

Why We Come Back to the World's Greatest Pond Hockey Tournament

When Danny asked me if I would write a few words to convey my sentiments of the World's Greatest Pond Hockey Tournament, he recommended I read the previous articles written in Ice Chips. After reading them, my first thought was, my name is not Bri(y)an, so how can I write it? The second was; these fine gentlemen are professionals with their prose, so I am not worthy. But then it struck me; one of the things that make the Pond Hockey Tournament so special is that we are all equal when it comes to our love of the game and the fun we have on Roulston's lake; whether it be Professional Hockey Players who have played the game at a level that most of us can only dream about, or a wayward Tobiqueur who lives in Egypt and skates on a small patch of ice next to the Nile River.

I was born and brought up in Plaster Rock and my history with the game is approaching the half century mark. As I look back, some of my earliest and fondest memories are of skating on the river and ponds of Plaster Rock and the surrounding area. This includes "the lake", that body of water that has become hallowed hockey ground for the 120 teams that gather each year to "live the dream". Whether it was going for a skate with my Dad in my formative years; or skating with The Panthers on "the lake" because the ice in the Arena was not ready; or leaving a New Year's Eve party at Robertson's camp to have a mid-night skate on "the lake" with my 8 year old brother Bruce; or taking George Pitt for a "twirl" on the head pond with Jeff Hollins; all are memories that are stamped in my subconscious and continue to influence the person I am.

During the past 25 years I have experienced life in many different countries and cultures. This has allowed my family and me the privilege of seeing and experiencing much of the world's beauty and many of the world's treasures. However, more than anything else, it has made me appreciate the beauty and the treasures of the Tobique River Valley and the town of Plaster Rock. It has also reinforced something I have always known; that the single biggest treasure on the Tobique is the people.

During our first two Pond Hockey Tournaments, I have had the pleasure to meet and socialize with many of the visiting players. If there is one common theme in all the conversations, it is the amazement and praise for the people of Plaster Rock and the genuine hospitality they show. Many of our visitors have never experienced people opening their homes and lives to "strangers"; they do not understand ladies showing up at their hotel door and offering to wash and dry their hockey equipment after the infamous rain delay; they have never eaten moose steak and eggs for breakfast with Dale or partridge stew and deer steak at 3 AM with Trevor; they have never had a "kitchen party" on the ice with a Fiddle Band playing; they have never had anyone repair their skates and not charge for it; they have never seen a town of 1200 people produce 300 volunteers; and they have never truly felt like an "honored guest".

People of Plaster Rock, you should be very proud of yourselves, the event you have created, and of the reputation you continue to grow. You are a town of "doer's" not "talkers"; "workers" not "watchers"; and most importantly, "givers" not "takers". As one of your native son's, I take tremendous pride in telling people I am from Plaster Rock.

What keeps us coming back to the World's Greatest Pond Hockey Tournament? You do!!

Bill Schofield
Cairo, Egypt
Member of - The Pharaoh's Global Connection