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# The Vancouver Asahi Baseball Team and Cultural Acceptance 1920-1941

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree in Master of Arts

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The Vancouver Asahi Baseball Team and Cultural Acceptance 1920-1941

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by

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Graduate Program in Kinesiology

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts

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London, Ontario, Canada

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# Abstract

This thesis analyzed how the Vancouver Asahis, through excellence in baseball, gained acceptance within the newspaper media and community from 1920 to 1941. An examination of Vancouver's history and culture determined the importance of baseball to the city, especially upon Bob Brown's, Vancouver's greatest builder of the game, immigration. A history of the Asahis was also examined to help frame baseball's importance to the Japanese and why they wished to engage in this specific sport. Through a content analysis within the *Vancouver Sun* and *Daily Province* newspapers, this thesis examined how the Asahis were represented in each of the two major newspapers in Vancouver. Words and phrases related to the themes of racism, praise, and acceptance, were documented and analyzed for frequency in each year sampled. This helped determine what type of coverage was afforded to the Asahis thematically. Through excellence in baseball, a sport primarily reserved for Caucasians, the Asahis managed to gain favour within the community as well as minimize the racism that Japanese residents of Vancouver normally received.

## Keywords:

Asahi, Baseball, Vancouver Asahi Baseball Team, Japanese Baseball History, Harry Miyasaki, Culture, Content Analysis, Bob Brown, Vancouver Baseball History

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## Chapter 1

### Research Question, Introduction, Sources, and Methodology

#### *Research Question*

The objective of this thesis was to argue that, through baseball, the Vancouver Asahi baseball team progressively was able to gain acceptance into Vancouver's culture from 1920 to 1941. The Asahis were an all Japanese team composed of mainly Nisei<sup>1</sup> players, in a period when baseball was dominated by Caucasian men. This thesis argued that baseball was an area of common ground between Japanese-Canadians and Caucasian-Canadians and that, through baseball, the Asahis were able to gain acceptance into the greater community. It cannot be proved that baseball was the sole reason for the Japanese team's acceptance in the time period but, through an analysis of newspapers, written histories, and historical footage, baseball can be deemed a catalyst for change. The research completed in this study cannot be generalized to the Japanese population outside of the Asahis. Articles studied reflected only how the media represented the team; therefore, benefits afforded to the Asahis may or may not have been extended to the Japanese population as a whole. In order to examine how the Asahis used baseball- intentionally and unintentionally- to navigate culture and gain acceptance, this thesis also examined what culture is, and how it played a role in shaping society. The focus of this thesis is the baseball team, and it was this study's full intent to argue that baseball was a part of the culture of Vancouver, and that it was through baseball that the Asahi team was able to entrench themselves as an important part of that culture. In terms of the analysis of culture, a working definition was given, along with a conceptual framework explaining what culture is and how it is displayed in society.

The main research question that will be the focus of this thesis was:

1. In what ways did baseball serve as a means of acceptance into the dominant culture of Vancouver from 1920 to 1941?

Through this analysis, the goal was to contribute to the extant body of baseball literature in two main ways. The first attempted contribution was to add to the relatively sparse list of resources and body of knowledge concerning the Vancouver Asahi baseball team. Outside of Pat Adachi's book, *Asahi: A Legend in Baseball*,<sup>2</sup> Jeri Osborne's *Sleeping Tigers*<sup>3</sup> documentary, and a section of the Nisei Museum in Vancouver, there are very few in-depth resources or studies dedicated solely to the Asahi baseball team. Newspaper columns and Shannon Jette's, *Little/Big Ball*<sup>4</sup> article are other sources of information available about the Asahis, but neither provide a breadth of analysis. This baseball team was unique and an important part of Canadian baseball history. It was a staple of baseball's professional circuit within Vancouver for over 20 years, during a time when teams folded almost yearly. The Asahi team, comprised only of Japanese players, managed to succeed and climb the professional ranks while many Caucasian teams could only admire their success. In the United States, Negro League teams reflect a parallel to the Asahis as both ethnicities were discriminated against heavily. The main difference is that the Negro Leagues were entrenched in American history and celebrated for their accomplishments, whereas the Asahis were/are relatively unknown and unheralded in Canadian sport history. It would be naive to think this thesis will start a scholarly revolution for the Asahis, but the goal was to add valuable knowledge to the achievements of the team.

Second, this thesis provided more than just a seasonal, game-by-game history of the Asahi team; instead, it was a study of the team against the cultural backdrop in which it was

immersed and the process by which it became enculturated. Jette argued that the Asahis saw baseball as a means of assimilation, but there is little to suggest assimilation was their intention.<sup>5</sup> This thesis instead argued that the Asahi team saw baseball not only as a competitive sport, but as an inadvertent means to navigate their way into and through culture. The Asahis partook in a game that was important to Vancouver's culture, in part, in order to avoid stronger forms of racism to which most immigrant groups were subjected. Baseball was a major part of the culture of Vancouver and, by virtue of their baseball prowess, the Asahis were afforded certain rights and forms of acceptance by the greater community. Adding the social context of the team to the existing body of literature was deemed important because this team was an anomaly of the day. The Asahis managed to thrive from 1914 until the Japanese internment in 1941. They were the only team composed entirely of a racial minority in Vancouver after the Nippons folded; therefore, it was important to explain why this team was able to be successful both athletically and culturally.

### *Introduction*

Baseball has long been a part of Canadian history; its roots can be traced back to 1838 in Beachville, Ontario.<sup>6</sup> The game was reported by *Sporting Life* magazine in 1886 with evidence from a letter written by Adam E. Ford.<sup>7</sup> Most games played from 1838 until the 1860s went largely unregulated and local rules were used in accordance with the location of the game.<sup>8</sup> With a lack of provincial and national guidance, leagues operated within the borders of each city. It was not until 1859 that an inter-city game was played; the combatants were teams from Toronto and Hamilton.<sup>9</sup> According to Spencer Lang, teams from Southwestern Ontario were the pioneers to accepting American rules as the standard as early as the 1860s.<sup>10</sup> Before Lang's claim, Hamilton, the first organized team in Canada, reportedly played with the New York rules as

early as 1854.<sup>11</sup> Alan Metcalfe argued that 1876 was the official turning point for a full acceptance of American rules, leading to baseball's competitive era.<sup>12</sup> With baseball development influenced heavily by its North-South relationship with the United States, rather than within the country like most other sports, the adoption of American rules was almost inevitable, influenced by the stronger baseball culture of the Northern States.<sup>13</sup> Outside of urban centres, baseball was seen as something more than a pastime; it was a vehicle for community pride and spirit.<sup>14</sup> Baseball was used to settle rivalries amongst neighbouring areas and to establish dominance in sport.

