

# The 100th Anniversary of Winnipeg Falcons' Olympic Win

By Susan Hughes

## KEY CONCEPTS & ISSUES

When the scrappy underdog Winnipeg Falcons hockey team found themselves winning a spot at the Olympic Games in the summer of 1920, they had to fundraise to afford the trip across the ocean to Antwerp, Belgium. Once there, they ended up winning the first ever gold medal in ice hockey, thrilling Canadians country-wide. How might examining sports teams and events of the past be useful to us today? How might sports affect relationships between people (for example, bringing them together)? Students will reflect on whether, and how, sport affects our identities as individuals and as Canadians (such as personal and political values and beliefs).

- Political Identity
- Concept of Personal Identity
- Concept of Canadian Identity
- Cause and Consequence
- Historical Significance

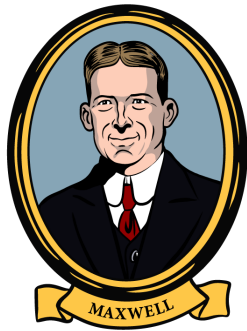
## MATERIALS REQUIRED

- *Golden Boys: The Winnipeg Falcons of 1920* graphic novel
- Computers or devices with Internet access
- Materials needed for preparing presentations (notebooks, pens)

**SUBJECTS:** Sports, Canadian History

**DURATION:** 4 to 5 classes





## EXPECTATIONS/OUTCOMES

The overall expectations listed below serve as an entry point for teachers. Teachers are encouraged to make connections to specific expectations in their region and grade. Students will:

- Explain how sports activity may affect social-emotional learning skills and the ability to learn and build resilience;
- Describe how some fundamental values and beliefs, both personal and those associated with democratic citizenship in Canada, may be related to sports activities and organizations;
- Explain how various individuals, groups, and events, including some major international events, contribute(d) to the development of identities and citizenship in Canada;
- Communicate their ideas, arguments, and conclusions using various formats and styles, as appropriate for the audience and purpose.

## CURRICULUM LINKS

- Social Studies
- History and Geography
- Civics and Citizenship/Politics in Action
- English Language Arts
- Equity, Diversity, and Social Justice

## BACKGROUND

Canada has always been a land of immigrants. Manitoba is no different. By the early 1900s, it was home to its First Peoples, as well as Métis, and many settlers from Europe, such as Ireland, Scotland, England, Russia, Ukraine, and also Iceland. Hockey had become a popular sport in Manitoba by that time; in 1908, there was both an amateur senior men's league and a professional senior men's league. Some parents even flooded their backyards so their children could play hockey! Especially keen was young Frank Frederickson, as were his neighborhood buddies. They attended the same school and church, were fair-haired, fair-skinned, and tall—and none of the leagues, made of players of British ancestry, would allow the Icelandic boys to join. So in 1911, the young men formed their own team, the Winnipeg Falcons, and began competing in the Manitoba Independent League. In 1915, they won the Independent Hockey League title.

Then, in 1917, the members of the Winnipeg Falcons team joined many other Canadians in heading overseas to fight in the First World War. At the war's end, two members of the team had been killed. Nevertheless, in 1919 the Falcons reassembled, recruiting a few new players to replace those who were lost. That first season, 1919-1920, they not only won the Winnipeg league division, but they also won the provincial championship, which qualified them to compete in Canada's amateur championship. They came out on top, defeating the University of Toronto Varsity Blues 11-5 to win not only the coveted Allan Cup—but the opportunity to represent Canada in the Olympic Games! It was the first time hockey had been included in the Olympics.

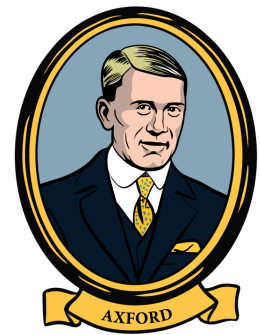
Days later, the Winnipeg Falcons—eight players and one substitute—boarded a ship for Antwerp, Belgium. Seven teams competed: Belgium, Czechoslovakia, France, Sweden, Switzerland, the United States, and Canada. Over a period of six days (reduced from the planned ten days) in April 1920, the Falcons played in three games. Heavily favored, with the American team being a concern mainly because many of its players were Canadian, the Falcons ended up coaching their European opponents during practice. The Falcons won their quarterfinal game against Czechoslovakia 15-0 and their semi-final game against the United States 2-0. The final gold medal game was against Sweden: Canada won 12-1.

