: No. 8 B & G School Drops Entry in Alberta Senior Loop” made its way to the *Lethbridge Herald* it was the only sporting related news that made the front page for the entire duration of the Second World War.²⁰⁵ The prospect of no senior hockey was a real concern for the community. Squadron Leader Conarcher, who resided in Ottawa, was in charge of air force sport which included making sure that airmen who had at least senior level hockey experience were being posted to schools that had teams. The Bombers had received several promises from Conarcher of players being transferred to them, but it never happened, which led to the withdrawal.²⁰⁶ The day following the withdrawal the *Herald* contained an article announcing the team was back in the league. Although the decision of Squadron Leader Lees, team manager, to withdraw from the league was a desperate move to make a point that the station needed more airmen with hockey skill to be posted in Lethbridge, the tactic really scared the community.²⁰⁷ Although enthusiasm for the new year of senior hockey was lacking somewhat from previous years, the quick re-entry into the league allowed “Lethbridge sports fans [to] breath normally again.”²⁰⁸ However, the team was slow to have hockey-skilled airmen

posted to the city and had to withdraw from the opening exhibition game.²⁰⁹ The team slowly gained more players throughout November and were ready for the season opener on December 2.²¹⁰ It only took until December 14 for the *Herald* to start referring to the players of the station as “locals” instead of airmen, school trainees, or any other form of military personnel.²¹¹ The Bombers were now Lethbridge’s team. A shortage of players continued to be a theme, not only for the Bombers but the other three teams in the league. The situation prompted Tom Foley, *Herald* writer, to compose a letter to Santa on behalf of the Bombers asking for “a couple good hockey players.”²¹² Unfortunately Santa did not come through for Foley or the Bombers and they continued to play shorthanded into 1943.²¹³ The fans packed the arena throughout the season accepting the Bombers as their own, and the team practised as though they were a normal senior team practising every day they were not playing games.²¹⁴ Tom Foley, author of the “Sporting Along” column in the *Lethbridge Herald* kept a running narrative of happenings for the team, even once taking to interviewing the wives of the station players.²¹⁵ Even when the team was in a losing slump Foley remained optimistic about the team, trying to make sure the fans kept going to games. The players of the team hailing from all over the country still caught the inevitable Lethbridge injury curse, thus further endearing the team to the city and vice versa.²¹⁶ The Calgary Stampeders -Lethbridge Leafs hockey rivalry continued into this season even though the two teams perpetuating the rivalry had no history in it. At one point the two teams had a combined practice that turned into multiple fights.²¹⁷ The two air force teams also met in the first round of the best of three playoffs, which was decided in overtime in game three. The game, won by Calgary, came with protests from the Bombers and their fans. The protest was all for naught though.²¹⁸ Due the newness of

many of the Bombers to the Lethbridge-Calgary rivalry, the players would have had to have picked up on the feelings from Lethbridge civilians. The existing dislike for Calgary sporting teams was important to Lethbridge civilians and turned into a common tie with the players picking up on it. The feeling in the arena when the team played Calgary and the ensuing fights and playoff battle was a form of social interaction through hockey that brought the two communities closer together.

The 1943/44 season did not get off to a much better start for hockey fans in Lethbridge. When it became apparent, for reasons unknown, that the Bombers were not being invited back into the Alberta Senior Hockey League, the Arena, operated by the Lethbridge Artificial Ice Company Limited, got prepared to cut their losses, as they had been losing money since 1940, and shut down until the war was over.²¹⁹ No. 8 and the town council worked together to save hockey in Lethbridge for the season. Two special town council meetings were held in order to find a way to keep the Arena open. The meetings included representatives from the Artificial Ice Company, the skating club, the curling club, No. 8 B & G, local schools, and a representative for the general public. The representatives pleaded with city council to keep the Arena open by whatever means necessary because it kept juveniles from delinquency, the city had an obligation to all the armed forces in Lethbridge and it contributed to public morale and welfare.²²⁰ The representatives fighting to keep the Arena open were, as Robert MacIver describes, seeking a form of fulfilment and trying to relate to others in the community.²²¹ None of the individual clubs who used the rink could support the Arena on their own for a season; they had to work together and compromise to get what they wanted. Once an agreement between the city and the Ice Company was signed the Bombers organized a service loop

including five Southern Alberta schools which brought extra gate money to the Arena. The use of the Arena by the Bombers also justified the argument local clubs made in keeping the Arena open.²²² The city council accepted a “proposal offering to the extent \$3,875.15 to the Lethbridge Artificial Ice Company” to operate for the winter season.²²³ The money from the city and the prospect of the service league allowed for more than just hockey to continue, it also opened the door for curling, skating clubs, junior hockey, school groups, and the station to continue using the Arena through the winter.²²⁴ It was a combined town and school effort to save a sporting facility for use by both.

Medicine Hat: Soccer

The RAF based school in Medicine Hat did try hockey introducing soccer to Canadian civilians. The locals supported and appreciated the station’s attempts to play a game so ingrained in Canadian culture.²²⁵ In turn the locals also supported and appreciated the game of soccer as the RAF brought it to them. Medicine Hat is on the eastern edge of the province and about 170 kilometres from Lethbridge. The city is in Southern Alberta, but it is still far away from the other towns and cities which hosted air force schools. Medicine Hat got their fill of soccer in 1941 and 1942 watching knock out series between teams organized based on sleeping quarters, officers versus others, pitting Old Country players from England and Scotland against one another, and the “Adolfs” versus the “Winstons.”²²⁶ The station really made an effort to make the matches exciting for military and civilian spectators. 1943 did away with the inter-station matches and saw No. 34 reach out and start to challenge and get challenged by other station teams. No. 34 played No. 39 SFTS Swift Current, No. 37 SFTS Calgary and No. 36 SFTS Penhold in

their bid to be named the best soccer team in the province.²²⁷ It was after leveling the Calgary airmen in front of 2000 fans that Medicine Hat realized what a great team they had in No. 34. The school produced “a soccer team that Medicine Hat [could] be well proud of,” and they were.²²⁸ It became a team that was no longer the No. 34 team, but Medicine Hat’s team. In September of 1943 an article in the *Medicine Hat Daily News* had fond words for the station:

About two and one half years ago Medicine Hat received its first contingent of airmen from the Old Country, to take up their duties at newly constructed No. 34 S.F.T.S. For two and a half years they have been made welcome to the city and during that time have struck up a wide acquaintance with the citizens...They brought with them the outstretched hand of friendship, which was warmly grasped by Hatters. That friendship has ripened into one so strong that parting with these acquaintances has come to react with the same effect on experience.... During their sojourn in Medicine Hat personnel of No. 34 S.F.T.S. have become widely known throughout the city for their versatility as entertainers, vocalists, instrumentalists, and last but not least, for their prowess on the athletic and sports fields.... The latter group, particularly those who have performed on the soccer field at the New Ball Park and on the airport pitch, have gained a host of fans unknown to them for their performances. They have not come to know the majority of their supporters personally, their acquaintance being no closer than the sidelines of the playing field. To a great number of fans they are...just a fine bunch of fellows who can play a grand game of soccer; and to the players the fans are accepted as their friends, their supporters, their boasters. The feeling towards each other is mutual...This was demonstrated at last Sunday’s soccer match, when the fans gave their vociferous support to the players to the players of No. 34, and the players reciprocated by giving the fans five goals to gloat over against a team from Calgary!²²⁹

The paper tried to put into words the relationship between the school and the town, and the role that sport, particularly soccer, played in helping the two communities integrate and operate together. What is also amazing about the situation in Medicine Hat is that the common tie developed with no civilians playing. Peter Conrad argues that the RAF stations struggled to connect and integrate with local communities.²³⁰ Medicine Hat is an exception to this argument. Through soccer, and other sporting activities, the two

successfully came to interact and rely on one another, as evident in the above article. The Medicine Hat team stayed unbeaten for the rest of the season, beating No. 36 SFTS Penhold in what the city thought would be a showdown for the Alberta championship.²³¹ However the title of champions was not to be. The team never registered with the provincial soccer association and therefore could not be awarded with the title of Alberta provincial champions. Civilians and airmen alike were unhappy with the decision, however they maintained to themselves that their team was the best in the province.²³² Hatters were supported in their claims by a *Calgary Albertan* sports writer who also thought missing paperwork and fees should be overlooked. He wrote that “[i]t would be a fine gesture on the part of the A.F.A. [Alberta Football Association] to officially declare them champs.”²³³ The AFA never made a fine gesture, so Medicine Hat citizens named themselves and referred to their soccer team as champions.²³⁴ Another intriguing factor in this saga is the actual coverage in the *Medicine Hat Daily News*. Early in 1943 the newspaper took a “Sports in Shorts: For the Duration” stance, meaning that the paper condensed the size of sports articles “to capsule form, but at the same time providing informative but brief accounts of sports happenings as they bec[a]me available,” they also eliminated preview articles of upcoming events.²³⁵ The paper foresaw that civilian sport would decline, and therefore would not need the same amount of coverage they had afforded sport pre-war. This policy was abandoned when it came to covering soccer, especially during 1943. There were preview articles for upcoming matches, there were articles taking up half the sports page describing games that had been played. The articles were not small and concise, they were long and opinionated. The importance of No. 34

soccer in Medicine Hat made the *Medicine Hat Daily News* break their set of war time guidelines for the sports page.

