

A STORY OF INCLUSION

JILLIAN WEIR

Jillian Weir was born February 9th 1993 in California. Jillian comes from a very diverse background. Her Canadian grandmother is Mohawk from the Tyendinaga Territory, and her father is from England and has Jamican parents. Jillian's father was also an athlete and even went to the Olympics three times! Sports have been a big part of Jillian's life ever since she was small.

“My brother and I would go to the track while Dad was coaching whether it was playing in the long jump pit, running around the track or hanging out on the field.” In school she played all different kinds of sports such as water polo, basketball and track and field. She was encouraged to try lots of different things.

Jillian began to focus on the sports of shot put and discus throwing in high school and then went on to university to compete. She ended up switching to hammer throwing and she made it to the Olympics. In the 2020 Summer Olympics in Tokyo Japan, Jillian finished in 19th place. This was the second best result ever by a Canadian woman in the hammer throw.



Jillian knows that being part of an inclusive environment is so important to her, as an athlete of colour. “Track and field is a sport where it doesn’t matter what your gender is, your size, or the colour of your skin, there is an event for everybody.”

During the summer, Jillian would travel back to Tyendinaga with family. This was an important connection back to Jillian’s Indigenous roots. “We would go to the reserve as often as we could. I just have such fond memories of seeing family and getting authentic moccasins and dream catchers. I always had a dreamcatcher in my room and I still do. There were little pieces of my background and culture that were comforting that I liked to have and be a part of.” Jillian still makes sure to go back to Tyendinaga, She even visited many schools on the reserve as a guest speaker with her grandmother in 2021. In California, Jillian and her family would attend a Pow Wow every Mother’s Day weekend. “My mom always made a point to take my brother and me to that so we would recognize that this is similar to our Indigenous family back home. It was something that we really looked forward to going to each year, just to be connected to the culture and support the families that were there.”

Inclusion is important to Jillian as a competitive athlete and an Olympian. “Everybody wants a place where they feel that they belong. When you compete in athletics and in sport, no matter what level, what matters is being able to go out there and do your best.”



LEARNING ACTIVITIES

LEARNING GOAL

By the end of the lesson students should have an understanding of what the word 'inclusion' means and what it can look like at school, in sports and in culture. Inclusion is a human right and it means that no one is excluded on the basis of their gender, race and disability. Students will learn about inclusion through an example of Pow Wow as a celebration day of diversity and inclusion of Indigenous culture.

MATERIALS

Jillian Weir Athlete story (either displayed where students can see or individual copies), Chart paper/ Board, sticky notes

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Jillian was given the chance to try a lot of different sports until she found one she enjoyed. Think of a time where you were given an opportunity to try something new and what the result was.

What does the word 'inclusion' mean?

What happens when we include people and what happens when we exclude people?

Why is being inclusive important at school?

Students from our school have many different backgrounds. Why is it important to celebrate all of our differences?



CONNECT

Read aloud Jillian Weir's athlete story with the whole class. As you read it, pause when examples of inclusion come up to give students a chance to connect the examples to the theme. Ex. Jillian is an athlete of colour as she represents both Black and Indigenous heritage. This is an example of diversity within sports. Aim to discuss at least three examples of inclusion from the reading.

PROCESS

Go over some of the discussion questions with the whole class and give students a chance to ask any questions. Introduce the concept of a Pow Wow to students. Pow Wows are a cultural celebration day within many different Indigenous cultures. Each territory within the United States and Canada has different ceremonies, traditional dances and regalia for the Pow Wows. They are about sharing and gathering together and celebrating through traditional dance, music and food.

Show this video to give students a visual representation of what they may see at a Pow Wow:

[YOUTUBE.COM/WATCH?V=IEPIELBIGHI&ab_channel=CBCKIDS](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IEPIELBIGHI&ab_channel=CBCKIDS)

You can also read and distribute this article:

[CBC.CA/KIDS/ARTICLES/DO-YOU-KNOW-WHAT-A-POWWOW-IS](https://www.cbc.ca/kids/articles/do-you-know-what-a-powwow-is)

Divide students into partners or small groups and instruct them to take turns sharing something they learned from either the video or the reading about Pow Wows. Allow 10 minutes for discussions to take place.

TRANSFORM

Bring the class back together and have each group share something they discussed. This is also a good opportunity to have students share a celebration from their own cultures so they can make connections between Pow Wows and their own cultural celebrations they are familiar with. End the lesson by summarizing that a Pow Wow is a celebration and expression of culture and why it is important to have different cultural celebrations.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Canadian Olympic School Program wishes to thank and acknowledge the contributions of the following people. Without their efforts, and creativity, this project would not have been possible.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

FEATURED ATHLETES

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