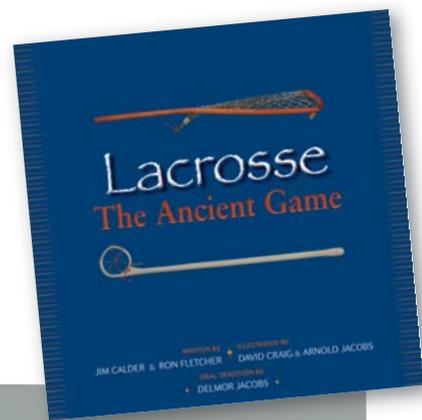


# LACROSSE— THE ANCIENT GAME

## BRINGING THE HISTORY OF LACROSSE TO LIFE



// By Melissa Yollick

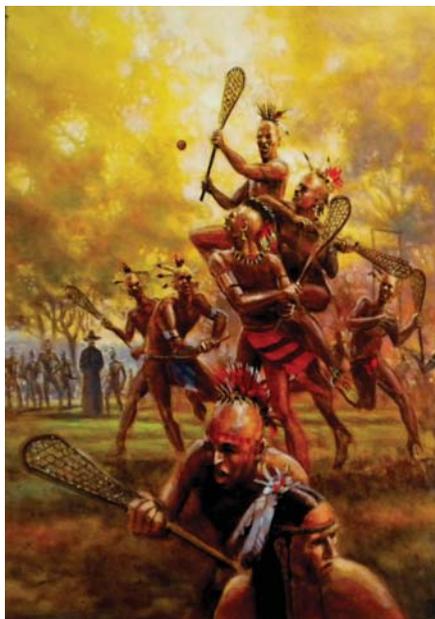
Just thumbing through Jim Calder's and Ron Fletcher's *Lacrosse — The Ancient Game*, the newest lacrosse book published in Canada, it's clear that this is not your typical book about the team sport. Page after page is filled with coloured illustrations with some original artwork making its debut. The details would catch any keen eye, but make no mistake — this is no ordinary picture book. Complete with historic and cultural significance and the Native Americans' oral tale that is making its first appearance in print, *Lacrosse — The Ancient Game*, is as heavy on substance as it is on artistry.

In an interview with author Jim Calder, his passion for the game, and drive to pass down the importance of its history and culture, was evident. He felt the need to create a book that filled a gap in the current published literature on lacrosse. "What was out there was lacking in history and culture which is a special part of the game but wasn't accessible to the lacrosse community. That's what this book does," says Jim.

In fact, the book represents a significant milestone in the history of lacrosse. For thousands of years, this game has been played on reservations around Lake Ontario — but this marks the very first time the Native American oral tradition, explaining how the game ties into their culture, has been put in print.

"Historical records on lacrosse are pretty well documented...I did extensive research in books, on the internet, through articles and magazines, and found there were certain patterns," adds Jim.

But what was missing from all his research was the oral tradition of the game and how it plays a role in the Native American culture, tied to such things as healing and preparation for war. Recited by Cayuga Faithkeeper Dao Jao Dre (known as Delmor Jacobs in English), the oral tradition explains the significance of "the Creator's game." "The Iroquois view this as much more than a game. It's a spiritual event played for entertainment of the Creator," says Jim.



To obtain permission to capture this tale in print for the first time in history, Jim sought Delmor's approval, since it is a sacred story in the Native American culture. Jim adds, "The oral tradition had never been in print before....Just that alone is important to have in the book as the game grows."

Another dimension of this book that makes it stand out is the original art by Arnold Jacobs, an Onondaga Nation Hereditary Chief at Six Nations reservation, who not only provided First Nations art and his own paintings, but also some brand new ones, never seen before. The book also features illustrations from David Craig, a well-respected and award-winning artist.

Jim's interest in lacrosse began at childhood. As a Canadian that grew up in the U.S., he started playing field lacrosse in Long Island, New York, and his talent took him all the way to Hobart College on a field lacrosse scholarship. His big break came in 1978 when team Canada was looking for players for the world championships. Jim made the team, and his return to Canada.

This was Canada's very first field lacrosse gold medal, and what a victory it was! The U.S.

was up 28 to 4 when Canada came back and beat them in double overtime. "The U.S. was dominant at the time the Canadians won the gold medal. It was a terrific experience... Lacrosse played a big role in my life in terms of my education and great moments in my life like winning gold...It was a guiding force for me," adds Jim.

Now in his mid-fifties, Jim is still involved with lacrosse, but feels a different need to share his passion and love of the sport. "I now have a greater interest in the history and culture of the game," says Jim. As the sport's popularity grows, there become fewer players who make a connection to its history. "I tried to bring the history to life....As I watched the game grow from four countries in 1978 to today being the fastest-growing game in North America according to Sports Illustrated, it just boomed," adds Jim. He says that traditionally, lacrosse was more of a tight knit community, but the expansion of the sport (now played in more than 30 countries around the world) has brought all new people to the game. "Now, people don't know the history and culture, and I thought it was important to create a book that describes the spiritual side...No other team game has a spiritual side like this," says Jim. "I hope that the lacrosse community reconnects with the roots of the game...to know where it came from and to treat it with respect."

Thanks to some help from the Canadian Lacrosse Foundation, Jim's book has been very well received by the lacrosse community, and is already in its second print less than a year after it was launched.

For anyone interested in purchasing *Lacrosse — The Ancient Game*, visit [www.lacrossetheancientgame.com](http://www.lacrossetheancientgame.com) to order a copy or view a list of retailers that carry the book. As Jim puts it, "Anyone who loves the game would like to have this book as a reference in their home." ♦

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