Southern Alberta sport survived the war because the air force slowly filtered in and took over civilian sport at the senior level. The air force came to dominate the senior leagues, and in doing so kept morale high during the war and kept sport from having to make a big comeback post-war. Women's basketball in Lethbridge, lacrosse in Macleod and soccer in Southern Alberta were revived during the war due to military participation which added expertise and skill. As well, children in Claresholm benefitted in the pool as air force personnel took the time to organize competition and teach them how to swim. It is apparent that sport was an important factor in area, common ties and social interaction factors of community between towns and the local schools. Through hockey it is apparent that for Southern Alberta communities, particularly Claresholm and Lethbridge, the sport was and remains "the very idea of community."²³⁶ It also becomes apparent through the case studies focussed on Macleod and Medicine Hat that basketball, lacrosse and soccer defined community as hockey did. Basketball, lacrosse, hockey and soccer were synonymous with, and came to define Macleod, Claresholm, Lethbridge and Medicine Hat during the war years.²³⁷ The connection each community made with 'their' sport created closer ties within the civilian/military dynamic. Sporting interaction was a catalyst for civilian and military communities to form mutual, functioning, combined communities.

Notes

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² Ibid; Richard Gruneau and David Whitson, *Hockey Night In Canada: Sport, Identities and Cultural Politics* (Toronto: Garamound Press, 1993).

³ David W. Minar and Scott Greer, *The Concept of Community: Readings with Interpretations* (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1969), 60.

⁴ George A. Hillery Jr., "Definitions of Community: Areas of Agreement," *Rural Sociology* 20 (1995): 111-12.

⁵ Minar and Greer, 47.

⁶ Gruneau and Whitson, 201.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Michael N. Danielson, *Home Team: Professional Sports and the American Metropolis* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1997), 5.

⁹ Danielson, 9.

¹⁰ Gruneau and Whitson, 199.

¹¹ Ken Dryden and Roy MacGregor, *Home Game: Hockey and Life in Canada* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1989), 23.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Gregory P. Stone, "Sport as a Community Representation," in *Handbook of Social Science on Sport*, ed. Gunther R. F. Luschen and George H. Sage (Champaign: Stipes Publishing Company, 1981); 221.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Allen Guttman, *Sports Spectators* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 79.

¹⁶ Ibid, 177.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Dryden and MacGregor, 219-20.

¹⁹ Janet Lever, *Soccer Madness* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983).

²⁰ Tony Mason and Eliza Riedi, *Sport and the Military: The British Armed Forces 1880-1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 91.

²¹ Lever, 14.

²² Minar and Greer, ix.

²³ Included in his narrative is a discussion considering the role that airmen and airwomen had in keeping sport leagues and teams from collapsing in Canada during the war. Bullock examines the role sport played in boosting morale, for civilians and military personnel. Day and Mason and Riedi look at the different ways in which military and civilian personnel interacted through sport; soldiers on community teams, civilian versus civilian with military spectators, civilian versus military, military versus military with civilian spectators, civilian and military spectators together. Mason and Riedi discuss injuries, and trying to get talented athletes into certain units. Day also includes the benefits of having military personnel close to towns; they helped with facilities and added a higher calibre of skill and expertise. Sport also allowed the military to build positive relations with civilians.

²⁴ Stone, 323.

²⁵ Sydney Gruson, "Organize Sports among troopers active service," *Medicine Hat Daily News*, October 3, 1939, 4.

²⁶ None of research done for this project explains why this was, however, distance may have been a factor (see figure 1 in chapter two).

²⁷ Gruson, 4.

²⁸ Ibid; "Hockey Association Suspends Residence Rule for Army Boys," *Medicine Hat Daily News*, November 1, 1939, 5.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Alan Metcalfe, "The Meaning of Amateurism: a Case Study of Canadian Sport: 1884-1970," *Canadian Journal of History of Sport* 26 (1995); Don Morrow and Kevin Wamsley, *Sport in Canada: A History*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

³¹ "Alberta Softballers to use new rules in 1940," *Medicine Hat Daily News*, April 8, 1940, 3.