Canadian baseball was linked constantly with its American counterpart; it closely followed the American game in terms of its development. The first major adoption was the aforementioned New York set of rules; this was then followed by the acceptance of professionals within the Canadian game. In 1872, during a game in Ottawa, professionalism was first documented in the Canadian game.<sup>15</sup> Teams such as the London Tecumsehs and Guelph Maple Leafs engaged in bidding wars for the services of professionals, often signing players away from each other in an effort to be the top team. George Sleeman, an infamous businessman from Guelph, built the Maple Leafs into the powerhouse team in Southwestern Ontario by recruiting American professionals and by poaching players from the Tecumsehs.<sup>16</sup> Although Southwestern Ontario was the birthplace of Canadian baseball's professionalism, baseball soon stretched from coast to coast. As early as 1889 a team in St. John employed up to nine professionals and by 1915 Halifax fielded two professional teams.<sup>17</sup> On the west coast, Victoria and Vancouver also joined a fully professional league by 1905, with Victoria boasting professionals as far back as 1889.<sup>18</sup>

One major difference between the Canadian and American game that lasted for decades, was the Canadian game did not organize itself very quickly. While baseball in the United States flourished and produced the National League, in Canada, no governing body emerged to represent the sport as a whole. Without a governing body to help direct baseball's growth in many parts of Canada, professional teams often struggled. A lack of direction and league organization led to many teams and leagues lasting just one or two years, while new teams eagerly waited to replace them. From 1889 to 1905, only four of 163 intra-city leagues managed to maintain any form of longevity, none from west of Ontario.<sup>19</sup> Despite the instability of leagues and teams, baseball was, "Undoubtedly the most widely played game in Canada," according to Metcalfe.<sup>20</sup> The success of baseball can be attributed to the fact that it was played by people of all social strata and from all professions, while receiving acceptance from major cultural influences like the church, universities, industry, other sport clubs, ethnic associations, and cultural enterprises.<sup>21</sup> Baseball was the only sport played by all levels of social classes, and thus, its availability to the public helped it gain traction in Canadian culture.

The allowance for all classes within society to play baseball surely attributed to its rapid growth. Baseball was not only for white, English-speaking individuals; it was played also by French-speaking Canadians in Quebec, as well as people of African-American descent. The first game involving black players was in London, Ontario in 1869, although the tournament supported segregated teams.<sup>22</sup> As Eastern Canadians migrated to settle the West, baseball was slowly transplanted and developed a foothold in the Prairies and B.C. According to Metcalfe, in 1914, baseball was Canada's national sport and no other game was played across the country with such steady and spectacular growth.<sup>23</sup> Metcalfe derived this by arguing that baseball competed seasonally with, "soccer, cricket, lacrosse, and rowing,"<sup>24</sup> making baseball all the more

dominant as compared to hockey, which only competed with curling. Morrow and Wamsley echo Metcalfe's findings by stating that, "Between 1900 and 1920 baseball was easily Canada's most popular sport."<sup>25</sup> By 1915, baseball was the most covered sport in newspapers in Halifax, Montreal, Winnipeg, and Edmonton, as well as the second most reported sport in Toronto.<sup>26</sup> Baseball coverage by newspapers in major Canadian cities remained strong, post-war and into the Great Depression years. Janice Waters' thesis, *A Content Analysis of Newspaper Sport Section 1927-1935*, showed that baseball remained one of the most popular sports in terms of coverage by major Canadian papers in Vancouver, Winnipeg, Toronto, Montreal, and Halifax.<sup>27</sup> Between 1927 and 1935, baseball was the most covered sport in Halifax in three of nine years,<sup>28</sup> one year in Montreal,<sup>29</sup> all nine years in Toronto,<sup>30</sup> four years in Winnipeg,<sup>31</sup> and eight years in Vancouver.<sup>32</sup> It was also important to note that baseball coverage was never ranked lower than second in any year or newspaper except in Montreal, where it fell to third in 1927 and 1932.<sup>33</sup> Baseball entrenched its position of importance within prominent Canadian newspapers based on its rank compared to other sports. The amount of coverage afforded to baseball reflected that baseball was entrenched in Canadian culture at this moment and young, aspiring teams were given a window of opportunity to engage in this national phenomenon.

Coinciding with the growing enthusiasm towards baseball, a young team of Japanese-Canadian youth was formed in 1914, under the name Asahi and managed by Matsujiro Miyasaki.<sup>34</sup> This team was formed as a junior or farm team for their idols, the Vancouver Nippons, which began play in 1908.<sup>35</sup> When the Nippons folded in 1918, the Asahi became the only Japanese-Canadian team in the Vancouver area and managed to flourish in many of the citywide leagues. The Asahis won a low-tier city league title in 1919, with a core of five youths whose families were from Kaidé-ema, Hosaka, Japan.<sup>36</sup> The 1922 season was a landmark season

for the Asahis, when Harry Miyasaki took over as manager; Miyasaki's dream was to win the Terminal League championship, a senior level league in Vancouver. Miyasaki worked tirelessly training the team and developing the "small ball" strategy used to beat the larger and more powerful Occidental teams. This version of baseball utilized the speed, bunting, and fielding ability of the Asahi as means to win games, rather than a reliance on homeruns that were outside of their skills repertoire. Miyasaki's hard work culminated in a Terminal League championship in 1926, lifting the Asahis to stardom within the Vancouver community.<sup>37</sup>

A rise to fame was not concomitant with a rise to acceptance for the Vancouver Asahi team. As a team made up solely of Japanese players, the discrimination and blatant racism they encountered was pervasive and frequent. Being called anything from "Little Brown Men"<sup>38</sup> to "Japs,"<sup>39</sup> racism was directed at the team from the greater community, composed primarily of Caucasian families. The discrimination was well-documented in the newspapers of the era, mainly the *Vancouver Sun* and the *Daily Province*, but also in interviews with players, as well as in secondary sources. Although racism continued to be a theme that plagued the Asahis through their existence, it tapered off when the team became more prominent in the city as their wins and championships escalated. In 1927, the *Vancouver Sun* documented instances where the fans cheered for the Asahis instead of the Caucasian teams.<sup>40</sup> This led to a coach of a Caucasian team to become extremely irate and yell at the fans for cheering for a bunch of Japs.<sup>41</sup> Even the newspapers seemed to use less derogatory language when reporting the box scores of games and providing accounts for their readers as the Asahis won more games.<sup>42</sup> Baseball was, indeed, a major part of the culture of Canada leading up to the 1920s and the Asahi's excellence in the game offered them a means to challenge the second-class treatment that they received.

The Asahis importance to the game of baseball in Canada was cemented with their 2003 induction into the Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame, in a ceremony held at Toronto's SkyDome.<sup>43</sup> Being inducted into the Canadian Baseball of Fame represented the importance that the team as a whole had in the Canadian baseball community. This induction honoured the Asahi team for its entire existence, not just individual player contributions to baseball. In 2005, the Asahis were also inducted into the British Columbia Sports Hall of Fame, reflecting their value to British Columbia's entire sporting community, not just their value to baseball.<sup>44</sup> These inductions exemplified a legacy for the Asahis and provided proof that Canada's sporting community was proud of the Asahis and their contributions to sport, specifically, baseball.