The year 2020 was the 100th anniversary of the Winnipeg Falcon's gold medal win at the Olympic Games.

### STEP ONE:

#### TEACHER DIRECTED DISCUSSION

- With students, read a short book, or excerpts from a book, that explores diversity within hockey, or any other popular sport, for example:
  - Picture book biography *Mamie on the Mound: A Woman in Baseball's Negro Leagues* by Leah Henderson
  - Picture book biography *Breaking the Ice: The True Story of the First Woman to Play in the National Hockey League* by Angie Bullaro
  - Non-fiction *Hard Road to Victory: The Chatham All-Stars Story* by Brock Greenhalgh
  - Excerpts from the non-fiction MG book *Fighting for Gold: The Story of Canada's Sledge Hockey Paralympic Gold* by Lorna Schultz Nicholson
  - Graphic novel *Pelé: The King of Soccer* by Eddy Simon
  - MG biography *Becoming Muhammad Ali* by James Patterson and Kwame Alexander
- Using the readings as springboards, discuss with students connections between sport activity and personal traits and/or concepts reflecting values and beliefs, such as: grit, perseverance, and determination; inclusivity and exclusivity; prejudice, discrimination, and other barriers to success; and what possibilities sports can offer individuals and groups. For example, ask questions such as:
  - What challenges do all athletes face?
  - What specific challenges did this athlete face, and why?
  - What personal qualities did this athlete need to achieve success?
  - How did this sport activity cause division or bring people together, and why?
  - What would you have done to change this situation?
- Explain to students that 2020 was the 100th anniversary of the Winnipeg Falcon's win at the Olympic Games in the summer of 1920. Using the Background content and graphic novel, explain to them who the Falcons were and how they came to play in the Olympics. Ask students to share their responses. Prompt with questions such as:



- Do the players' difficulties joining teams because of their Icelandic heritage reflect your own personal values and beliefs? Your values and beliefs as a Canadian? Would this happen today?
- How did Canadians respond to the Falcons' winning the Olympic Games, and why? How does their win make you feel? How and why can a sports activity elicit this kind of feeling?

## STEP TWO: STUDENT-LED EXPLORATION

1. Have students in partners discuss the purpose and value of sports to individuals and communities (physical, emotional, and social). Ask prompting questions, such as:
  - a. What are some physical activities you enjoy, and why?
  - b. What are some ways to be active, other than organized sports? (hiking, gardening, doing household chores, cycling, snowshoeing, swimming)
  - c. Why is physical education a subject we include in our school curriculum? Why is it important for each of us to stay active? How can taking part in a small-group or team sport benefit us? (relieves stress, keeps our bodies healthy, gives us opportunities to interact with others and make friends, helps us learn discipline, develop confidence and self-awareness, make good choices, and so on)
  - d. What do you find challenging about being on a team with others (sports or otherwise) and what do you like most?
- Students in partners discuss why many sports teams have names and logos. Have them jot down, or draw, examples of team names and logos with which they're familiar and note why they think the name and/or logo was chosen.

Students invent a team for a particular sport, writing brief biographies of the team members, creating a name for the team, and designing the necessary equipment (for example, jerseys, helmets, bats/sticks, footwear, pads), and a logo.

They write a short explanation of why they made these choices.

- The Canadian Paralympic Team has a beaver as a mascot. According to the team's website:

"As Canada's national animal, I can be found all over the country in our beautiful lakes and rivers. I move slowly on land, but because of my webbed feet I am an excellent swimmer. I might not have the best eyesight, but I make up for it with my strong sense of hearing, smell, and touch. I don't let any challenge stop me!

