

# Medicine Game

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Livia Šavelková, Tomáš Petrání, and Milan Durňák. 2014. *Lacrosse – It's a Way of Life*. Cinepoint Ethnographic Film, 2014, 62min, English/Czech.

Šavelková, Petrání and Durňák have successfully produced a charming ethnographic film about multiple cultural layers in the yet not very known globalized sports of box and field lacrosse. By featuring bodily practices as a “Medicine game”, a “sports” activity and an intercultural encounter, the film opens ways of reflection on the significance of bodily practice and the connected (mutual) exoticization of practitioners.

By showing the Iroquois Nationals men's team's first visit to the Czech Republic during the 2011 World Indoor Lacrosse Championship, the film focuses on the political and spiritual aspects of the game in the interviews and examines various aspects of competition and sport in-game scenes. By introducing key figures of the Czech lacrosse development, it reconstructs a short history of lacrosse in their country and provides background information on the contact between Native Americans and the Czechs during the times of closed borders. It also extends to the scouts and woodcraft movements of the 1970s, which influenced the development of lacrosse in its various forms. By this, the authors offer explanations of the current formation of lacrosse in the Czech Republic and Europe.

The film provides a differentiated spectrum of conceptions of lacrosse to avoid stereotypization of the exotic other, respectively, the noble savage or the post-socialist Czech. One can observe the film crew's culturally sensitive approach by focusing on self-images, the process of cultural encounter of specific teams and highlighting respective mutual gestures. In a setting of formerly stark stereotypical images, state censorship and the constant evolution of lacrosse, this seems to be especially necessary. The film's interviews indicate the development of international lacrosse as a process of translation of a local ritual to a global practice, as one could summarize by the words sportification and institutionalization. Those

come along with shifts in meaning, practice, and social organization from which not all actors connected to lacrosse may profit equally.

To walk the fine line of adequate representation, the English-Czech subtitles are put with accuracy and caution in order to avoid misinterpretation. Though they sometimes tend to distract the viewer from the film's imagery, the speakers' original words also provide the lay viewer of lacrosse with necessary framing information.

The film furthermore subtly hints at the longing for the sovereignty of the Native American team, which travels on their "own" passports, making it not only a contribution to the methodology of representation in the ethnographic film but also a globalized sports culture with an inner logic of national representation. The concept of an international championship affirms the existence of nations and provides the opportunity for expressing ideas of belonging. The film respectfully draws on the emotions of the athletes involved, who are moved by the "honour" of being the ambassadors of "their people".

The informed (sports) anthropologist may use this work as a valuable case study of sportification, the "deeper level" of "spiritual" or national identity through sporting practice, as well as the multifaceted individual benefits of sport games. This ubiquitous topic finds a very appealing tone in "playing with a good mind" without overstretching it. Šavelková and her team tell an interesting story about the history and contemporary practice of lacrosse simultaneously for both sides of a cultural encounter driven by this sport. They succeed in assigning a multi-levelled meaning to the development of "bumping hips", what the Haudenosaunee word for lacrosse literally means, in a rapidly growing global sporting activity for those who "have been [playing] for 200 years" as well as those who have played for "only 30" years.

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