#### *Sources*

Newspapers were the main primary source of information for this thesis. Articles from the *Vancouver Sun* and the *Daily Province* were analyzed for content pertaining to the Asahi baseball team. These newspapers were the two largest in the city and provided the most consistent source of information regarding the Asahi team. As baseball was not strongly organized within Canada, reporting on teams was mainly restricted to local newspapers. For this reason, the two aforementioned papers provided the most in-depth and accurate stories regarding the Asahis. The amount of coverage afforded to the Asahis compared to other teams was looked at, as well as the depth of coverage that was given to them. Depth of coverage was measured by the inclusion of box scores, pictures, game recaps, as well as commentary on the team within articles the day after games. Themes such as racism, praise, and respect toward the Asahis were codified and counted in order to determine what each newspaper reflected about the team during the 1920 to 1941 timeframe.



At the start of the research, every second month of the year was sampled within the *Vancouver Sun* and *Daily Province* starting in 1920 until 1924 to determine when baseball coverage was present. Through this sampling method it was evident that both newspapers only consistently covered the Asahis and the city leagues during the months of March until September, the months during which the leagues became organized, until when they concluded. Consequently, all of the years sampled in this thesis were only sampled from March 1st until September 30<sup>th</sup>. The years sampled from the *Vancouver Sun* were 1920-1926, 1930, 1936, 1938, and 1941 and then 1926, 1927, 1933, and 1937 for the *Daily Province*. The *Vancouver Sun* was sampled from 1920-1926 to see how this newspaper portrayed the Asahis before they became a successful club. The following years were randomly selected up until 1941. The *Daily Province* was not used to establish a baseline because its sport coverage was lacking the quality seen in the *Vancouver Sun* from the original 1920 to 1924 sample. The inferior coverage did not provide enough detail to add anything to what the *Vancouver Sun* already provided. Each remaining year studied was randomly selected to intersperse within the thesis' timeframe. Martin and Copeland stated that, "Newspapers set priorities, from front-page headlines to the smallest stories on the last page."<sup>45</sup> This statement implies that newspapers played an important role in determining what was important within individual communities. In addition, it helps to strengthen the argument that the *Vancouver Sun* and the *Daily Province*'s coverage of the Asahis represented the team's role in Vancouver's society.

Primary sources will also be used from the online Asahi exhibit from the Nikkei Museum in Vancouver, British Columbia. The Nikkei Museum has an expansive collection gathered from families of former Asahi players. Sources include pictures of personal belongings, players, the stadium, and families as well as personal documents, letters written by players, and interviews

given to the Museum's historians. The letters and interviews were the most important documents from this collection, as the players recounted major events and what it meant to be an Asahi. All of this material was available through the Nikkei Museum's website, where pictures of physical objects were posted and interviews were available to the general public. These interviews allowed for an in-depth look into how players felt as part of the teams, including periods of intense racial abuse, coupled with positive moments that included championship wins and adoring crowds. Carney's text on content analysis will be quite pertinent in regards to interviews and letters, as the research allowed for the determination of the most useful information provided by the players.

A reliance on secondary sources was also needed in order to provide a history of the Asahi team, in addition to contextualizing it within Vancouver's culture of the era. Pat Adachi, author of *Asahi: A Legend in Baseball* (1992) provided the most complete history of the team from its inception in 1914, to its disbandment in 1941. Pat Adachi is a longstanding member of the Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre, and has had access to Asahi memorabilia and players that the public has not. Her book on the Asahis is a work unparalleled by any other researcher. She completed a book with biographies of every player from each year the team existed, and compiled interviews, quotations, and newspaper clippings regarding the Asahis. This book provided considerable detail on the team and provided a narrative backdrop to the Asahis. Her interviews with players also helped to provide greater detail on how each man experienced his time and enculturation as an Asahi and as a Canadian.

In order to analyze both aforementioned newspapers, a content analysis was done using Thomas Carney's book, *Content Analysis: A Technique for Systematic Inference from Communications*<sup>46</sup> as well as Klaus Krippendorff's book, *Content Analysis: An Introduction to*

*its Methodology* as guidelines.<sup>47</sup> Carney's book provided an in-depth look on how to perform a content analysis in terms of codifying phrases and words, as well as selecting the type of relevant information that should be codified. Carney's definition states, "Content analysis is any technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages."<sup>48</sup> This definition was the accepted norm because it afforded content analysis a broader range of uses. Bernard Berelson's original definition restricted content analysis to quantitative analysis, whereas Carney's definition allowed the reader to use qualitative analysis and make inferences and conclusions based on what was written.<sup>49</sup> Krippendorff's definition of content analysis mirrors Carney's in the sense that Krippendorff states, "Content analysis is a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use."<sup>50</sup> These definitions were important because this thesis examines more than just how often the *Vancouver Sun* and the *Daily Province* report on the Asahis. This thesis explores the context of what was being said and if the portrayal of the Asahis changed over time, from a team that was blatantly discriminated against, to one that was an accepted member of the community.

To provide an analysis on culture, Raymond Williams' book, *Culture*, was used.<sup>51</sup> Williams provided an in-depth look at culture and how it is produced, reproduced, as well as its means of production.<sup>52</sup> This book offered background information on the importance of culture and how it is manifested in societies to create different forms of acceptable behaviour that can lead to enculturation or cause a rejection from the norm. As Japanese Canadians were heavily discriminated against after World War I, it was important to analyze how certain groups of Japanese descent, like the Asahis, were able to gain acceptance within the community. A dissertation by Craig Greenham<sup>53</sup> helps support the argument that baseball was indeed a major

part of the culture of Vancouver and that it played an important role within society. Through Greenham's work, it is evident that baseball was Canada's most popular game immediately after World War I. Therefore, my working assumption was that baseball had enough cultural significance to have served as a vehicle of cultural acceptance for the Asahi teams during the period under study.

### *Methodology*

The methodology used in this thesis was narrative descriptive, and included a content analysis of the *Vancouver Sun*, the *Daily Province*, various letters and interviews with Asahi players, and on various secondary sources available. Content analysis in this thesis was utilized through various techniques, as outlined by Carney and Krippendorff. The method utilized in this thesis was counting or frequency, where words and phrases from primary sources that relate to themes such as racism, respect, empowerment, and acceptance were noted and grouped under their according theme. These themes were chosen because they are intertwined with the Asahis' most difficult moments, as well as their most notable successes. Developments were tracked by the language and pictures used by each newspaper, with the hypotheses that as the years progressed, the Asahis were represented by the positive themes of respect, empowerment, and ultimately, acceptance.

