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# ***I Dream: An Open Poem to Canadian Hockey Communities***

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## **Abstract**

This poem offers reflexions from my Black Canadian perspective on how hockey's lived-felt borders of un/belonging can be seen, felt, and imagined otherwise beyond its current state of toxic white-colonial, cis-heteropatriarchal cultures that keep out many "Canadians." This poem is addressed to adults connected to hockey, including fans, parents/caregivers, coaches, players, administrators, and officials who are curious to explore what hockey can actually be at its best, perhaps even imagining a hockey for everyone...or not. In the Appendix, I offer a link to an .m4a audio file containing a 10-minute audio-only performance of the poem.

## **Keywords**

Critical Race Theory, Black Studies, intersectionality, decolonialization, ice hockey, poetic inquiry, poetry

*I dream*

of popping the hockey bubble  
 using ingredients of ingenuity, determination, and grit  
 to make something beautiful right out of the rubble  
 Bye girl, resign  
 All the harms left behind  
 Whiteness, nah  
 Settler-coloniality, see ya  
 Heterosexism, peace queen  
 Ableism, so long  
 Macho-mascness,<sup>1</sup> good day  
 We have better ways to play

*I dream*

of a deeply, uncontainable-ly crippled, queered, maddened, fattened, femmed, affordable game.  
 One we can all be proud of; release the shame.

*I dream*

of hockey changing on the fly<sup>2</sup>  
 Embracing anti-racist, anti-colonial, and intersectional anti-oppressive ways  
 Bubbling up from *our* movements, setting status quos ablaze.

*I dream*

of hockey being used to integrate *them*  
 to decontaminate then fold their Whiteness into *our* pluralist, creolized, and global-majority  
 cultures,<sup>3</sup> yum.  
 Forget the bitterness of *their* extractive, exploitative, and eroding colonial-racial capitalist curse;  
 White hockey should learn from *us*,  
 be part of our *sweet* collectivist, connecting, regenerative, and healing multi-verse.

*I dream*

for everyone who wants in, who wants transformation, who's owed goodness  
 to receive all the richness the sport has to offer.  
 Our body-mind-souls deserve nothing less.

*I dream*

for everyone who wants out to have their own meaningful outlet;  
 to move, heal, be healthy, express joy, and physically, but not emotionally, sweat.  
 Hockey has never been and still isn't the only or best Canadian game.  
 Hockey doesn't have to be for everyone!  
 We all can and should make *our own* claim.  
 We won't get there without praxis.<sup>4</sup> Thinking, feeling, praying, planning, trying...  
 then thinking, feeling, praying, planning and trying anew.

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<sup>1</sup> Rao, 2019

<sup>2</sup> Szto, 2020

<sup>3</sup> Szto, 2020

<sup>4</sup> McGuire-Adams, 2021

We can fail forward into the grandest of freedoms...freedoms more pure and true.  
 One program won't do it. One club won't be enough.  
 Nor will one theme night, one campaign, or one standout player doing all the stuff.  
 The pay, the cups, the medals earned...they're all master's tools.<sup>5</sup>  
 They only go so far, on the way making us fools.

*I dream*

that recent declines,  
 drops in minor hockey,<sup>6</sup> can excite some urgency,  
 get dociled<sup>7</sup> hockey insiders off the sidelines.  
 Drops in growth can be a green light,  
 an invitation for more to join the fight,  
 to more deeply consider hockey's role  
 in giving us abundant access to recreation, leisure, and sport that makes us whole.

*I dream*

that White flight<sup>8</sup> will not devalue our claims to the sport,  
 that our hockeys will be embraced, not abandoned of support.  
 Indigenous, Brown, Asian, and yes Black too.  
 All these hockeys deserve investment. Even if *you* think they are new.  
 The space, the programs, the money should flow.  
 White men centered no longer, it's high time for the bubble to grow.