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- ³² “Hardy likely director for army sports,” *Lethbridge Herald*, September 11, 1940, 10.
- ³³ “Plans made for 1940-41 Cage season: Invitation to Airmen enter team in loop,” *Medicine Hat Daily News*, November 7, 1940, 4.
- ³⁴ “Introduce Basketball,” *Medicine Hat Daily News*, March 20, 1941, 3.
- ³⁵ “Notes,” *Macleod Gazette*, December 5, 1940, 8.
- ³⁶ “May Organize Hockey League for Town and Flying School,” *Macleod Gazette*, December 5, 1940, 2.
- ³⁷ “Engineers and Air Force Pucksters to clash Sunday,” *Lethbridge Herald*, December 27, 1940, 12.
- ³⁸ “Air Force sextet wins at Macleod,” *Lethbridge Herald*, January 7, 1941, 10; “R.C.A.F. Clash with Greyhounds in Arena Ice Very Sloppy,” *Macleod Gazette*, January 30, 1941, 4; “Tigers Defeat R.C.A.F. in Exhibition Game,” *Medicine Hat Daily News*, February 12, 1941, 4; “Amateur Hockey Series Provides Keen Sport Between Local and Air Force Pucksters at Arena,” *Macleod Gazette*, January 9, 1941, 7; “Hockey Notes,” *Claresholm Local Press*, February 20, 1941, 1; “Stavelly Defeated in Arena by Snappy Air Force Team,” *Macleod Gazette*, February 28, 1941, 3.
- ³⁹ “Fan Fare Served Up By Dick Matthews,” *Lethbridge Herald*, January 25, 1941, 12; “Speedy Lethbridge Club Wins Over Local Fliers, 7-1,” *Macleod Gazette*, January 30, 1941, 2; “Hockey Notes,” *Claresholm Local Press*, February 20, 1941, 1.
- ⁴⁰ “Local Army Team Will Play Calgary here Sunday,” *Lethbridge Herald*, January 18, 1941, 12; “R.C.A.F. vs. R.C.E. in Arena Sunday,” *Lethbridge Herald*, February 28, 1941, 14.
- ⁴¹ “Engineers and Air Force to Tangle in Puck Tilt Sunday,” *Lethbridge Herald*, January 11, 1940, 14; “City Glances,” *Medicine Hat Daily News*, January 24, 1941, 1;
- ⁴² “Amateur Hockey Series Provides Keen Sport Between Local and Air Force Pucksters at Arena,” *Macleod Gazette*, January 9, 1941.
- ⁴³ “R.C.A.F. Clash with Greyhounds in Arena Ice Very Sloppy,” *Macleod Gazette*, January 30, 1941, 4.
- ⁴⁴ “Macleod Tangles with Lethbridge for Hockey Title,” *Lethbridge Herald*, March 4, 1941, 14.
- ⁴⁵ Danielson, 9.
- ⁴⁶ “Softball Games,” *Claresholm Local Press*, May 8, 1941, 1; Bob Tufts, “Round Town,” *Medicine Hat Daily News*, May 19, 1941, 2; “Old Timers Triumph 11-1 Over Air Force,” *Lethbridge Herald*, July 16, 1941, 10; “Air Force Ball Team Wins Revenge,” *Claresholm Local Press*, July 31, 1941, 1.
- ⁴⁷ “Ottawa Ruling Forces Fliers’ Out; Welling to Play Mihalik’s A.C. in Official Opener Tonight,” *Lethbridge Herald*, May 15, 1941, 10; “Softball schedule revised when Macleod withdraws: Ottawa ruling forces fliers out,” *Lethbridge Herald*, May 15, 1941, 10; “R.C.A.F. Decision Forces Revision of Sport Schedules,” *Lethbridge Herald*, May 19, 1941, 12; the sports writers did not include any reasons for why this ruling came down.
- ⁴⁸ “Locals Defeat Air Force in Lacrosse Game,” *Macleod Gazette*, June 5, 1941, 2.
- ⁴⁹ Once again sports writers did not include why the ruling was repealed, just that it was.
- ⁵⁰ “Service fight tonight 7:30,” *Medicine Hat Daily News*, February 7, 1941, 4.
- ⁵¹ “Air Force Boxers Stage Show at ‘Hat,’” *Lethbridge Herald*, February 8, 1941, 15.
- ⁵² “Large Crowd Attends Royal Air Force Boxing Show,” *Medicine Hat Daily News*, February 8, 1941, 4.
- ⁵³ “Arena Tonight,” *Medicine Hat Daily News*, February 18, 1941, 4; “R.A.F. Hockey Benefit Tues.,” *Medicine Hat Daily News*, March 17, 1941, 9.
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- ⁵⁵ “Hoop Playoff at the S.F.T.S. Tonight 8:30,” *Medicine Hat Daily News*, March 21, 1941, 3.
- ⁵⁶ “Beat Club Aces 47-30, S.F.T.S. Court Last Eve,” *Medicine Hat Daily News*, March 22, 1941, 3.
- ⁵⁷ “Introduce Basketball,” *Medicine Hat Daily News*, March 20, 1941, 3.
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- ⁶⁶ “Neat Performers in Aquatic Tournament,” *Claresholm Local Press*, September 3, 1942, 1.
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- ⁶⁸ “Fan Fare served up by Dick Matthews,” *Lethbridge Herald*, May 7, 1942, 12.
- ⁶⁹ *Ibid.*
- ⁷⁰ “Golf Course Official Opening on Saturday Afternoon, April 24,” *Macleod Gazette*, April 23, 1943, 3.
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- ⁷² “Air Force Bowlers Form Large Loop,” *Lethbridge Herald*, October 3, 1942, 12.
- ⁷³ “R.A.F. ‘Shots’ Stage Contest,” *Medicine Hat Daily News*, February 6, 1942, 3; “Local Airmen Best Shots,” *Medicine Hat Daily News*, September 9, 1942, 3; “Local Rifle Club Annual Meeting Tuesday, Nov. 3,” *Lethbridge Herald*, October 30, 1940, 16.
- ⁷⁴ “Sothorn Alberta Service Hockey League Commences Sunday Night,” *Lethbridge Herald*, January 2, 1942, 14; “No. 7 S.F.T.S. Won Hockey Championship at Lethbridge,” *Macleod Gazette*, February 26, 1942, 2; “Macleod wins service league hockey title,” *Lethbridge Herald*, March 3, 1942, 10.
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- ⁷⁶ “Fan Fare served up by Dick Matthews,” *Lethbridge Herald*, January 27, 1942, 10.
- ⁷⁷ “Macleod wins service league hockey title,” *Lethbridge Herald*, March 3, 1942, 10.
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- ⁸⁰ “Hoop Loop Opens on Wednesday,” *Medicine Hat Daily News*, January 27, 1942, 7; “City Basketball League Formed,” *Medicine Hat Daily News*, November 16, 1942, 9.
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- ⁸² *Ibid.*
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- ⁸⁴ “‘Y’ Men, Women W.D.’s Win Hoop Games Last Night,” *Lethbridge Herald*, December 17, 1942, 10.
- ⁸⁵ “Five-Team Service Hoop League Takes in Raymond Union Jacks,” *Lethbridge Herald*, December 15, 1942, 10.
- ⁸⁶ Tom Foley, “Sporting Along,” *Lethbridge Herald*, December 18, 1942, 14.
- ⁸⁷ “Fan Fare Served up by Dick Matthews,” *Lethbridge Herald*, September 12, 1942, 12.
- ⁸⁸ “Six Teams Enter Men’s City Softball League: Opening Contest is Scheduled May 11,” *Lethbridge Herald*, May 5, 1942, 10; “Air Force Boys Lift City Softball Title,” *Medicine Hat Daily News*, September 28, 1942, 9.
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- ⁹¹ “Hat R.A.F. Soccer Team to Plat in Coleman Monday,” *Lethbridge Herald* May 23, 1942, 14; “Pearce XI Blanks Pass All-Stars 4-0,” *Lethbridge Herald*, June 22, 1942, 12; “Airmen Stage Soccer Tilts,” *Medicine Hat Daily News*, October 10, 1942, 9; “Old Country Airmen Give Fine Display,” *Medicine Hat Daily News*, October 19, 1942, 9; “Sergeants Team Wins Soccer Cup,” *Medicine Hat Daily News*, November 16, 1942, 9.
- ⁹² “Box Lacrosse Teams Proceeding—Air Force to Have Team,” *Macleod Gazette*, July 24, 1942, 3.
- ⁹³ “Shaw’s Courage, Stamina Win Respect 1,000 Fans as ‘Hatter Stages a Two-Fisted Blitzkrieg,” *Medicine Hat Daily News*, May 7, 1942, 9; “Stage Set for Kinsmen Fight Card Wednesday: Milk for Britain Fund will Benefit,” *Lethbridge Herald*, June 16, 1942, 10; “Fight Card at No. 8 For Next Saturday,” *Lethbridge Herald*, December 12, 1942, 14; “Claresholm S.F.T.S. Boxing Card on Dec. 10,” *Lethbridge Herald*, November 28, 1942, 12; “All-Star Inter-Service Boxing Next Monday at No. 7 S.F.T.S.,” *Macleod Gazette*, December 17, 1942, 3.
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- ⁹⁶ “Sports Day at No. 7 on Labor Day—Field and Track Events,” *Macleod Gazette*, September 3, 1942, 2.
- ⁹⁷ “Fan Fare Served Up by Dick Matthews,” *Lethbridge Herald*, August 6, 1942, 10.
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- ⁹⁹ “Fan Fare served up by Dick Matthews,” *Lethbridge Herald*, August 14 1942, 14; “Hockey Register Loses 13,000 Men,” *Lethbridge Herald*, October 7, 1942, 10.
- ¹⁰⁰ “Four-Team Services Hockey League for Alberta: No. 8, Red Deer, Two Calgary Teams,” *Lethbridge Herald*, October 19, 1942, 12.
- ¹⁰¹ “No. 8 Comes from Behind to Trim Mustangs 5-4,” *Lethbridge Herald*, November 23, 1942, 10.
- ¹⁰² “Macleod Airmen Win Over Claresholm,” *Lethbridge Herald*, January 8, 1943; “No. 15 S.F.T.S. Hockey Team Evens Up Series with No. 2 F.I.S. Vulcan,” *Claresholm Local Press*, March 18, 1943, 4.
- ¹⁰³ Ibid; Nanton is a town south of High River, north of Claresholm and west of Vulcan.
- ¹⁰⁴ The number of newspaper reports related to sports in 1943 was significantly higher than any of the other years. The number of articles in 1943 alone was very close to the number of articles for all the other war years combined.
- ¹⁰⁵ “B. and G. Win Hoop Thriller at Pearce,” *Lethbridge Herald*, January 16, 1943, 10.
- ¹⁰⁶ “Six-Team Southern Hoop League Schedule,” *Lethbridge Herald*, January 9, 1943, 12.
- ¹⁰⁷ Tom Foley, “Raymond Union Jacks Win Southern Hoop Title,” *Lethbridge Herald*, March 20, 1943, 12.
- ¹⁰⁸ “Hoop Playoffs,” *Lethbridge Herald*, March 12, 1943, 12.
- ¹⁰⁹ “Basketball,” *The Vulcan Advocate*, February 11, 1943, 3; “Pearce Hoopsters Beat Local Team,” *Lethbridge Herald*, December 9, 1943, 10.
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- ¹²¹ “Pearce will Play ‘Hatters,” *Lethbridge Herald*, September 21, 1943, 10.
- ¹²² “Football at 34 Reaches Hot Tempo,” *Medicine Hat Daily News*, August 9, 1943, 7.
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- ¹²⁷ “Preparing for Fine Card,” *Lethbridge Herald*, December 2, 1943, 12.
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Chapter Four

The Fundraiser: Raising Money through Sporting Charity Events

“Since the momentous day of last September, hundreds of thousands of Canadians have been asking themselves, “What can I do to help win the war?”¹
- Claresholm Local Press

The above came from an advertisement promoting the buying of War Savings Certificates, which the government sold as a way of funding the Canadian war effort. The buying of these certificates was not the only financial contribution Canadians made during the war. Fundraising and sport together played a large part in the history of the schools and towns coming together; fundraising through sport and for sport created new common ties, as well as ways for social interaction to occur. As in a few of the literature review case studies discussed in chapter one, charity events were also very popular in Southern Alberta during the Second World War.² Money was raised for the war effort, as well as assisting school and town plans and developments. The geographic proximity of the communities provided opportunities for the air force and the towns to help each other. The air force needed the assistance of people living in towns to help with their own individual needs at each school for things like equipment and facilities. The air force also represented the national needs of the war effort in Southern Alberta. The towns benefitted from having the extra air force personnel attend their money raising endeavours. The school personnel also added welcome contributions, providing a band for music or a team for competition, for the entertainment needed for fundraising efforts. Charity sporting events came in many different forms during the war in Southern Alberta, and as evidenced in local newspapers, most all were in some way linked to the war. From established charities, to the seeming endless necessity for new charities, to the needs of

the air force and the town, money, though in short supply, seemed to come when it was called for.

Kevin Filo, Daniel Funk and Danny O'Brien define a charity sports event as "any sport event where significant portions of the proceeds benefit a specified charity."³ This definition includes most of the fundraising events conducted in Southern Alberta during the Second World War. Filo, Funk, and O'Brien conclude that a "sense of solidarity and belonging" of the events created an atmosphere of common cause, similar to the result of common ties and social interaction of communities.⁴ One participant of the study even described the charity sporting event as "building a community."⁵ The sentiment of coming together in a common cause because they wanted to support it, not because they were forced to, created solidarity. The town and air force communities were forced to come together geographically. It is through sporting charity events that it becomes clear that these two communities were also melding because they wanted to, which created a stronger sense of solidarity.⁶ In Southern Alberta the war created what Filo, Funk and O'Brien describe as a parallel mindset. Focussing on specific charities and wartime needs allowed for a connection to develop between military schools and the towns. Also, a sense of cause materialized. The participants felt as though they were making "a difference in the world by raising awareness and supporting a worthy cause."⁷ Many civilians could not fight in the war for any number of reasons. Organizing and/or supporting the chosen charity was one way of assisting the war effort. There were also members of the military who did not get the chance to serve overseas, especially those who were too old, or were needed to train students. Supporting charity events was one way they could support the units overseas. In almost every instance where a town

organized a fundraiser, the nearby school participated. “[U]nder the kind permission of the commanding officer” became a very common line in newspaper sporting articles which included school participation.⁸ The airmen were given permission to participate on a lot of occasions, which confirms that commanding officers understood the need for money and wanted to be a part of the efforts. Filo, Funk and O’Brien, highlighting the aspect of competency, which includes “the health and fitness aspects of the event,” explain that “[i]ndividuals felt a connection to the physical activity, and participation in the event allowed them to take part in this activity, which contributed to attachment to the event.”⁹ Previous chapters have discussed the need for physical activity in airmen training, and that the integration of the schools into leagues allowed civilians to continue playing sports. Charity sporting events were organized around already existing leagues and games. Sporting events were also organized around charity events, particularly boxing, that provided extra opportunities for individuals to train and compete. The examples below will highlight the important community building influence of charity sporting events.