Each newspaper sampled was examined for words, phrases, pictures, and stories that related to each theme, so as more years were sampled there was enough evidence to determine if the themes surrounding the Asahis changed or remained in place. This method, according to Krippendorff, "Is a practical way of coping with large volumes of text, as a method of data reduction."<sup>54</sup> He also claimed that counting is only acceptable when the frequencies mean

something.<sup>55</sup> For this thesis, frequency was important because of the twenty-one year research span. Counting how often certain themes appeared each year showed longevity and the purpose of this thesis was to analyze if the Asahis became enculturated over the span of their existence in Vancouver. As information was categorized into each theme and themes were developed in each year of analysis, the principle of “more or less,” by Carney, then came into effect.<sup>56</sup> This principle determined what information was useful by counting the frequency to which each theme appeared; greater value was placed on ones that appeared more frequently. This thesis relied on examples of questions asked by Carney, such as, “Of this list of themes, how many occur in...,” and, “What is the major theme in each...”<sup>57</sup> Questions such as these were utilized because they create or disrupt patterns. The author looked for patterns of racism and acceptance, in order to examine the process of enculturation over the period under consideration. Counting and frequency was vital to developing themes, something upon which this thesis relied heavily.

### *Limitations and De-Limitations*

The major limitation that was encountered while writing this thesis was that the amount of resources available about the Asahis was relatively limited. The only newspapers that ran stories consistently about the team were the *Vancouver Sun* and the *Daily Province*. Moreover, most sport stories for local leagues consisted of a box score and a small write-up about a game. In addition, it has been seventy-two years since the last year of study for this thesis concluded, leaving only one remaining member of the Asahis known to be living. This ultimately eliminated any chance to get a first-hand interview to see if any players could describe some pivotal moments from their playing days. In listening to the interviews done by other researchers, an analysis could only be done on the answers to questions asked by the historians, not ones that necessarily cater to this thesis’ objectives. Secondary sources on the Asahi were

also limited to only a handful of documents, a book by Pat Adachi and a film by the Film Board of Canada. Both of these latter sources were thorough, and through re-telling the history of the Asahis, were able to provide much more information about certain players and events than newspapers were.

The second limitation was the time it took to collect resources. As the *Daily Province* appeared to be second in popularity to the *Vancouver Sun*, it was much harder to acquire from library databases. Generally, only libraries in Western Canada had the microfilm for this paper and were only willing to lend out one year's worth of microfilm at a time. Including the time to ship each year, it took about a week per year to order, receive, analyze, and send back for more microfilm. Once the microfilm was sent back, it took a long time to have re-shipped to Western.

The major de-limitation to this thesis was that it did not look at primary sources for every year from 1914 to 1941. To establish a baseline, all of the years 1920 to 1926 were looked at in the *Vancouver Sun*, but from 1926 onward, only eight years were sampled and split between the *Vancouver Sun* and the *Daily Province*. The years selected were 1927, 1930, 1933, 1936, 1937, 1938, and 1941. The reason for this was that examining every year in a 21 year span went beyond the saturation point in dealing with Asahi enculturation because patterns did not become noticeable until a few years had passed. 1920 was the chosen starting year because it directly followed the Asahis first league championship in the International League in 1919, one of the lower leagues in the city.<sup>58</sup> Setting a baseline was important because it helped to discover any evidence of the seeds of enculturation. Examining at least every three years thereafter allowed for observations about the change that occurred, rather than examining yearly for the smallest of changes.

## *Organization of Thesis*

Chapter 1: Research Question, Introduction, Sources, and Methodology

Chapter 2: Vancouver's History and Growth: Railroads, Japanese Immigration, and Baseball

Vancouver's cultural development was the major theme of this chapter, therefore defining culture as a concept was quite important. Culture was determined to work in two ways: one, as a guiding hand helping to shape a society based on past mores and laws, as well as having the ability to be shaped by changes within society as time went on. In 1886, when Vancouver was named the Western terminus for the Canadian Pacific Railway, the city grew rapidly and quickly became the largest urban centre in British Columbia. Vancouver's growing economy led to high levels of immigration, especially from Asian countries like Japan. Many of the Japanese immigrants worked in the primary sector, jobs in the mines, on the railroads, and in the fisheries. Despite the Japanese immigrants' willingness to work hard labour jobs, they were still heavily discriminated against by the primarily Protestant, Caucasian population. One aspect of culture that the Caucasian residents of Vancouver were hesitant to accept, was the introduction of the Japanese into baseball, a sport played in the city since 1887. Baseball had developed a major following in Vancouver, largely in part to Bob Brown and his many contributions to the sport. Baseball grew from mostly unofficial and unorganized games to a sport organized in many city-wide leagues and reported in major newspapers of the day. It was one of the most popular sports amongst Vancouver's population, regardless of ethnicity, and was quickly taken up by the influx of Japanese immigrants with the formation of the Vancouver Nippons, and eventually, the Vancouver Asahis.

Chapter 3: An Overview of the Asahis Baseball Team, 1920 to 1941

This chapter provides a history of the Asahi in order to explain how the team originated and its place within the Vancouver's baseball community. It also explained major accomplishments between the years of 1920 and 1941, including their promotion through various leagues; their tour of Japan in 1921; and their first Terminal League Championship in 1926. Also examined will be the thematic issues, including the racism the team faced from opposing Caucasian teams and the community.

#### Chapter 4: Racism, Praise, and Acceptance in the *Vancouver Sun* and *Daily Province*

This chapter weds the Asahi team with the culture of Vancouver. It explains how the Asahis' style of play and winning ways helped to carve out a niche in the culture in which they could transcend the harsher racism. Statements and quotations are analyzed to show media acceptance of the team and examples such as promotions to better leagues meant that the Asahi were more than just a group of Japanese ball players. Content analysis provides thematic trends which show decreasing racism as the team continued to excel, therefore exemplifying forms of acceptance of the Asahi team. It also determines how the Asahis were seen by the media through counting the number of articles that shed positive and negative light on the team.

#### Chapter 5: Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations



## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> Shannon Jette, "Little/Big Ball: The Vancouver Asahi Baseball Story," *Sport History Review* 38, (2007): 4.

<sup>2</sup> Pat Adachi, *Asahi: A Legend in Baseball; A Legacy from the Japanese Canadian Baseball Team to its Heirs* (Etobicoke: Asahi Baseball Organization, 1992).

<sup>3</sup> *Sleeping Tigers: The Asahi Baseball Story*, directed by Jari Osborne (National Film Board of Canada, 2003), Web.

<sup>4</sup> Jette.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>6</sup> Spencer Lang, "Experimenting with Professional Baseball: An Examination of the Guelph Maple Leafs and the London Tecumsehs in Canadian Baseball's First Professional Era, 1872-1878" M.A. Thesis, The University of Western Ontario, 2003, 2.

<sup>7</sup> Don Morrow and Kevin Wamsley, *Sport in Canada: A History*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2010), 93.

<sup>8</sup> Alan Metcalfe, *Canada Learns to Play: The Emergence of Organized Sport, 1807-1914* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1987), 86.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> Lang, 2.