*I dream*

that race+-based data will be recorded<sup>9</sup>  
 then used such that BIPOC and *all* players are rewarded.  
 So even when players go through harm,  
 they have abundant options to sound the alarm,  
 then to seek justice for what they went through,  
 and without punitive, carceral logics that just piles on more poo.  
 Data needs to be used for meaningful progress,  
 change defined by us; they'll never know our stress.  
 Non-dominant communities are the ones left out.  
 The game was never made for us...I have no doubt.

*I dream*

that hockey players have repeated, progressive opportunity  
 to understand their relationship to all isms and how to they can coalesce in unity.  
 To combat harm in *their* sport  
 one-time learnings will always fall short.  
 Beyond the token training, workshop, or course,<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Lorde, 2007

<sup>6</sup> Kabetu et al., 2021

<sup>7</sup> Foucault, 1995

<sup>8</sup> Szto, 2020

<sup>9</sup> Hodd, 2022; Kabetu et al., 2021; Snelgrove & Kabetu, 2019; Szto et al., 2020

<sup>10</sup> Snelgrove & Kabetu, 2019; Szto et al., 2020; Ritondo et al., 2025; Szto, 2020

I long,<sup>11</sup> yearn,<sup>12</sup> for sustained dialogues,  
 ongoing talks offering a new life-source.  
 Talks in all of hockey's nooks, crannies, and cracks  
 so there's nowhere to hide, no way to go back.  
 In classrooms, changerooms, and stands.  
 On the ice, off the ice, in-between.  
 At dryland training, games, and the kitchen table.  
 From the local rink to the highest level inter-national and national championships.  
 Hockey should have nowhere anti-racism can lose its grip.

*I dream*

that hockey players will be listened to.<sup>13</sup>  
 There is no sense in sharing our guts and best dreams  
 just to be tossed aside, caving to the old regime.

*I dream*

that existing blueprints will be picked up,<sup>14</sup>  
 the ideas deserve to be tried, not ride the bench watching from close up.

*I dream*

that those writing the next steps in these blueprints<sup>15</sup> will dare to dream otherwise,  
 beyond being included<sup>16</sup>... trying a bigger dream on for size.

*I warn*

to the hockey protector:  
 get out of your own way, move *with* the sport sector.  
 Move before you are left behind.  
 Before the globalized, Browning capitalist economy turns completely against your kind.

*I will judge*

judge the sport on how well they can meet the test.  
 Watching and pushing as still more of a guest.  
 But I will not just sit back, wait and hope.  
 That is no way to world-build, barely a way to cope.  
 I will work harder, I will work more.  
 I'll strive in my circles to make hockey soar.  
 I haven't lost hope. No, I wish the sport well.  
 The potential for greatness makes my heart well.  
 I am routing for you. And us. And everyone.  
 Together we will make hockey its best, yet our work has just begun.

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<sup>11</sup> Thobani, 2007; Walcott, 2021

<sup>12</sup> Rochon & Dickerson, 2025

<sup>13</sup> Associated Press, 2022; Hodd, 2022

<sup>14</sup> Szto et al., 2020

<sup>15</sup> Srinivasan, 2022

<sup>16</sup> Bains & Szto, 2020; Forde et al., 2024; Litwiller et al., 2023; O'Dell, 2025; Peers et al., 2023

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## Appendix

Listen to the approximately 10-minute audio-  
only performance of the poem by clicking here:

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1WrhFmG9\\_6oX  
uLpZCrcBpxZZ28fpa4dzb/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1WrhFmG9_6oXuLpZCrcBpxZZ28fpa4dzb/view?usp=sharing)

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## Author Biography

Jordan O'Dell, PhD Student (he/his/him), is an interdisciplinary scholar, activist and practitioner working in the municipal sector. Without formal training or credentials in artistic practice, he notably does not claim the hyphenate of artist. However, he is drawn to art-based scholarship as an (more) accessible and powerful mode of storytelling to create and mobilize knowledge. His current lines of critical qualitative research broadly engage in/across the disciplines of critical race studies, critical disability studies, and critical leadership studies, all as they connect to community-based sport, recreation, and related human service contexts. The overarching goal of his scholarly agenda is to advance disability, racial, and social justice approaches to leadership, management, and governance.