BAGGATAWAY TO LACROSSE: A CASE STUDY IN ACCULTURATION
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When two societies collide, the degree, rate and type of change is determined by the dominant values, beliefs and norms of the groups; by their intentions and aspirations; by their technological levels; and by the nature of the contact and the numbers involved. Of all the changes that occurred throughout the long history of the native North American, none were as traumatic as those that followed the appearance of the European. Here change was evident in its entirety—passive and violent, sought and forced, small and large, slow and sudden, smooth and spasmodic.

Alfred Kuhn,¹ an economist, showed clearly that cultural change is most significant when markedly different societies come into contact or merge. Certainly the differences between the aboriginal American and the European were considerable. Although societal fusion in the New World was rare, cultural change did occur through the diffusion of cultural traits. In theory this was a two-way street. In reality, the native American borrowed more from the European than visa-versa. Through the process of acculturation, traditional First Nation cultures were eroded and modified rapidly, and more dramatically than during any other period of their history.²

The Norse established communities in Labrador long before Columbus "discovered" the New World. Yet, prolonged and constant contact between Europeans and native North American peoples did not really begin until the dawn of the seventeenth century. This started in 1598 with the founding of a Spanish colony on the Rio Grande in New Mexico, and was followed shortly after by a French settlement at Port Royal, Nova Scotia (1604), and an English community in Jamestown, Virginia (1607).

Conflict was not long in the making. Often it resulted from white intransigence, indifference or greed, and in all instances brought massive changes to the aboriginal's world. Usually friction was the result of European pressure for more land or of native desires to obtain luxury trade items—livestock, alcohol, tobacco, foods and beverages, cotton and wool products, glass beads, metal tools and weapons. Frequently it stemmed from religious differences, political alliances, economic rivalries, or simple racial discrimination. The result was that Europeans commonly viewed the
indigenous peoples as a problem. Too often, the solution was to restrict them to small areas, to remove them completely from the region and their traditional lands—or to eliminate the "problem" entirely.

Different solutions were applied in different areas of North America at different times. Armed conflict erupted as early as 1672 with the elimination of the New England Wampanoags and the 1692 defeat of the southern Pueblo by the Spanish, and ended in 1885 with the failure of the second métis rebellion in Manitoba, the capture of Geronimo's Apaches in the Southwest the following year, and the massacre of the Sioux at Wounded Knee, South Dakota in 1890. The period between saw nearly 400 treaties made, broken and remade in the United States and some 15 or so established in Canada. Most contained agreements about land and required the natives to confine themselves to a "homeland territory"—a reservation. Although the Canadian Government generally treated their First Nation peoples better than did the Government of the United States, in both countries, their way-of-life had been irreversibly and dramatically changed by the end of the nineteenth century.

While recognizing that the vibrations of contact were felt by both groups, Indian and Caucasian, this essay focuses solely on the Indian. Specifically, it glances at the changes that occurred in the game of lacrosse as a result of European contact, and at the relationship of these changes to the shifting politico-economic climate of the native North American.

The role of lacrosse in preparing the pre-European Indian for the task of tribal provision and protection was considered in an earlier work. This study concluded that certain skills and traits developed through the game and its associated training sessions were of both direct and indirect value to the native in the spheres of economics and defense.

Physical skills, such as throwing and catching, developed both arm-shoulder strength and hand-eye coordination. Deceptive-eluding techniques and the amount of running associated with the game promoted agility of mind and body, lower trunk strength and speed. Bodily contact resulting from stick swinging, wrestling and fist fighting permitted certain skills, valuable in a close-combat situation, to be practiced. Simultaneously a player experienced and learned to respect physical abuse. All aspects of the game contributed toward a more efficient cardio-respiratory system.

As a team game, lacrosse encouraged younger players to assume leadership roles, and helped established leaders consolidate their positions.