I always work hard and persevere through any situation so that I can accomplish all of my tasks and goals. I believe that anything is possible, and I'm proud to share that belief with the amazing athletes who are training to be the best in the world and represent Canada at the Paralympic Games."



Students independently or in pairs consider questions such as:

- What is a mascot?
- How might a team choose a mascot?
- How might it help a team?

Challenge students to choose, and draw, a mascot for the school, your classroom, real teams or imaginary teams, and explain their reasons.

### STEP THREE: CULMINATING ACTIVITY

#### 1. Preparing for the Activity: Doing Extra Research

Students gather in groups of three to create a retelling of the Falcon story for younger children (ages 5 to 9). Explain they will create a non-fiction retelling, using only facts, or an informational retelling, using invented dialogue and scenes that are based on reality. They will share the final product with other students.

Discuss with students:

- Think about how to turn history into a narrative that instructs and entertains. Will it be non-fiction or informational fiction? (Have them choose depending on their audience and purpose.)
- Think about whether you'll create the story as a written document, a video, a podcast, and so on. Will you add visuals, and if so, will they be photos, illustrations, comics?

#### 2. Executing the Activity

Students research to find out more details about the Winnipeg Falcons and their experience at the Olympic summer games. They create their narratives.

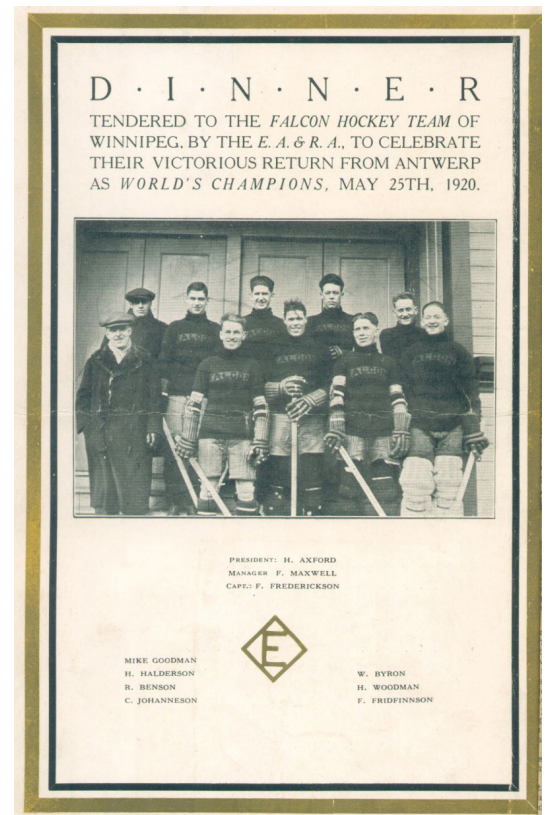
- Where will you begin your narrative? What will the middle be about? How will you end?
- Will you have a “refrain” that repeats?
- What will be the thread that connects the story throughout?
- Will there be a theme or “message,” and if so, what will it be?

Students record their thoughts using text, audio, images, or video. They share their work with younger students.

- What was the impact of your narrative on your audience? How do you know?