<sup>11</sup> Morrow & Wamsley, 93.

<sup>12</sup> Metcalfe, 86.

<sup>13</sup> Morrow & Wamsley, 100.

<sup>14</sup> Metcalfe, 87.

<sup>15</sup> William Humber, *Diamonds of the North: A Concise History of Baseball in Canada* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1995), 25.

<sup>16</sup> Dixon, letter to George Sleeman, 20 January 1877. Sleeman Collection. Archival and Special Collections, McLaughlin Library, University of Guelph.

<sup>17</sup> Metcalfe, 91.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 92.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 93.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 95.

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 86.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 98.

<sup>25</sup> Morrow & Wamsley, 104.

<sup>26</sup> Metcalfe, 85.

<sup>27</sup> Janice Waters, "A Content Analysis of Newspaper Sport Sections 1927-1935" M.A. Thesis, The University of Western Ontario, 1981.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 52.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 56.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 60.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 64.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 70.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 74.

<sup>34</sup> Adachi, 11.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid, 11.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 75.

<sup>38</sup> *The Vancouver Sun*, 19 June 1922

<sup>39</sup> *The Vancouver Sun*, 5 July 1922

<sup>40</sup> Jette, 10.

<sup>41</sup> Adachi, 45.

<sup>42</sup> In the *Vancouver Sun* the use of derogatory language such as "Japs" and "Little Brown Men" was prevalent in 23% of articles in 1920, down to 12% in 1921, 22% in 1922, and 16% in 1924.

<sup>43</sup> National Nikkei Museum and Heritage Centre, "Asahi: Canadian Baseball Legends." Last modified 2007. <http://www.museevirtuel-virtualmuseum.ca/sgc-cms/expositions-exhibitions/asahi/index2.php?loc=en-CA>. (Accessed 10 June 2013)

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Shannon Martin and David Copeland, *The Function of Newspapers in Society*, (Westport: Praegar Publishers), 140.

<sup>46</sup> Thomas Carney, *Content Analysis: A Technique for Systematic inference from Communications* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1972).

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<sup>47</sup> Klaus Krippendorff, *Content Analysis: An Introduction to its Methodology*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (London: Sage Publications, 2013).

<sup>48</sup> Carney, 25.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Krippendorff, 24.

<sup>51</sup> Raymond Williams, *Culture* (Glasgow: Williams Collins Sons & Co. Ltd, 1981).

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>53</sup> Craig Greenham, "Outfields, Infields and Battlefields: How the Great War Influenced Professional Baseball in Canada" Ph. D. diss., The University of Western Ontario, 2010.

<sup>54</sup> Krippendorff, 189.

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<sup>58</sup> Adachi, 11.

## Chapter 2

### **Vancouver's History and Growth: Railroads, Japanese Immigration, and Baseball**

As the goal of this study was to analyze the Vancouver Asahi baseball team within the culture of Vancouver, it is important that an analysis of culture and its meanings precede the Asahis' role within culture. This analysis was undertaken with the help of Raymond Williams' book, *Culture* (1972),<sup>1</sup> which tracks the historical development of the concept and explains sources of production and reproduction. Chapter Two introduces a history of Vancouver and its culture from the 1880s to 1920. This chapter also provides the demographics of Vancouver, including population growth, dominant religion, as well as the ethnic make-up of the city. Leisure activities that made up the culture, as well as the main industries that helped shape the city's labour force are presented too. This is followed by a history and analysis of the Japanese immigration waves to British Columbia and the hardships that were encountered due not only to their ethnic difference, but also due to important cultural aspects that were transplanted from their homeland. Lastly, this chapter looks at a history of baseball within British Columbia and Vancouver and explains the ways in which the sport was established as an important facet within Vancouver's culture.

#### *Culture as a Concept*

There are many nuances and complexities embedded in the word culture. For example, there is no fixed definition and there is variance about how it plays a role in shaping, as well as being shaped, by society. Raymond Williams' book, *Culture*, offers a historical analysis of the many meanings of culture, as well as the means by which culture is produced and reproduced. For this thesis, Williams' definition provided the most pertinent information. His definition

moves away from the conventional notion that culture plays either an “informing spirit” role, where main social activities such as art and language are sternly guided,<sup>2</sup> or a, “whole social order” role, where culture is solely created by social activities.<sup>3</sup> The “informing spirit” lens takes the stance that culture is created through history and parlayed forward as guiding principles through components of that culture, components such as art, language, and educational values.<sup>4</sup> Through the lens of the “whole social order,” culture is described as a phenomenon that is created through the ways a group of people interact. Elements of culture, such as, “Styles of art and kinds of intellectual work, [are] seen as the direct or indirect product of an order primarily constituted by other social activities.”<sup>5</sup> The activities in which people engaged defined the way that they lived thereby creating common elements of culture, such as the aforementioned language and art elements. In this chapter, the concept of culture will be used to explain how the city of Vancouver developed its initial identity and how that identity shaped sport development and the acceptance of certain immigrant groups. The concept of culture will be used to demonstrate how the original overarching values of Vancouver were influenced and slightly changed by immigrants and societal developments. Williams explains that culture is not a static entity; instead it is one that is constantly being changed by the world around it. A society’s culture does not simply guide its population into eternity; the culture is instead impacted by changes that constantly occur within its population.

First, the contemporary definition of culture accepts that there is a whole social order within culture, but cultural production and practice are not simply produced by certain activities; instead, they are perceived as elements that also helped determine those activities.<sup>6</sup> Secondly, culture is not an informing spirit whose historical groundings must be strictly adhered too, it is, instead, a “Signifying system through which necessarily (through among [sic] other means) a

social order is communicated, reproduced, and explored.”<sup>7</sup> The combination of conventional definitions can be compressed into one definition that explains culture as a phenomenon that can function as a governing body, but also one that adapts and is ever changing as time moves on. Culture serves as a device that oversees a group of people within it, but at the same time the group of people can influence and change their culture. The ability to make changes within one’s culture reflects points in history; cultural changes allow for updates to old mores and codes of life that reflect the time in which individuals experienced their culture. This chapter covers an era in which the culture of Vancouver changed dramatically. From the industrial revolution experienced by the small lumber town, to the influx of Oriental immigrants, and finally to the installation of baseball as a defining sport within the culture of the city, Vancouver’s culture was influenced and changed greatly but, at the same time, resistance from the existing culture was such that change did not occur easily.