Sporting charity events required sporting facilities, whether it was a building, stadium, or a field, where spectators could be a part of the event. Gaffney and Bale discuss the sense of history and belonging that is a part of what, they call, “the stadium experience.”¹⁰ They argue that sense “adds to the individual and collective experience of the stadium and helps inform action, response, emotion and understanding.”¹¹ The sense of history and the sense of belonging to a crowd are central to understanding the relationship between military schools and civilian communities in Southern Alberta.¹² Coming together in a sporting venue was one of the places where school personnel and

town members were able to socially interact and create common ties necessary for a community to develop.

The sense of history refers to stadium events and points out that “people know when and where to gather to participate.”¹³ Gaffney and Bale acknowledge the role newspapers play in documenting events, and suggest that this kind of recording “heightens the sense of historical import,” although they also admit that the event does not always live up to the hype, using the Super Bowl as an example.¹⁴ There were several events in Southern Alberta that were hyped up, especially the boxing events. With boxing there are time limits for each round, but the match can end early if one of the competitors is knocked out. There would have been nights when the fights did not go for all the rounds, or where the match ups did not provide the anticipated excitement. The authors discuss the ability of the stadium “to extend both forward and backward in time,” which “fosters the sense of shared purpose, historical process, and cultural belonging.”¹⁵ Through charity sporting events the schools and towns were able to foster a sense of shared purpose and cultural belonging. Gaffney and Bale also discuss the historical importance of architecture. They suggest that “[t]o a large extent the collective energies, dreams, and aspirations of large segments of population are posited in the stadium.”¹⁶ Several sporting charity events in Southern Alberta were responsible for raising the funds for the building of two new facilities during the war. The coming together of the two communities to build these buildings contributed to what Gaffney and Bale refer to as a collected history to the facilities which “implies a much deeper and specific meaning for thousands and thousands of individuals.”¹⁷ This includes users of the facility who were there at the time and those in future generations. The initial construction and use of the

facilities was supported by a combined effort of the schools and the towns, while continued use following the war was only by the town. The school was written into the history of the facility and therefore into the future of it as well.¹⁸

The sense of belonging to a crowd involves several factors including the money required to attend the event.¹⁹ Gaffney and Bale argue that the more money spectators pay for the event the more they value the experience.²⁰ Spectators may not have paid a lot to get into sporting charity events, but they were expected to add to the silver cup collection, or pay to play any carnival type games that were added to events to collect extra money for charity. It was the charity sporting events that drew the largest crowds, upwards of over 2000 people on many occasions, on a consistent basis.²¹ People seemed to want to be a part of helping the war effort. The feeling of belonging that developed through this type of support contributed to what Gaffney and Bale describe as “the communal sense of a crowd.”²² Gaffney and Bale describe the communal sense as creating feeling through being tangled up amongst thousands of people, chanting together, tailgating, or participating in the wave. In Southern Alberta one of the best examples of a communal feeling from thousands of fans was the final regular season game and the playoff game between Claresholm and Macleod during the 1942 Southern Alberta Service Hockey League. In the first game Claresholm supporters had a band and were united through chanting and cheering. The Macleod fans were not to be outdone and stepped up to the plate to battle the Claresholm fans in the playoff game.²³ The fans of each team, including civilian and air force members, banded together in order to try and outdo each other through music and cheering.

As early as November 1939 communities were starting to recognize “that the need for funds [would] be great and [would] increase with the growing intensity of the war.”²⁴ Karl B. Raitz, in his study of sporting events, suggests that “the economic context within which sports are practiced changes through time and across space, dramatically affecting the character of sports places, which in turn alters the way sports are practiced and the way they are observed.”²⁵ Wartime sports reflected this sentiment. During the war, money and sport became entwined. One item that was a regular feature of Medicine Hat and Lethbridge city league games was the silver cup collection. This became a popular way of collecting money from spectators for different funds. This technique was mostly utilized for regular season baseball and soccer games. A bowl, or bucket, or anything that could hold money would be passed around during the game. During the 1943 baseball season in Lethbridge, the home team’s manager was responsible for making sure the silver cup got passed around.²⁶ Another popular technique used during the war was giving War Savings Certificates as prizes at carnivals, or weekend tournaments. In 1940, the Medicine Hat Golf Club originated the trend of utilizing these certificates as prizes in Southern Alberta.²⁷ By 1942, Canadian military leaders realized just how effective sports could be in raising funds. Canadian military leaders began “placing more teams in established leagues,” so they “could accumulate funds for various war services.”²⁸ Dick Matthews, from the *Lethbridge Herald*, felt the idea of using sport to raise money was “something the Canadian authorities might well consider” and could lead to “changes for the better.”²⁹ In Eastern Canada a travelling U.S. Navy baseball team raised \$50, 000 for the U.S. Navy Relief Fund. Matthews felt changes should be made to follow this line of

raising money through sport.³⁰ As the war continued, silver cup collections and war certificate funds made room for larger and grander fundraising endeavours.

The first fundraiser recipient to receive money from military/civilian sporting charity events was the Red Cross. The Red Cross was the only pre-war charity that was incorporated into these events involving both the schools and the towns. Many new charities surfaced as the need to support the war effort in Britain, Greece and China. Charity events were also organized to raise money to send Canadian soldiers cigarettes and other essentials. Southern Albertans supported overseas war causes, but they also raised money for local concerns including buying sports equipment for air force teams, providing money for injured hockey players, as well as fundraising for a new pool in Claresholm and Macleod and a recreation hall in Claresholm.

The Red Cross was the most popular, established, charity to fundraise for early in the war. This was most likely because it was a well-known worldwide charity, and had been since the mid-1800s. They specialized in needs for the war, and did not require any extra organization to start contributing to the war effort.³¹ The most urgent needs the Red Cross met included food parcels for British prisoners of war in Germany, which helped reduce pressure on British coffers, as well as distributing supplies for British civilians who had endured bombing. The Red Cross in Canada worked at providing equipment and assistance for hospitals in Canada and overseas and delivering clothing and necessities for evacuees. The Red Cross also prided itself on being “ready and fully equipped to meet any emergency as the moment arises.”³² The Red Cross had a history of success in these areas; therefore, it is understandable why the early sporting charity events were directed towards fundraising for this organization. In Alberta the Red Cross had its first official

meeting in 1914, and was officially organized in order to help with the First World War.³³ During the war the Alberta division of the organization not only focused on helping meet the national goals of the Red Cross, they also worked hard at getting people to donate blood.³⁴ Towns and schools came up with some inventive events to be able to raise money for the Red Cross.

In Medicine Hat the first recorded charity event in support of the war effort developed accidentally. On Sunday February 13, 1941 the RAF personnel of No. 34 in Medicine Hat played a hockey game with an interesting twist on the rules and under interesting team names. Two teams of RAF personnel were divided up into the “Adolfs” and “Winstons”. Since many of the men at this base were from overseas and did not skate, let alone play hockey, before being assigned to Canada for training, they turned the rules upside down for an increased entertainment factor. The players put skates on their knees, as an alternate style of getting around the ice, as well as their feet.³⁵ Normal goals scored into the net were worth one point; however, the men set up their own way of scoring points. To score three points a player must simply crack another player’s head, a broken arm would add two points, half a point for a black eye or bloody nose, and a measly quarter of a point for knocking out a tooth. The initial game on Sunday morning was simply for fun, but as the game went on more and more Medicine Hat civilians filed in to watch the game.³⁶ The steady increase of civilian interest led to the decision to play another game under these rules for the benefit of the Red Cross. By Tuesday, February 15 a rematch was scheduled for the following Saturday evening. Several tug-of-war competitions were added to the evening to increase interest in the event.³⁷ The event was labelled the “Hockeykrieg” in the *Medicine Hat Daily News* mimicking the German

Blitzkrieg. Over three hundred spectators showed up for the event, which saw the Wintsons win handily by a score of 8-2. The extra ways of scoring points was never initiated; it was just for fun and to build anticipation. During the game all of the goals came the normal way of the puck being shot into the net. However, the added entertainment came from watching “the English, Scotch, Welsh, and Irish boys’ efforts to maintain their equipment on steel blades and still concentrate on propelling along the ice a tricky little black object with a crude weapon call a ‘stick.’”³⁸ Another rematch of the game was organized for March 18, 1941. Hype for the game was increased by referencing the wound licking both teams had gone through since the last battle.³⁹ Once again the Wintsons prevailed in a much closer overtime game, entertaining another large crowd, with all admissions going to the Red Cross.⁴⁰ In the newspaper coverage of these two events the parallels to the real war increased from one game to the next, and the hockey games seemed to take on a lot more meaning then just a fundraiser. The contests were referred to as Hockeykrieg’s, the Winstons were also called the Churchills, the games were fights, and the players had to recuperate from their wounds between events. Even though points were not actually scored by the violence described above, the RAF airmen were able to introduce themselves to the Medicine Hat community through a Canadian sport, just with their own twist on it. Town members responded to the station efforts to integrate into Canadian culture by showing up to watch a hockey game of inferior skill than what they were used to. Medicine Hat would again support the Red Cross in February of 1943 through organization of an Ice Show which included RAF personnel racing two miles on skates, boxing matches on skates featuring local youth training centre boys, an RAF hockey game and a children’s carnival.⁴¹ One thousand

people attended the Ice Show. The *Medicine Hat Daily News* billed the show as “an [o]utstanding [e]vent in [c]ity [e]ntertainment.”⁴²