#### 3. Final Critique/Reflection

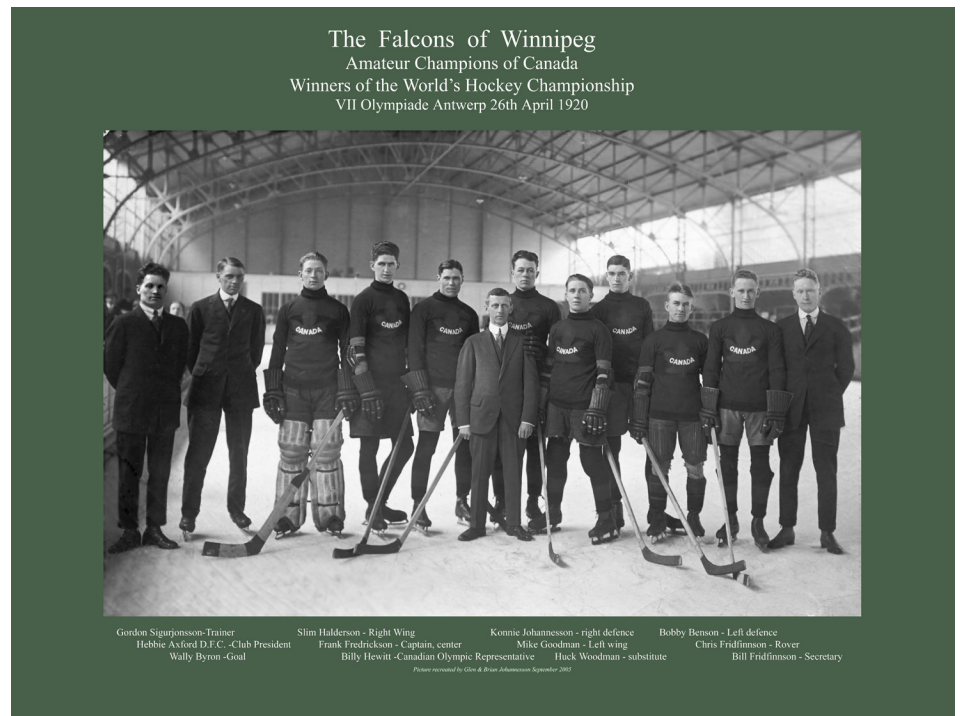
- In what ways do you feel your work is successful?
- In what ways would you change your work to improve it?
- How does your work reflect your understanding of the historical experience of the Winnipeg Falcons and what this could mean for other Canadians?



One of several complimentary banquets held to honour the Falcons' Olympic victory.

## OPTIONAL EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

- If possible, obtain photos of the Winnipeg Falcons in full hockey gear and photos of several contemporary NHL teams. Compare the older hockey equipment to contemporary hockey equipment, doing research to help analyze and explain the differences.



- Students make their own mini foosball/air hockey table with craft materials. Have them write a list of rules for the teams, including the purpose of the game, instructions, and participant make-up and conduct. They reflect on which of their own personal beliefs and values they rely on when creating the rules.
- Have students research sports or active games with roots in a particular cultural community. If possible, have them explain and even demonstrate the game live or using video footage or displaying photos to the class. (If possible, help them access any necessary equipment or visual sources.) For example, lacrosse has origins in games played by Haudenosaunee and other First Nations. Cricket is played extensively in South Asia.
- Non-profit organizations worldwide, including in Canada, use sports as a way to support youth and sustainable development. For example, Chance to Play is a non-profit organization that ships soccer gear around the world and to Aboriginal communities across Canada. Slum Soccer helps marginalized communities in India using soccer as “the messenger.”

Small groups of students choose one organization, research, and then discuss why and how sports and play can make a difference to young people.

- Students reflect on why some communities might not offer organized sports (discuss economics and priority setting, funds needed to build and maintain pools, outdoor hiking and snow trails, parks, rinks). They research how many, and which, organized sports their own community offers, and how many, and which, other kinds of sports or fitness opportunities take place in their community. They create a chart outlining who the activities are aimed at, including age range, gender, abled/disabled, and so on. They reach a conclusion about equity of opportunities in their community. How does this reflect on their community's values and beliefs?
- Students discuss the concept "fairness is not sameness." How are equality and equity different? They discuss and list reasons why the concept is important to sports activities or organizations.
- Students watch (online or live) or participate in a sports activity with which they're unfamiliar. Have them record their feelings as they watch, specifically about interest and inclusion. Would they find this activity personally inviting? Would they encounter any barriers if they wished to engage in this sport regularly? How does this affect their idea of beliefs and values in the sports world?