### *The Canadian Pacific Railway and Vancouver’s Development*

Vancouver’s development in the nineteenth century was closely linked to the Canadian Pacific Railway’s (CPR) 1885 announcement of Vancouver as the western terminus for the railroad.<sup>8</sup> The announcement led to the incorporation of Vancouver as a city in 1886, accompanied by the population quadrupling to around 2,000 by Christmas of that year.<sup>9</sup> On May 23, 1887 the first train arrived at Vancouver’s station to be greeted by almost the entire town.<sup>10</sup> Between 1886 and 1892, Vancouver’s population grew by nearly 12,000, while construction investments totalled \$4 million.<sup>11</sup> The majority of Vancouver’s wealthy residents lived in the west end of the city, while single men lived in hotels in the denser core of the city, and ethnic minorities gravitated to the cheaper (cost of living), east end of the city.<sup>12</sup> After the railway’s completion, British Columbia’s exports rose from just under three million dollars in 1886, to ten

million, five-hundred thousand dollars in 1896, demonstrating the railways economic value to the city.<sup>13</sup> Roads, schools, police and fire stations were established and city necessities such as a sewage system, parks, and hospitals were built.<sup>14</sup> In 1891, it was listed that Vancouver consisted of 2,700 buildings.<sup>15</sup> In 1892, it became evident that Vancouver quickly had become a major urban centre, demonstrated, in part, by the majority of the labour force being in the service industry, rather than primary industries. Sixty-five-seventy percent of the labour force was employed in retail/wholesale, bakeries, confectionaries, machine shops, skilled trades, domestic labour, local transport, or real estate.<sup>16</sup> Vancouver's labour force also included seventy professionals, while the remaining members of the workforce were largely based in sawmills.<sup>17</sup> The CPR connected Vancouver to the rest of Canada, giving people access to the untapped resources of the land and the ability to settle the area permanently, while reaping the rewards of its convenient proximity to the Pacific Ocean, the United States, and access to the Orient.

It was quite clear that the CPR played a huge role in not only the development of Vancouver, but also in laying the framework to the development of the culture within the city. The railroad allowed for permanent settlement of Vancouver, creating a large tertiary service centre. Within six years of incorporation, Vancouver had sixty-five to seventy percent of its workforce in this sector, making it clear that goods and services were the primary focus of income. Vancouver also developed an economic hierarchy, with the West End, "Symbolizing the heights and Rancherie [while] a cluster of shacks east of the Hastings Mill, represent[ed] the depths."<sup>18</sup> Despite the geographical division of the upper and lower class, the people of Vancouver created a homogenous culture. In 1891, between eighty-five to ninety percent of the inhabitants were English speaking, with 83% of churches being of Protestant denominations.<sup>19</sup> By 1894, almost 75% of residents owned the land they lived on and aside from a riot in the

Chinese neighbourhood in 1887, the pre-dominantly white city of Vancouver had very little racial tensions with minority groups.<sup>20</sup> The high percentage of land ownership reflected that the lower class possessed enough wealth to live comfortably and could even be seen as a developing middle-class. Having established businesses to create income and a population closely aligned in interests, Vancouver's leisure and sport industries developed within society. In terms of sport, many clubs, such as the YMCA, the Vancouver Boating Club, the Rugby Club, and the Lawn Tennis Club were established and operated by city elites.<sup>21</sup> The Opera House was sponsored by the CPR, providing the wealthier residents of the West End a theatre venue.<sup>22</sup> Between 1886 and 1900, Vancouver developed a stable economy with its own culture. Different industries developed, which created a diversification and specialization of labour. The city exemplified religious beliefs, and although one religion and race dominated, the number of immigrants from across Canada and the world created a growing level of cultural diversity. Sport and leisure activities became established within the culture of Vancouver, which helped foster a growing and diversifying city centre heading into the twentieth century.

From 1900 until 1910, Vancouver experienced an exponential population growth of 271%.<sup>23</sup> The demographic increase was attributed to 28,000 British and Commonwealth immigrants, 24,500 Canadian migrants, 8,000 Americans, 7,000 (Continental) Europeans, as well as 2,500 Chinese and Japanese immigrants.<sup>24</sup> The increase in population led to the creation of highly praised three-storey buildings and the creation of the thirteen-storey Dominion trust Building, hailed as the tallest in the British Empire in 1909.<sup>25</sup> In 1912, the city of Vancouver set aside extensive lands for the future University of British Columbia, signs that as the population and economy grew, more professionals were needed to continue the economic expansion.<sup>26</sup> The setting aside of lands showed that education was a priority of the city's planners, a concern that



helped maintain a growing middle class. Although there was an influx of immigrants to Vancouver, the dominant race remained Caucasian and the dominant religion remained Protestant, especially among the elites and major cultural influences. In a study of 38 societal elites in Vancouver, 37 were Canadian, American, or British born and 31 were of the Protestant faith.<sup>27</sup> It was quite clear that Vancouver's demographic make-up changed very little in the first decade of the twentieth century. The people with the most power and ability to influence culture came from the same backgrounds as when the city witnessed its first boom from 1886-1892.

Sport continued its insurgence into Vancouver's culture as well, notably reflected in the local newspapers. As the city grew, so did papers like the *Vancouver Sun* and *Daily Province*, with weekend editions sometimes running as long as 60 pages and the paper itself being divided into sections.<sup>28</sup> One of the newspaper units was an established sports section, dedicated not only to local sport, but to national and international competition as well. Sport had a definitive place within a major cultural producer, such as the newspapers, representing sport's value to society. Pierre Bourdieu argued that, "all fields of cultural production today are subject to structural pressure from the journalistic field [as a whole], and not from any one journalist or network executive, who are themselves subject to control by the field."<sup>29</sup> As the *Vancouver Sun* and the *Daily Province* were the largest sources of newspaper journalism in Vancouver, each newspaper's content underscored the ability to exert pressure on cultural producers, such as the other media sources and the Vancouver sporting community. The burgeoning sports sections in each paper likely reflected and led to sport gaining prominence as a cultural producer. Overall, Vancouver remained a burgeoning city, one that was ripe with economic opportunity. This opportunity eventually drew immigrant groups from across Canada and throughout the world

and, as these immigrants searched for a place to call home and increase their standard of living, Vancouver's population diversified.

### *Japanese Immigration and Cultural Acceptance within Vancouver*

Vancouver's exponential growth as a port city and gateway to the Orient prompted the city to open its doors to immigration from Pacific nations, specifically Japan. Japanese immigrants were preferred to Chinese immigrants because of Japan's attempt to model itself after the Western world, making Parliament members think that the Japanese immigrants were more similar to the Vancouver's extant population.<sup>30</sup> The Japanese immigrants were especially important because they arrived at the beginning of Vancouver's first growth cycle and played a large role in the economic development of the city. The Japanese were heavily involved in many occupations within Vancouver, such as railroad building and mining. But especially did they dominate the fishing and boatbuilding industries, ones that were of critical importance to the port city. In the 1920s, as types of industry diversified, the Japanese became major agricultural producers for the province of British Columbia. As early as 1884, Japanese immigrants began to arrive in B.C.,<sup>31</sup> and by 1896, 97% of the Japanese population within Canada was located in B.C.<sup>32</sup> Vancouver's Japanese population continued to grow, eventually reaching 15,000 by 1920 and over 43,000 by the start of World War II.<sup>33</sup> Japanese immigrants were industrious and diligent workers, taking most jobs that guaranteed employment. Originally they established themselves through hard labour such as mining, forestry, fishing and the building of railroads; but they quickly moved into farming and commercial enterprise.<sup>34</sup> The move into farming and commercial enterprise was mainly facilitated by the racism exhibited by the Caucasian groups that the Japanese encountered. Both the farming and commercial professions offered a chance for self-employment and a shelter from discrimination. By 1927, Japanese farmers owned over

10,000 acres of land, valued at over \$1.25 million.<sup>35</sup> At the same time they dominated the shipbuilding and fishing industries, industries in particular that led to an expansion of wealth for many Japanese, creating a middle class which further established their presence within the city.

