



Traffic and Furious connect with the Lil'wat Nation through ultimate

Beautiful Mount Currie plays host to ultimate showcase



When the athletes of Furious and Traffic arrived at the Xeṭólacw Community School, in Mount Currie, BC, they all had the same reaction: 'wow.' As top-level touring players, we've played ultimate at field sites around the world. Locations such as Lake Como, Italy and Medellin, Colombia come to mind as particularly picturesque settings to compete.

The community school fields are nestled in the shadow of Lil'wat Mountain and Mount Currie, with the staggering Saxifrage Mountain rising above all. The stunning location had an immediate impact on the visitors and created an instant connection to the natural world. For many of the players on Traffic and Furious, this trip to the Lil'wat community was our first time on a First Nations reserve. I had some feelings of apprehension, some nerves around acceptance. Would we be accepted and embraced? Natural feelings when being an outsider. Here's the thing about sports, and ultimate to be specific. Whether I felt like an outsider or not, whether I am playing in Italy, Colombia, UK or at the community fields in Mount Currie, once the field cones are laid, it's all the same. The nerves faded away and we let sport connect us.



Traffic arrived at the field-site first thing in the morning. For the top women's touring team in Vancouver, this trip had a dual purpose. For the first half of the day, the team participated in a training camp to prepare them for their upcoming trip to USA Ultimate Club Nationals. The second half would be a showcase of learning and connection with the Lil'wat community. Community members filtered down to the field to watch Traffic train and compete, by way of drills and intra-team scrimmages. Near the end of Traffic's practice, a small game of 4-on-4 broke out on the sliver of field available behind one of the endzones. Kids from the community were eager to play.

Traffic finished their last scrimmage and took a break to eat some food, stretch, and decompress after a tough four-hour session. In the meantime, the arriving members of Furious took the field, to warm up their bodies get to know the community. I threw with a couple of teens, Danny and Tayla. They showed me their throws and we worked on developing a few skills. Power wasn't an issue for Danny, as he could really chuck it, so we worked on control and touch. Tayla had sticky hands — meaning she could catch anything — so we worked on her backhand throwing a bit.

Before we played, Jimmy Roney, from Ultimate Spirit, welcomed everyone with enthusiasm. He exclaimed his excitement about the day's activities and openly discussed the vision of Ultimate Spirit — transformational connections between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. For Roney, days like October 11 in Mount Currie are examples of living that vision. He introduced Chief Dean Nelson, who welcomed the visiting players. Previously a P.E. teacher at Xetólacw, his passion for youth sports was clear. Roney and Chief Nelson shared their gratitude and excitement for the day.

The second half of the day was designed to showcase mixed ultimate. Members of Furious and Traffic would play together in a high-level game, then the community youth would get involved. The plan changed slightly when it became clear that the kids wanted to play. They had done enough watching. They wanted to run. Traffic and Furious players mixed in with the community kids and the game began. The scrimmage displayed everything that ultimate had to offer: beautiful throws, long runs, diving catches, exciting interceptions. The game also featured a few throwaways, drops, slipups and miscommunications. More than anything though, the game put smiles on everyone's faces. Shouting, laughter, some friendly teasing, piggybacks, barefoot races, the day had a festival feeling.

The game was a reminder of the power of community sport. Sometimes, there is little to connect people. Different backgrounds, different homes, different perspectives. Our differences often do more to divide us than our similarities connect us. But on this day, at this field, we let the sport bring us together.

After the on-field festivities had concluded, we all shared some food. Hamburgers, hotdogs, fruit, chips, and pretzels. Like any good community event, it's not fully complete until you share a meal; even if that meal is field-side burgers and dogs.

The group came together to reflect on the game and talk about the event. Jimmy provided some arm bracelets to the group as gifts. The multicolour bands had four colours. White represented the head, the mental side of the game. Black was your feet, or the physical aspects of the sport. Yellow stood for the heart, the emotional connection to ultimate. Red was your connection to something bigger than the sport; red was the spirit of the game. These small tokens could be given out by anyone to anyone who showed a pursuit and commitment to these tenants. Many were given out, for many reasons. Passing out these keepsakes was the perfect way to celebrate a successful day.

As we wrapped up, Jimmy and Chief Dean made one thing clear; they have set up this connection to be a repeat venture. The goal behind Ultimate Spirit is to create lasting connections. Traffic and Furious intend to return to Lil'wat, to continue to foster the meaningful relationship through sport. I can't wait to return, to learn, to connect and play.

Written by- Kevin Underhill