In the above example of the Ice Show, the school provided most of the entertainment for the events. This was not always the case. At times town and school communities played against each other. In Raymond⁴³ around the same time as the Adolf/Winstons hockey games in February 1941, the famed Union Jacks played No. 7 SFTS, Macleod, in a basketball fundraiser for the Red Cross.⁴⁴ At other times towns organized sporting events with proceeds contributing to the Red Cross. In 1941 and 1942, part of the Vulcan July 1st Dominion Day⁴⁵ Sports Day proceeds were turned over to the Red Cross. The Vulcan sponsored event was attended and supported by school members.⁴⁶ Late in the war a hockey game between Vulcan high school students and the “Married Has-Beens” was played in benefit of the Red Cross.⁴⁷ Support and organization for the Red Cross came from the schools and towns in separate organizational efforts and participation, but also through combined participation.

New charities, which developed because of war necessities, started to take precedence over the Red Cross by late 1941. At times some sporting events simply advertised that the silver cup collection would “go towards war work,”⁴⁸ or a “worthy war cause.”⁴⁹ However, it was usually well advertised which charity a sporting event would be supporting. Money was raised for the Canadian war effort, for Canadian soldiers serving overseas and also for other Allied countries, which found themselves in need of help. The shift from the Red Cross focus occurred for several reasons. The Red Cross was a large organization with established offices; they had the power and resources to run collection campaigns, which meant they did not have to rely on fundraising events.

Analysis of newspaper reports suggest none of the other charities were able to do this. There are few primary, or secondary, sources detailing the minute details of the individual charities that were started and lasted only during the Second World War. However, they may have become more prominent in Southern Alberta because individuals had a family member fighting in one of the areas and wanted to do something to help. There may also have been an issue with individuals trying to get involved and really feel like they were helping in the Red Cross considering its size and influence. War Saving Certificates were utilized in helping raise money for the Canadian war effort. Many times communities held charity sporting events which raised money specifically for men from the district who were serving. This money was then used to buy cigarettes to send overseas. Similarly, money was raised for Allied countries through the Lord Mayor's Fund, the Queen's Canadian Fund, and the Milk for Britain fund for Britain and for Greece and China relief funds.

A popular trend, which surfaced in 1940, was presenting War Savings Certificates to the winners of sporting events. War Savings Certificates and Stamps were not a charity but they were the government's way of securing funds to support the Canadian war effort. The certificates were repayable after seven and a half years, and if held until maturity, would repay the owner three percent on their money. Certificates started at five dollars. For every five dollars purchased an individual paid four dollars to buy it. Stamps could be purchased if an individual did not have four dollars to purchase a certificate. The stamps, sold at 24c each, could then be saved to buy a five-dollar certificate. The stamps were initiated with the intention of making it possible for children to contribute to the war effort. Ted Byfield noted that Albertans wanted to financially contribute to the war effort

and the stamps made it possible for them to do so.⁵⁰ In 1941, Walter Zeller, head of the National War Savings Certificate committee, implored Canadians to buy War Savings Certificates. Mr. Zeller felt that Canadians needed to find “a stern sense of duty.”⁵¹ He encouraged patriotism by comparing the financial contributions Canadians were making to help win the war and stabilize the economy post-war to being the equivalent of being on the front lines. War Savings Certificates did not directly impact the relationship between the towns and schools. It was, however, one way civilians could impact overseas soldiers. Buying War Savings Certificates was another tie for civilians to the war effort, creating another way that they were invested in the war. The more invested civilians became in the war helped increase the ties they felt to the airmen training close to them. Having the airmen in close vicinity also forced civilians to realize the importance of buying War Savings Certificates. Having the constant reminder of war with the air force training in the community made it difficult to push the war out of people’s minds, especially when airmen training in the community were sent off to war every couple of months.

Through late 1940 and 1941 Southern Alberta sporting events began to yield to Mr. Zeller’s plea. The Connaught Golf Club in Medicine Hat started the trend of presenting War Savings Stamps as prizes. In September of 1940, the club twice used stamps to draw people to compete in tournaments. Both men and women played for the stamps.⁵² The slogan for the second tournament was “Stamp out Hitlerism with Stamps.”⁵³ The following summer of 1941 saw the club continue to draw golfers to their tournaments by appealing to players’ patriotism and the possibility of “increasing [their] holding of War Savings Certificates.”⁵⁴ In February of 1941 the Lethbridge Ski Club used

War Savings Certificates as prizes for those who did not finish first.⁵⁵ In June 1941, the town of Raymond used half the net proceeds of their annual rodeo to purchase War Savings Certificates to “be held in trust of the Raymond Board of Trade to be used for rehabilitation of returned men.”⁵⁶ The town donated the other half of the proceeds to the Lord Mayor’s Fund.⁵⁷ Similarly, Lethbridge hosted two major sporting events centred on War Savings Stamps. In February 1941, the “Lick Hitler” Ice Jamboree was organized and sponsored by the Lethbridge Kinsmen Club, with all services donated.⁵⁸ The jamboree included a hockey game, and fancy skating led by a Miss Helen Cantwell (see figure 4).⁵⁹ The price of admission for the sold out show was paid through the purchase of War Savings Stamps.⁶⁰ The end of the year saw another War Savings Stamps entrance fee as admission for a night of entertainment, this time a carnival organized by the No. 8 B & G School, which included a skating act, music and a play about the bombing of a Japanese plane. Once again all services and the facility were donated.⁶¹ In 1942, Vulcan followed suit and charged War Savings Certificates as entrance fees into a carnival raising money for overseas charities, a carnival in which Miss Cantwell once again led a program of fancy skating.⁶² War Savings Certificates were used in several creative ways involving sport highlighting combined efforts to promote and support the Canadian war effort.



FIGURE 4: Miss Helen Cantwell, *The Vulcan Advocate*, 16 January 1941.

Raising money for the soldiers overseas, mainly in the form of cigarettes, was a priority for locals in Southern Alberta. Vulcan, High River and Coleman⁶³ held fundraisers specifically for men from the districts who were serving overseas.⁶⁴ High River was the leading Southern Alberta community in this area for fundraising, hosting a Smokes for Soldiers sporting charity event yearly from 1941-1944. The first of these events was on Dominion Day in 1941. The sports day netted \$400 to purchase cigarettes for local soldiers overseas.⁶⁵ Vulcan also used funds garnered from their 1941 Dominion Day sports day to buy cigarettes for soldiers.⁶⁶ In February of 1942 both Vulcan and High River held carnivals featuring fancy skating in support of the Smokes Fund.⁶⁷ League officials for the 1942 Southern Alberta Service Hockey League also donated 10 percent of proceeds from every game that season to the cigarette fund.⁶⁸ From this point on High River became the steady source of cigarettes and money for soldiers from Southern Alberta serving overseas for the remainder of the war.

In the summer of 1942 High River also began to incorporate training schools into the fundraisers. In August 1942 a sports day was organized which included a baseball game between No. 8 B & G Lethbridge and No. 2 Wireless School out of Calgary.⁶⁹ In 1943 the committee in charge of raising funds for cigarettes in High River set the lofty goal of supplying every soldier in the district with 2000 cigarettes spread throughout the year. The *High River Times* helped promote the cause and in a news article compared sports days and the Smokes' Fund to ham and eggs, implying that it would not be a proper sports day without raising some money for the Smokes Fund.⁷⁰ The July 1st Dominion Day sports event was billed a success as over 2000 attendees, helped generate \$1125 for the fund.⁷¹ The final two major cigarette fundraisers were organized in 1944. On May 24, Victoria Day, High River hosted a baseball double header.⁷² On July 8, not on Dominion Day in 1944 for unknown reasons, High River again played host to baseball and racing. The July 8 fundraiser drew a crowd of close to 5000 people to watch No. 5 EFTS win the day's baseball tournament.⁷³ The final fundraiser collected an impressive \$1,879.75.⁷⁴ As 1944 came to a close the *High River Times* printed several letters of thanks from overseas soldiers for the cigarettes they had received.⁷⁵ The *Times* editor also received a letter from a local parent thanking the High River smokes committee for all the work they had done throughout the war to raise the money for overseas soldiers:

Writing as a parent I should like to extend heartiest thanks to the committee for their uniting efforts to make the Smokes fund a success for our boys overseas. Many thanks to one and all who contributed to make the sports' day a banner event. And appreciation goes to the officers and men of the E.F.T.S....The whole day on the grounds was a fine neighborly time, with everyone in genial spirit.⁷⁶

The parent also acknowledged the spirit of union and the morale boost the Smokes Fund events provided for the community.