Between 1895 and 1901, Japanese workers quickly entered the shipbuilding industry and made it a dominant enterprise within their culture. Throughout those six years, they were responsible for building approximately half of the boats in the fishing industry. Every cannery that employed Japanese fishermen also had a Japanese builder on the property.<sup>36</sup> The Stevenson waterfront, which had the largest number of Japanese builders, registered nineteen Japanese boat manufacturers by 1919, with many more builders reputed to be smaller and unregistered.<sup>37</sup> In the Greater Vancouver area there were at least seven Japanese boat builders. On Vancouver Island, for example, T. Matsuyama built a \$200,000 shipbuilding and repair shop on 4.18 acres of land.<sup>38</sup> The success of the Japanese in shipbuilding showed that they were not just willing to take a role assigned to them in the established hierarchy of Vancouver; instead, they used their skills and resources to fill a need in the city that was otherwise void of their quality of workmanship. Dominance in the shipbuilding industry showed the resourcefulness of the Japanese and their ability to create a niche in which they could excel. They created a need for their skills; the fishing industry of B.C. relied heavily on the boats they produced. Through shipbuilding and fishing, the Japanese people established a stable source of income, which in turn, allowed for the funding of ethnic clubs and associations.

With 1,958 out of 4,722 fishing licenses held by Japanese fishermen, they were able to organize themselves into powerful associations.<sup>39</sup> In 1897, the Japanese of the Fraser River area not only created the first Japanese organization in B.C., but they also established the first fisherman's organization within the province, known as the Fraser River Fisherman's

Association (FRFA).<sup>40</sup> The organization acted like a union, formed to protect the economic well-being of its members, provide education and child care, as well as deal with any medical crisis that existed.<sup>41</sup> Through fundraising and member fees, the FRFA was able to build a two-room school in 1909 that taught students in Japanese.<sup>42</sup> Associations allowed the Japanese to keep their children fluent in the Japanese language, especially as the Nisei became more affluent in the established Caucasian culture. By establishing associations, the Japanese were also able to build their culture as one that relied on family, friends, and business partners with similar interests. Associations helped to create a sub-culture in Vancouver where the Japanese people could maintain endearing and sacred aspects of their heritage. Aside from protecting their native language, the associations helped maintain aspects of Japanese culture such as style of education and Buddhist religious views.<sup>43</sup> These associations acted as a resistance to the monopolistic hand of the white, Protestant culture of Vancouver that soon changed its tempered acceptance of the Oriental population. The banding together offered some protection from the tougher times of discrimination that followed.

Despite the willingness of Japanese labourers to work on the railroads and live peacefully in Vancouver, they were not welcomed eagerly by the established Caucasian residents of British Columbia, or the government. Just as with economic growth cycles, the anti-Oriental sentiment was cyclical as well. The latter cycles were driven by social, economic, and psychological factors, with periods of heavy racism and periods of toleration.<sup>44</sup> Actions taken by citizens and the government starting in the 1890s led to an introverted culture<sup>45</sup> within the province, one which was not accepting of the “other.”<sup>46</sup> By 1891, there was an attempt to maintain the status quo, white Protestantism, within the British Columbian government. The first attempt was by extending the Chinese Head Tax to Japanese immigrants, as well as increasing it from \$50 to

\$200.<sup>47</sup> In 1899, the provincial minister of finance and agriculture, Francis Lovett Carter-Cotton, stated, “It is unquestionably in the interests of the Empire that the Pacific province of the Dominion should be occupied by a large and thoroughly British population.”<sup>48</sup> In 1901, a provincial Royal Commission found that there was an economic rivalry amongst the Caucasian and Japanese immigrants, one that that could endanger the peace.<sup>49</sup> Government officials within B.C. were aware that increased tensions could lead to a break in the tolerance that each race had for each other, tensions that could eventually lead to physical attacks by each group. The commission also recognized and reaffirmed that the Japanese controlled the boat-building industry and that they were involved in other resource-based industries within the province.<sup>50</sup>

A developing rivalry between the Caucasian and Japanese peoples was a result of the Japanese culture differing from that of the mainly white, Protestant community within B.C. The Issei<sup>51</sup> preferred not to assimilate into the established culture of Vancouver; they often refused to use English and maintained a preference in building their own community within Vancouver. Issei respected their traditional values, holding family and the group in high regard<sup>52</sup> and, therefore, keeping their economic success within their community. Caucasian groups preferred to invest in the city and held individual achievement in high regard.<sup>53</sup> This made the powerful elite of the province unwilling to accept the waves of Japanese immigrants and created a desire to maintain the mostly British demographic and Protestant religious views upon which British Columbia was founded. Meanwhile, the Japanese, while assimilating into the labour force, were unwilling to abandon all of the elements of their culture. The Issei were especially resistant to replacing their Japanese language with English, as they held the language in high regard and as a reminder of their homeland. This was evident in the area of Powell Street, where many Japanese immigrants banded together, acquired property, and started businesses in the area which became

known as Little Tokyo.<sup>54</sup> By creating a Japanese enclave, they were able to create a subculture within the white, Protestant community, a creation that allowed them to keep traditions such as their language and religion.

In the fall of 1907, all Caucasian economic classes began to fear Japanese competition.<sup>55</sup> The height of racial tensions and cultural clashes occurred September 7, 1907, when a mob of 15,000 Caucasians marched into Chinatown and began rioting.<sup>56</sup> The riot began during a town hall meeting, attended by around twenty-five thousand citizens who lobbied to support a Vancouver which preserved pure Anglo-Saxon blood.<sup>57</sup> A younger individual was said to have incited the crowd by throwing a brick through a window, causing a gang of individuals to march through Chinatown and break every window along their way.<sup>58</sup> With relative ease the mob tore through Pender Street and the Chinese neighbourhood, just a few blocks from the Japanese enclave on Powell Street. When the mob approached Little Tokyo, the Japanese fought back and made the mob retreat.<sup>59</sup> The riot reinforced the 1901 notion that there was a rivalry between the Caucasian and Oriental cultures and that both were willing to defend the degree to which they wanted to assimilate into or accept each other's cultures.

