Is Hockey Really for Everyone?

Is it true that hockey is for everyone, when some people are suffering from racism in hockey? Saul, Tyler Woodhouse, and Jordin Tootoo have suffered from racism in hockey. They are First Nations people of Canada. **How has hockey treated the First Nation people?** The book, *Indian Horse*, written by First Nations author Richard Wagamese, is about the life of Saul, the protagonist, and the life of the First Nations and how they cope with their hardships of racism. The story takes place between 1950s to 1970s in Ontario. The CBC news article, “Icing racism in hockey: Players speak out,” written in 2014 by CBC journalist, Karen Pauls, is about real lives of aboriginal hockey players who has been discriminated in hockey. **In *Indian Horse* and “Icing racism in hockey: Players speak out,” they both talk about racism and discrimination towards the First Nations people when they play hockey by both the fans and the systems. However, in *Indian Horse*, hockey is just one of many ways of how the First Nations people were discriminated; although, in “Icing racism in hockey: Players speak out,” real hockey players who has actually been discriminated by fans and the system tell their story and want people who has discriminated them feel how the players felt. Regardless of this difference, reconciliation between the First Nations players and people who discriminated are needed as well as sincere apology.**

*Indian Horse* depicts racism and discrimination that were prevalent towards the First Nation people in 1950s to 1970s. The book shows many specific incidents of racism and discrimination. In *Indian Horse*, the problem is mostly shown in the ice rink. For example, Saul the protagonist of the story is kicked out from his team just because white players do not want to play with Saul; even though, he is good enough to play. Even the fans and the systems discriminate Saul’s team and Saul’s home fans. To explain further, after Saul is kicked out from his team, when he asks Father Leboutilier about his conversation with the coach, Father Leboutilier says, “The parents of other players want their own kids to play … they are not on the ice as much as you are” (Wagamese 91). Even though Saul is way better than other players, he was kicked out from the team because he belongs to a First Nation people, and other parents were not happy with the First Nation player to take up their children’s play time. Secondly, white people teams does not want to play against Saul’s team. In the story, Fred Kelly says, “we play Native tournaments. Every reserve across our territory has a team … anyway, we love hockey. Trouble is, the mill town teams don’t want anything to do with us. They won’t play us even though we’re good enough. Our kids don’t get to play in their town leagues either” (Wagamese 94). Saul’s team need to drive miles and miles to play against native teams. Lastly, after Saul plays against white people teams, he realizes:

I started to notice things after that. I started to see a line in every arena we played in. It showed itself as a stretch of empty seats that separated the Indian fans from the white ones. Police were stationed at the separate entrance they shunted our people through. I saw that a lot of players on the opposing teams would not remove their hockey gloves to shake our hands after a game. Some of them didn’t even leave the bench. (Wagamese 137)

The fans and the system discriminate Saul’s team and their fans in hockey. There is racism towards the First Nations people in hockey.

“Icing racism in hockey: Players speak out” is a news article of interviews on the First Nation hockey players about racism in hockey. It is a non-fiction interview of real players out there. In the article, there are two First Nation hockey players who has been suffering from racism. Tyler Woodhouse, a nineteen year old player, plays for the Penguins Junior B hockey team which is an aboriginal team based on the Penguins First Nation in Manitoba. However, he has also played a lot in non-aboriginal teams as well, and he said, “We get a lot of comments like, ‘You don’t belong here, dirty Indians.’ A lot of thing like that. It leads to more and more” (Pauls, 2014). Also, he says that he hears racial slurs no matter what team he is in and he thinks they intentionally do that as a strategy. The abusive words come not only from the players, but also from a lot of spectators, parents, and people from other teams. Jordin Tootoo, who is the first Inuk to play in the NHL, started playing hockey in Rankin Inlet, Nunavut, and encountered racism early in his career. He recalled, “The first time I ever faced racism was when we went down south to play in a couple of native tournaments. The fans and the people away from the rink were calling us names” (Pauls, 2014). He also explained his recent experience of racism, but he did not repeat what was said to him at the time. It shows how much he has been hurt from the experience. Tootoo has spoken to the NHL about taking a zero-tolerance position on racist comments. There has definitely been racism on the First Nation hockey players from the fans and the systems in hockey.

*Indian Horse* and “Icing racism in hockey” have a common that is about a racism. However, they have differences. The first difference between *Indian Horse* and the CBC article is that *Indian Horse* is happening in between 1950s to 1970s and “Icing racism in hockey: Players speak out” is written in 2014. It means there has been a racism on the First Nations in hockey for a long time. The difference between two of them is that *Indian Horse* is a fiction story and “Icing racism in hockey: Players speak out is a non-fiction story. People can learn and realize about racism in hockey when they see the non-fiction article, but they may not feel how the First Nations people felt. People can feel how the First Nations people felt and the atmosphere of the story when they read the book because the book has a power of delivering emotions. Lastly, in *Indian Horse*, racism in hockey is one of various racisms in the story; however, in “Icing racism in hockey: Players speak out is about just a racism in hockey. People may not focus on a racism in hockey when they read *Indian Horse* and focus other things like the residential school or abuses, but people definitely focus on a racism in hockey when they read “Icing racism in hockey: Players speak out”.

In conclusion, both of sources show a racism on the First Nations people in hockey by fans and the system. They also show how much the First Nations people suffers and how much they need the reconciliation and an apology from racists. How can people say that hockey is for everyone when majority takes an advantage and discriminate minority just because of race? Hockey and Canada have treated the First Nations people awfully and they need to reflect on themselves.

Citations

Wagamese, Richard. Indian Horse : a Novel. Vancouver, BC :Douglas & McIntyre, 2012. Print.

Pauls, Karen. “Hockey Players Speak out about Sport's Racism | CBC News.” *CBCnews*, CBC/Radio Canada, 14 Nov. 2014, www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/icing-racism-in-hockey-players-speak-out-1.2831319.