Raising money for Allied countries and allies of the Allied countries grew as the war progressed, and came in the form of the Lord Mayor's Fund, Queen's Canadian Fund, Milk-For-Britain Fund, Greek War Relief Fund, and the Chinese Relief Fund. In 1941, Raymond donated half of the proceeds from the annual rodeo to the Lord Mayor's Fund, which along with the Queen's Canadian Fund helped Britain clean up from bombing attacks and support the citizens who were dealing with bombing.⁷⁷ The two funds received financial boosts through charity games, the Lord Mayor's Fund from two soccer matches hosted by No. 34 SFTS of Medicine Hat during the summer of 1942.⁷⁸ The first game was No. 34 hosting players from the city of Medicine Hat while the second game brought players from No. 39 in Swift Current to the school.⁷⁹ The Queen's Canadian Fund received financial aid from a charity baseball game when the women of No. 8 B & G Lethbridge made their debut as a team against the men of the school.⁸⁰ Both games saw local citizens as spectators and contributors to the two charities.

Milk for Britain, as it sounds, was to provide British citizens, although mainly children, with milk. Lethbridge took up the call for this charity, hosting four major charity sporting events between 1942 and 1943, all of which included town and school cooperation. The first of the four events was on June 17, 1942, drawing over 1500 people for a fight card including participants from Lethbridge, Macleod, Claresholm and Pearce schools.⁸¹ The Lethbridge Kinsmen club organized and sponsored the event. Dick Matthews, opinion writer for the *Herald*, acknowledged the building excitement for the event in the city, commenting that it had "been a long time since so much enthusiasm ha[d] been evident here in a boxing card," which was to be held in a portable ring constructed in the Arena.⁸² City, district and school members were all on hand to enjoy

and support the event.⁸³ The 1942 Labour Day celebrations in Lethbridge included a double-header baseball game between the airwomen of No. 8 B & G in the first game and the airmen of No. 15 SFTS Claresholm against a team of Lethbridge men's all-stars in the second game. This was all part of the town's celebrations for the holiday.⁸⁴ A month later, early in October, the Kinsmen club organized another fight card. This time the card was mostly composed of local fighters, not school fighters.⁸⁵ The event once again attracted a large number of people with 2000 attendees.⁸⁶ The final Lethbridge based Milk-for Britain contribution came from a baseball game between a Lethbridge all-star team and the Macleod RCAF team.⁸⁷ Medicine Hat also contributed to the fund on one occasion donating the proceeds from 1000 fans who attended a soccer game between two No. 34 teams.⁸⁸ The summer of 1943 saw the Greece Relief Fund take precedence, due to Nazi invasion.⁸⁹ No. 8 Lethbridge and No. 34 Medicine Hat took the lead in fundraising for this charity through soccer and baseball benefit games. In the fall of 1943 a baseball game between the Lethbridge Brewers and No. 2 FIS in Pearce raised money for the Chinese Relief Fund. The inclement weather made for a small crowd; however the silver cup collection still managed to collect over thirty dollars.⁹⁰ Almost all events relied on silver cup collections, which produced between twenty and fifty dollars at each event.⁹¹

Many news articles reported that the benefit games were important to the schools.⁹² Some articles also tried to emphasize the importance of supporting charities.⁹³ By writing about the importance of the charities to the schools and the importance of civilians supporting them, newspapers did their part in getting town members and airport personnel to come together through sporting charity events. Southern Albertans did their part to help raise funds for overseas countries. The bulk of charities and money went to

Britain, which was no surprise considering that two of the schools in Southern Alberta were mainly RAF personnel and had vested interests in making sure Britain got help.

Money was also raised to support the military effort in Southern Alberta. On several occasions, sporting charity events were focussed on helping the local BCATP schools. Events supporting the schools were varied and wide-ranging from equipment to free entrance into events to fundraising for new facilities. The civilian communities did their part to support the local schools. As schools came into communities, as discussed in chapter two, local newspapers would help the schools by calling for sports equipment to be donated for use by the students. In Lethbridge, when No. 5 EFTS was in town briefly, two hockey exhibition games were held to help collect money by silver cup to buy equipment for the air force team.⁹⁴ In 1942 a unique event was held during the Southern Alberta Service Hockey League season. A playoff game between No. 15 SFTS Claresholm and No. 7 SFTS Macleod had to be rescheduled due to other commitments. To fill in the evening two other teams from the league, No. 8 B & G and the Lethbridge Reserves, played a benefit exhibition match. All proceeds went to two players from the league who were injured during regular season play.⁹⁵ Injuries to airmen and the impact of those injuries on training were never discussed in the newspapers. The money raised in this benefit game went to a player who broke his wrist and the other who suffered a concussion. This particular sporting charity event illustrates an important dynamic in the relationship between the schools and towns. This was the only reported fundraising event in which the money went directly to individual people who needed it and was not for the war cause. The specificity of the money going to two certain people who were only short-term members of the community shows how much the air force personnel were

integrating into the towns. It also shows how much the schools trusted and felt they could rely on the civilian community to come out and buy tickets for a benefit game supporting two members of the military community.

Similarly, on several occasions airmen and airwomen received some nice perks. In 1942, the *Claresholm Local Press* reported that members of the armed forces received free hunting licenses.⁹⁶ In 1942, members of No. 34 Medicine Hat were welcomed to the local Bowladrome for free bowling. A one-day bowling tournament was set up for Monday December 21.⁹⁷ The Bowladrome owner perhaps did this in an effort to get school personnel and airmen to consider bowling during their time off in town. In January of 1944 the Southern Alberta Service Hockey League invited service and civilian women to attend a game free of charge in an effort to gain ticket sales from those who would attend the game with the women.⁹⁸ Schools also organized and hosted events to raise money for their own causes. In December of 1942, No. 15 SFTS Claresholm held a boxing fundraiser in order to collect funds for a Christmas and New Year's dinner for the airmen and airwomen.⁹⁹

Two No. 15 SFTS facilities in Claresholm benefited as a direct result of charity sporting events, one on school property and the other in Claresholm. In 1943 the Women's Division canteen had to be rebuilt due to serious fire damage. Flight Lieutenant Marshall and Flight Officer Bailey organized a fight and wrestle card on the base in order to raise the money to fix the canteen. Fighters from many of the bases, including Macleod, Lethbridge, DeWinton, Vulcan, Calgary and Penhold, were sent to participate in the event. The *Claresholm Local Press* reported "an exceptionally large crowd."¹⁰⁰ The turnout helped provide "one of the most interesting and successful events of its kind

staged on the Station.”¹⁰¹ The event being held at the station may have helped draw a larger crowd. Robert Day suggests that sporting events held on military bases, or in this case the school, draw extra civilian spectators because of the mystery surrounding the buildings at the station and the training that goes on.¹⁰²

In 1941, when the school came to Claresholm, the Knights of Columbus took on the responsibility of building a recreation hall for the school.¹⁰³ The recreation hall was built to provide airmen and airwomen with a space to relax, write letters, listen to music, read, and put on plays.¹⁰⁴ The project was completed in January 1943, with just one hitch; the furniture that was due to arrive from the east was not paid for in advance.¹⁰⁵ Two sporting events were organized to raise money for the furniture. The Ice Jamboree, organized by the airport, took place in the Claresholm rink on the very cold night of January 19, 1943. A *Claresholm Local Press* writer bemoaned the cold night, feeling that “[h]ad it been a safe night for travel there is little doubt but what some of the crowd would have not been able to gain admission.”¹⁰⁶ The night included three hockey games; one between the airmen of No. 15 against a combined Stavely-Claresholm¹⁰⁷ town team, another pitting the airwomen of No. 15 against those of No. 7 from Macleod, and the Aussies of No. 15 against each other. No. 3 SFTS in Calgary donated hockey equipment so all the games could be played. Sporting charity events provided opportunities for Southern Alberta to witness some truly unique matches. Twelve hundred spectators were treated to an entertaining game between the new Australian airmen. The game provided:

more action away from the puck than there was close to it. In one corner two Aussies on the same team or on different teams – it didn’t matter – would be seen embracing one another in what could be taken for a loving manner, but was actually an eager desire for support.¹⁰⁸

The night concluded with a dance. It was estimated that \$275 was made. Flight Officer Hales publicly thanked Claresholm residents for buying tickets to the event and thanked all the organizations that had made the night possible.¹⁰⁹

The second event, the Ice Mardi Gras, was held February 18, 1943. Leading up to the event, two hockey game challenges were issued, raising the anticipation level. Old-timers in the Claresholm community issued a challenge to the Old-timers working at the school, and the Aussies and Women's Division of No. 15 challenged each other, with smack talk ensuing between the two in the lead up to the event. The airmen of No. 15 and the Stavely-Claresholm team rounded out the evening in a re-match game. Tickets to the event were sold in many of the local businesses.¹¹⁰ Although the Old-timers game did not end up being played because cold weather once again hampered the event, 1000 civilians and station personnel took in the action. In anticipation of the entertainment factor the Aussies had provided in the previous hockey game they played, the Aussie and Women's Division players came out to the most applause and excitement. The Aussies did not disappoint, compelling a local writer to compare the game to watching swimming because the Aussies spent more time on their bellies than on their feet.¹¹¹ Claresholm recreation hall opened March 3, 1943, although not a sporting facility, provided opportunities for charity sporting events to be organized, as well as contributing to continued interaction between the station and the town.¹¹² Through the sporting charity events the town and station cooperated to get the events running, and despite poor weather civilians turned out in high numbers. Upon completion and opening of the recreation hall, local organizations took on the responsibility of running the building,

including services like catering, which allowed for further interaction between the two communities.¹¹³