## RESOURCES

### GENERAL WEBSITES:

- Manitoba Hockey Hall of Fame: [mbhockeyhalloffame.ca](http://mbhockeyhalloffame.ca)
- Winnipeg Falcons: [winnipegfalcons.com](http://winnipegfalcons.com)
- Ontario Curriculum, Grades 1–8: Health and Physical Education, 2019 revised: [edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/elementary/2019-health-physical-education-grades-1to8.pdf](http://edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/elementary/2019-health-physical-education-grades-1to8.pdf)
- Slum Soccer: [slumsoccer.org/index.php](http://slumsoccer.org/index.php)
- Chance to Play: [chancetoplay.ca](http://chancetoplay.ca)
- Sport Information Resource Centre—Anti-Racism Resources: [sirc.ca/safe-sport/anti-racism-resources](http://sirc.ca/safe-sport/anti-racism-resources)

### VIDEO DOCUMENTARIES:

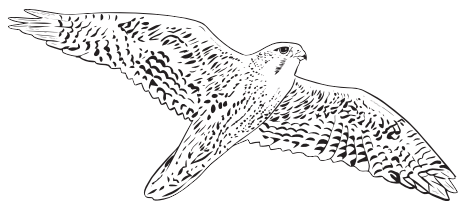
- CBC documentary, “The Winnipeg Falcons”: [cbc.ca/player/play/2597947238](http://cbc.ca/player/play/2597947238) (8:27)

### CHILDREN’S BOOKS (FOR STUDENTS AGES 9 AND UP):

- Picture book biography *Mamie on the Mound: A Woman in Baseball’s Negro Leagues* by Leah Henderson
- Picture book biography *Breaking the Ice: The True Story of the First Woman to Play in the National Hockey League* by Angie Bullaro
- Non-fiction *Hard Road to Victory: The Chatham All-Stars Story* by Brock Greenhalgh
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ASSESSMENT	LEVEL 1 (50-59%)	LEVEL 2 (60-69%)	LEVEL 3 (70-79%)	LEVEL 4 (80-89%)	LEVEL 4+ (90-100%)
<b>KNOWLEDGE &amp; UNDERSTANDING</b>	Student does not demonstrate much knowledge and comprehension of whether, and how, sport affects our identities as individuals and as Canadians.	Student demonstrates some knowledge and comprehension of whether, and how, sport affects our identities as individuals and as Canadians.	Student demonstrates knowledge and comprehension of whether, and how, sport affects our identities as individuals and as Canadians.	Student demonstrates great knowledge and comprehension of whether, and how, sport affects our identities as individuals and as Canadians.	Student demonstrates outstanding knowledge and comprehension of whether, and how, sport affects our identities as individuals and as Canadians.
<b>THINKING &amp; INQUIRY</b>	Student's planning and processing skills are not very evident; student has demonstrated critical and creative thinking processes to a small degree.	Student's planning and processing skills are somewhat evident; student has demonstrated critical and creative thinking processes to a satisfactory degree.	Student's planning and processing skills are clearly evident; student has demonstrated critical and creative thinking processes to a good degree.	Student's planning and processing skills are very evident; student has demonstrated critical and creative thinking processes to a great degree.	Student's planning and processing skills are extremely evident; student has demonstrated critical and creative thinking processes to an outstanding degree.
<b>COMMUNICATION</b>	Student has communicated their concept of identity through discussions and writing with little degree of proficiency.	Student has communicated their concept of identity through discussions and writing with some degree of proficiency.	Student has communicated their concept of identity through discussions and writing with a good degree of proficiency.	Student has communicated their concept of identity through discussions and writing with a great degree of proficiency.	Student has communicated their concept of identity through discussions and writing with an outstanding degree of proficiency.
<b>APPLICATION</b>	Student used knowledge and skills of the concept of identity to make connections to their retelling of the Falcon story with little proficiency.	Student used knowledge and skills of the concept of identity to make connections to their retelling of the Falcon story with some proficiency.	Student used knowledge and skills of the concept of identity to make connections to their retelling of the Falcon story with a good degree of proficiency.	Student used knowledge and skills of the concept of identity to make connections to their retelling of the Falcon story with a great degree of proficiency.	Student used knowledge and skills of the concept of identity to make connections to their retelling of the Falcon story with an outstanding degree of proficiency.