Even though most people were focussed on the war effort, there was still a little time for sporting charity events, which kept the money in town. Vulcan, Lethbridge, Macleod and Claresholm worked local charities and causes into their fundraising efforts. Throughout the war, the Vulcan Hospital was a usual recipient of part of the proceeds from Dominion Days; however, it was 1942 before a Vulcan school team participated in the entertainment.¹¹⁴ In Lethbridge in February 1941 a game between No. 7 SFTS and Lethbridge militia was held in support of the Elks Baby Clinic.¹¹⁵ Late in the war, in January 1945, Claresholm hosted a game between A-16 Currie Army and No. 15 SFTS for the benefit of Claresholm Parks and Recreation.¹¹⁶ As the war was coming to a close the final sporting charity event in Southern Alberta, a hockey game in Lethbridge, was played between the Currie Army and RCAF Mustangs, both Calgary teams, in support of the Lethbridge Lions Home Campaign for Pool and Playgrounds Fund.¹¹⁷ The focus on strictly town-based funds was limited during the war, but they were not forgotten.

In Macleod and Claresholm, the issue of building a local pool was on both town council agendas in 1941.¹¹⁸ Both communities held several fundraisers to help raise enough money for the project. The Macleod pool did not get built during the war, but the Claresholm one was. It is intriguing that two communities, today separated by about forty kilometres, could have the same goal, and yet such different results. Building a pool in Macleod became a town council item in April 1941 after No. 7 SFTS was settled into the community. Due to the increased prosperity, population and business, of which No. 7 SFTS was a direct result, the town felt it would be a good time to build a pool. It was

recognized that there were “many small children among the families of members of the R.C.A.F. and...the mothers could spend many leisure hours watching their children keep cool.”¹¹⁹ The town did realize that the school might not be permanently in the community, which would impact the long term success of maintaining a pool facility. Between ten and fifteen thousand dollars was needed for construction.¹²⁰ In August 1941 an official proposal was drawn up. The seventh bullet of the proposal referred to the air school as part of the Macleod community:

It was the unanimous opinion of the committee that a swimming pool would be a great asset to the Town, particularly for the safety of our citizens desiring to go swimming, and as a place of amusement for the entire country side including the members of the R.C.A.F. It would prove popular among tourists, of whom there are large numbers visiting Macleod during the summer.¹²¹

When the town discussed and laid out the initial plans for the pool, one of the largest factors in the decision was the addition of the school into the community. According to the *Macleod Gazette*, citizens of Macleod and district were on board with having a pool built. The first fundraiser, a music carnival, was held in August 1941, and most of the entertainment, in the form of bands and artists, were from the Macleod and Claresholm air force schools.¹²² January 15 and March 6, 1942 saw Macleod host to hockey games between No. 15 and No.7 as charity sporting events for the pool.¹²³ In September 1942, another music carnival was organized, with station members providing most of the entertainment again.¹²⁴ This would be the last sporting charity event for the pool in Macleod, and the issue disappeared from the newspaper for a year. In August 1943, the President of the Board of Trade announced his wishes to continue raising the funds to build the pool. He felt that the expected boost in tourism post war would be sufficient to keep a pool running. To this point only \$1500 had been raised.¹²⁵ From here the president

went to the airport to see if rumors of a pool being built at the school were true. Group Captain Hampton assured the president that these rumors were untrue. The president inquired if No. 7 would be willing to financially assist the town. The president was informed that the school would use a pool if built, but they would not be able to make a monetary contribution. He did assure the president that airport personnel would most likely lend their talents to further fundraising events, as well as pay to attend them, but that was all that could be offered.¹²⁶ This seemed to end all pool discussions in Macleod during the war.

Claresholm, on the other hand, had a more successful story. The narrative surrounding the Claresholm project started off on a better foot than Macleod because the discussion of building a pool in town had started before the war. The initial discussions during the war were centred on whether to continue funding for the project, or let it go until after the war. It was the addition of the station population as well as the fact that the town had already set money aside for the pool that made the difference for Claresholm. It was also decided early on that the station would not be asked to contribute to the funds, just to participate in the events to raise the money still needed.¹²⁷ In October 1941 the town held a carnival. The building committee expected to receive only \$800 in net profit.¹²⁸ The carnival, however, raised \$2000, which assured going ahead with the project.¹²⁹ The pool officially opened on June 30, 1942 and it was christened by a member of the air school.¹³⁰ The airport and town shared the use of the pool throughout the war.¹³¹ It is clear that the addition of the school in the Claresholm area helped put the town over the top in their preparations and fundraising for a new pool in the community. However, the difference in relation to Macleod was that preparations and much of the

money had been raised pre-war. Regardless, in both towns the station members took an interest in, and helped with the sporting charity events to help the towns get something they wanted.

Southern Alberta did its part raising money for the war effort and local initiatives during the war. Raising money for the war effort through sporting charity events for overseas war ravaged countries, for the local training schools and the towns themselves helped bring the school and town communities together. Sporting charity events in Southern Alberta exemplify the research conducted by Filo, Funk and O'Brien, and Gaffney and Bale. The setting for sporting charity events lent itself to helping the ties between the school and towns grow and become aligned. Sporting facilities were the grounds for these ties to develop. Much of the history between airport personnel and civilian members was left in hockey arenas and grass fields where baseball and soccer was played. Most of these facilities and charities no longer exist, and part of the history of the air force and civilian interaction has been lost with them. However, it is clear that the need for money during the Second World War was a very influential factor in the melding of civilian and air force communities in Southern Alberta.

Notes

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- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 35.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*; Refer to Chapter 3 and the potential loss of the Lethbridge Arena.
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- ⁵⁸ ““Lick Hitler” Ice Fete Monday at Arena,” *Lethbridge Herald*, February 13, 1941, 6.
- ⁵⁹ ““Lick Hitler” Ice Fete: Jamboree to be Staged at Lethbridge Arena Feb. 17,” *Lethbridge Herald*, February 10, 1941, 8; Miss Cantwell, and her skaters, performed for several charity sporting events in Southern Alberta in 1941. Miss Cantwell was a teacher and performer for the Glencoe Skating club in Calgary.
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Chapter Five

Conclusions and Recommendations

Exploring both geographic and relational notions of community,¹ this study places the maturing sporting relationship between civilians and military personnel in Southern Alberta during the Second World War as the focus of investigation and examination. Part of community, according to Minar and Greer, is the “extension of the bonds of kin and friendship to all those who share a common fate with us.”² It is therefore predictable that the civilian population reached out to the military schools and involved them in day to day interactions. The declining civilian population created increased incentive for towns to involve the nearby air force personnel in their sporting activities. The onset of the war and the integration of air force schools forced communities in Southern Alberta to reconstruct how they were operating.³ This study provides persuasive evidence that sport was a major factor, by providing positive common ties and social interaction, in the reconstruction process. As the war progressed, the military in Southern Alberta was responsible for keeping sport operating and functioning. Towns would not have been able to do it on their own because of the number of civilians leaving to join the war effort. The specific case studies of basketball and lacrosse in Macleod, hockey in Claresholm and Lethbridge and soccer in Medicine Hat, convey how ingrained into the civilian communities and how necessary the air force personnel became for sport to continue.

Early during the war, as the BCATP came to fruition, Southern Albertan towns experienced an initial economic boom as the schools were built and populated. Many of the towns in the area also developed a shortage of houses for the incoming air force personnel. Minar and Greer argue that it is issues like a housing crisis which give rise to

opportunities to develop joint solutions.⁴ The schools and towns worked together to solve the issue by providing land for temporary tents and trailers as well as petitioning civilians for rooms and rental opportunities. As air force students and officers became more comfortable in their new surroundings the matter of sports came to the forefront. The schools wanted to utilize sports as part of training and for morale. In many cases the towns helped the schools by providing sporting equipment, as the trainees in many cases could not bring it with them. This initial good will by Southern Albertan civilians opened a line of communication between the two communities through sport.

Initially, air force sport was a spectacle. They played exhibition games within the military community, or against civilian teams. The exhibition games were attended by civilians because they were curious about their new neighbours. By 1942, the air force men and women were becoming the backbone of sport. They entered teams into leagues that would have folded without them and started to organize large events like boxing matches and sport days. The addition of the schools in Southern Alberta began to change the sporting landscape. The air force was the catalyst for the revival of women's basketball and men's soccer in Southern Alberta, as well as being instrumental in the development of lacrosse, which did not have much traction in the area pre-war. Women's basketball in Lethbridge was terminated before the war due to lack of teams. The nearby school provided just enough teams for the revival of the league. RAF airmen used soccer as a way to interact with Medicine Hat civilians, and the city embraced the sport because of the success of No. 34. As the war continued, more Southern Alberta communities began to reconnect with soccer and soon a league was formed between almost all of the schools in the area. The revival of soccer was in most part due to the RAF airmen and

women who were stationed at the schools. The expertise and excitement they had for the game got locals excited about it as well. Lacrosse in Macleod developed out of a combined town and school effort. However, it was through military connections that the town was able to get equipment and have enough teams to start a league. By 1943, in Southern Alberta, most leagues were still in operation due to the participation of air force teams. Also by 1943 most sporting events, like boxing and sport days, were being organized and hosted by the schools. The schools and towns were invested in keeping sport alive because it was essential in promoting morale for civilians and military. Sport was the confirmation of the possibility; that the war would be over one day and things would get back to normal.⁵ As the military overtook Southern Alberta sport the towns adopted the air force teams as their own.

Sporting charity events developed into an important aspect of the civilian/military community development. The war was a binding factor in the initial interactions of the schools and towns. Sporting charity events included large numbers of civilians and air force personnel. Together they were able to raise money for overseas, for Canada, and for local issues that came up during the war. Unity and increased morale was the result of organising and attending these fundraising events. Sporting charity events were situations where solidarity developed between the schools and towns because there was a parallel interest. The sporting aspect of the event pitted one team against another; however, the reason for the competition was more about the entertainment factor and raising money than the outcome of the game.⁶ The occurrence of sporting charity events also attests to the awareness that the military and civilian communities began to have for each other. As the war progressed there were more fundraising events focussed on local school and town

concerns, particularly for facilities. The recreation centre for No. 15 and the pool for Claresholm would not have been completed without the money raised by sporting charity events. In addition, the money raised for each of the projects was contributed by both Claresholm civilians and members of No. 15. Sporting charity events identify the confidence schools and towns had in each other.

When it came time for the schools to disband and for the airmen and airwomen to return home, the local communities had mixed emotions. They were glad to see the war come to a close and to have their loved ones return home. However, they were also sad to see the members of the schools leave. They had become ingrained in Southern Albertan communities over the course of the war. There were difficulties integrating the military into civilian towns, but once they were in, it was also difficult for civilians to see them go. Sport was one of the prominent reasons why the bond between the schools and towns became so strong. Sport was something both sides already knew; they were able to get involved with each other through sport very quickly, and the need for sport during the war did not diminish, allowing for it to remain a constant in the relationship between the two communities. That air force teams became community teams was reinforced in the newspapers. At first writers referred to the airmen and airwomen and the teams from the schools as outsiders and others. As the war progressed and civilian teams disbanded with air force teams taking their place, in short time newspapers no longer referred to air force teams as the other. Air force teams became the town team and their glory and defeat was the glory and defeat of the town. This was particularly apparent through the case studies of basketball in Macleod, hockey in Lethbridge and Claresholm and soccer in Medicine

Hat. The teams in these case studies brought pride to both the school and the local community.

Recommendations for Further Study

Research in the area of military and sport in Canada has largely been ignored. It is understandable, to a point, given that Canada is not considered a military nation and has never been home to a large army, navy or air force over an extended period of time.

There are, however, many things to be learned from studies of this nature. The camaraderie, morale, and support that the air force and civilian communities developed through sport was an important factor in the training of the men who fought for Canada as well as for civilians who had to endure the war. The definition of amateur and professional sport continued to change due to sporting interactions between military and civilians during the war. Communities in Southern Alberta who were lucky enough to have air force stations assigned to their area experienced such benefits as new sports, new facilities, as well as caretaking of old facilities and an added dimension of expertise and skill that otherwise may have never been introduced.

Specifically, this study highlights the role of sport in Southern Alberta. Through this project, added to the limited literature, it is apparent that the addition of military schools into civilian communities had positive impacts on sport, and that sport was crucial in developing positive relations between the two. Each area of Canada would benefit from a study similar to this one, if only to determine the unique impacts of the military getting involved through the BCATP schools in different regions of Canada. In Southern Alberta, sporting facilities, along with soccer and lacrosse, were the longer term

legacies of the air force schools during the war. Each region of Canada would have different legacies, leaving behind different marks on the sporting heritage of the area. Researching different regions through sport would also help determine how communities throughout Canada had to reconstruct due to the war.⁷

The Services Sport League(s), which throughout the project was lurking in the background of the newspaper articles though never really talked about, would make for an interesting study. The League, and the president, had a great impact on how military personnel were allowed to play sport. A study of this nature could also highlight how military sport impacted the Canadian sporting landscape at a national level through investigation into the military teams that won the Grey Cup and Allan Cup. Research on this topic could also investigate what kind of role sport played politically at the federal level by analyzing how sport was used to manipulate military stations through assignment of talented athletes.

This project is based on community theory. It is my recommendation that this be carried over into a study of the Southern Alberta Service Hockey League, or any of the service hockey leagues that were operating during the Second World War, in an effort to analyze and place wartime hockey in the broader narrative of hockey in Canada. There is plenty of literature concerning the NHL during the war. What a study of this nature could bring to the already existing narrative is an added dimension to the role of hockey in Canadian communities. There was so much more that could have been said about the impact hockey had on these seven Southern Alberta communities, all because the air force stepped in and kept hockey going in the area.

Finally, the initial foundation for this project was supposed to be oral interviews of veterans who had trained in Southern Alberta during the Second World War. The personal experience, especially in relation to sport, of Canadian war veterans is a missing aspect in war and sport literature. Of all the recommendations to come out of this project, oral interviews with the veterans of this war are the most important. Interview data offers depth and context through the ability to question and explore certain events that cannot be gleaned from any other primary data source.⁸ They are also an aging generation that will not be with us to tell these stories for much longer.

Notes

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Coda: A Reflection on the Research Process

The process of writing this thesis has been an interesting experience in reflexivity. I was fully aware that the ideas I had for research going into my Master's program would likely be too lofty and complicated for a two year graduate degree. I did, however, stick to my main purpose in applying to graduate school, which was to research war and sport. I wanted to construct a part of Canadian sport and war history that was missing, all the while realizing that I would only be able to add one layer to the existing literature: my representation of the data I collected. The theoretical background of the project, and the decisions I made in constructing the narrative come from my personal family history.

My grandfather, Robert Staley, served in the armed forces during the Second World War and I have always been fascinated with the war because of him. He did not speak very much about his war experiences with his children, one of which is my mom, or with anyone really. He passed on when I was eighteen. I never did ask him about his experiences as a soldier because my mom said he did not like to talk about it. I know he went Absent Without Leave (AWOL) officially one time. He turned down getting promoted to Lance Corporal three times because he felt that officers had a greater chance of getting killed than normal soldiers did. He entered the service in August of 1943, but was not sent overseas until April, 1944. He first landed in Normandy after D-Day, was injured in Belgium and sent to an English hospital, sent back to the front in the Netherlands and was there for the liberation, and then crossed into Germany until his discharge in March of 1945. What I know of his sporting career comes from a booklet added to the Remembrance Day edition of the *High River Times* in 2003 and a plaque my mom found after he died. The newspaper booklet collected short histories from the High

River veterans of the Second World War and the Korean War. His history includes a short note that he played football in the Canadian Services League and also played hockey while overseas. The plaque my mom has hanging in her dining room is for the championship hockey team my grandfather played for in Regina during the 1941-1942 season.



Sport and the military in Canada, especially during war, is a fairly significant gap in academic literature. I wanted to rectify this, and once I was able to narrow my focus of a research topic to Southern Alberta and the role of sport in the integration of civilian and military communities I set out to add my interpretation of the collected primary data. What has become clearer throughout the writing process is the significance of the choices a historian has to make. Although there was a lot information available through newspaper accounts, I feel as though there are major holes in the data for this study. What I did not take into consideration was the short amount of time that airmen spent at each of the bases, as well as the number of different countries they had come from. Not only is

the number of veterans from the Second World War dwindling, but the way in which those who were airmen trained meant that they were moving from station to station spending only up to two months in different stages. They brought minimal possessions with them and then took that and whatever extra they gained with them as they left. I went to the archives in hopes of finding the monthly newspapers put out by each of the stations, but I only found copies from one of the seven schools included in this project. The nature of the training program also made it very difficult for me to track down veterans to could interview. My initial proposal for the project was based on conducting oral interviews with veterans who had trained in Southern Alberta. Once again the travelling nature of the BCATP trainee, and the fact that they came from all over Canada and the world hindered my plans.

However, what I did not expect as I started to make my way through newspaper accounts was the amount of information I would find. I struggled, especially in the writing of chapter three to select stories and cut others from the final draft. As I made my way through the newspaper data I began to develop a connection to the information I was uncovering. I can understand that sport has not been a large part of the military narrative in Canada; however the more I have researched the BCATP the more I am left wondering why it has not been made a part of Alberta school curriculums. This was one of the few times in Canadian history when the military had permanent residence in and near civilian communities. As well, many of the airports in this province are a result of the BCATP. As a native Southern Albertan, with very strong ties to the area on both sides of my family, I feel as though my education has been lacking, both at the secondary and post-secondary level.

In terms of being able to give voice to this time period and these people, my perspective is very limited. I have never experienced war. I have lived through economic instability, however not to the level it was coming out of the Depression. The closest I have come to feeling like I was united with other Canadians across the nation was during the 2010 Olympic Games and the feeling of nationalism that encompassed the country during those two weeks. However, my experience of nationwide unity was very different from what I would call the forced unity that came out of the demands of war. On the other hand, I feel someone needs to bring this story to Albertans and especially Southern Albertans. It is an important part of our military and sporting heritage and history.

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