After World War I (WWI), severe unemployment became an issue in British Columbia, causing union leaders and veterans to criticize the Asian population and accuse them of stealing jobs.<sup>60</sup> In the Spring of 1920, foresters were told that they could lose their license by employing Asians, reflecting the discontent that the Anglo-Saxon population of British Columbia had with Asian immigrants.<sup>61</sup> In an assembly meeting in 1924, Attorney General Manson's proposed idea that employers should employ members of the Caucasian race exclusively went almost unopposed, except for the voices of three Labour Members of the Legislative Assembly.<sup>62</sup>

Although most Japanese, and Asians in general, were still treated as second-class citizens into

the 1930s, Japanese war veterans who fought for Canada were enfranchised and gave the Japanese populations hope that some of the racism would subside.<sup>63</sup> In 1934, Fraser Valley School trustees even believed that the second and third generation Japanese were ready to assimilate into Canadian culture and even supported their attendance in Caucasian schools, deeming their attendance desirable.<sup>64</sup> Although the goal was assimilation and not necessarily acceptance, the fact that the school board wanted Japanese students showed that at least one important social institution was ready to at least give the Japanese a fair chance.

Racist sentiment gained prominence within British Columbia's government in the mid-1930s up to the Japanese internment. In 1935, Howard Green, in his campaign to become a Member of Parliament (MP), included anti-Japanese policies in his platform, with a specific concern of defending the Pacific coast, despite their not being any threats in the immediate vicinity.<sup>65</sup> In 1937, Green lobbied the Federal Government for a stronger naval presence in the Pacific, as well as more highways for rapid troop deployment in fear of a Japanese invasion after learning of Japan's military campaign in China.<sup>66</sup> Worried that Japanese immigrants did not assimilate into Canadian culture, Green offered support for a notion to end Japanese immigration in February of 1938.<sup>67</sup> Even though this notion did not pass, it was apparent that prominent members of B.C.'s government displayed racist attitudes towards the Japanese, long before internment began.

Despite such widespread discrimination, as time went by, the overriding white, Protestant culture of Vancouver gave way; the dominant culture needed to become more accepting of the Japanese as the latter became more integral to the labour force and started having families. This acceptance was likely tied to the speed at which the Nisei acculturated to western culture, although by maintaining a loyalty to some Japanese social institutions, like

schooling, and living in enclaves which created physical separation from the Caucasians, acceptance was still a slow process.<sup>68</sup> By embracing more areas of work and becoming owners of commercial enterprises coupled with their shipbuilding dominance, the Japanese established their permanence in Vancouver. Vancouver's culture was influenced and re-constructed by the diversification of its population. With Powell Street becoming a literal battleground, complete with Japanese men patrolling in order to defend it, another battle took place in greater Vancouver, one that was more symbolic in meaning, and one that took place in the realm of sport. Baseball, a Canadian pastime, was embraced by the Japanese. Despite the racism and widespread discrimination, one Japanese team, the Asahis, refused to be driven, literally and symbolically, from the diamond.

### *Baseball in Vancouver*

Baseball's origins in Canada date from a recorded 1838 event, in Beachville, Ontario. Despite a long history within Canada, the game was not quickly transplanted across the country. The game remained popular in Ontario and did not spread to the Pacific coast for thirty-four more years. May 24, 1862 marked the first documented baseball game in British Columbia's history.<sup>69</sup> Advertisements for a game on the Queen's birthday were discovered in New Westminster, explained by historian Geoff LaCasse as representations of the first recorded game of baseball in B.C.<sup>70</sup> At the time, many Americans travelled by steamer up the west coast in the pursuit of gold near New Westminster. During the inactive months of March/April and September/October, when claims were not worked and the miners sought leisure activity, the game was played regularly as a pastime.<sup>71</sup> The gold rush attracted Americans to come to Canada to make a living, while at the same time a window of opportunity was generated for American



culture to make an impact on the culture of B.C. Baseball was transplanted to the West, where it quickly caught on, much like it did years earlier in Ontario.

The discovery of gold in the Fraser River created a stable economy that allowed small towns to grow dramatically. On top of the growth of New Westminster, the small port town of Victoria experienced tremendous growth quite rapidly. In 1858, steam ships traveling from California made Victoria, a town of only 300 people, the terminus in Canada.<sup>72</sup> William Humber states that in 1859, an estimated 20,000 people made the trip to Victoria via steamer from San Francisco, in order to continue on to the Fraser River in search of gold.<sup>73</sup> The city of Victoria quickly evolved from a Hudson Bay trading post to a burgeoning city, one that attracted Americans who looked to stake a claim in the Fraser River.<sup>74</sup> As more and more Americans made the trip to Victoria, they began to outnumber the Canadians and were able to influence the culture of the era. Victoria became a permanent city, one that needed to establish forms of entertainment and leisure, therefore creating an opportunity for sport to gain prominence within the city. LaCasse claims the first record of baseball in Victoria was in March of 1863.<sup>75</sup>

As settlers began to move north in British Columbia, more cities were permanently inhabited and baseball became strongly rooted within those centres. Games were played in Donald in 1883,<sup>76</sup> Kamloops<sup>77</sup> in 1885, and finally, Vancouver in 1887, although it was assumed the game was played there much earlier.<sup>78</sup> Jason Beck, curator at the British Columbia Sports Hall of Fame, contends that there are no sources that completely summarize how baseball developed from the first documented game until the early 1900s.<sup>79</sup> He insists that newspaper articles from the time period as well as other unpublished papers provide some information of games played, but no complete history of baseball exists for this time period in Vancouver or British Columbia as a whole. Despite a lack of evidence explaining how baseball grew in

Vancouver's community from the 1880s until 1900, the existence of professional teams in the early 1900s suggests that baseball did take a foothold in Vancouver after its initial documented game. According to Metcalfe, Vancouver organized a professional team within an American league in 1905,<sup>80</sup> called the Vancouver Horse Doctors, managed by John McCloskey.<sup>81</sup> They left the league in 1907. The Vancouver Beavers were formed in 1908, eventually to be owned and managed by the legendary Bob Brown.<sup>82</sup>

Known as Vancouver's "Mr. Baseball,"<sup>83</sup> Brown was credited with helping to expand the sport vigorously within the city of Vancouver. His Beavers originally played at Recreation Park, on the corner of Homer and Smythe,<sup>84</sup> but Brown had grand ideas for an elegant stadium. After purchasing the bleachers of Recreation Park for \$500, and upon hearing of the plans for the stadium's closure, Brown embarked on a mission to build the Beavers a new home.<sup>85</sup> In 1913, Brown opened Athletic Park, a stadium on the corner of 5<sup>th</sup> and Hemlock,<sup>86</sup> which he built after clearing the site with a pickaxe and dynamite.<sup>87</sup> The iconic ballpark raised awareness of baseball in Vancouver; it lured a barnstorming team that included Babe Ruth and Lou Gehrig, and the all-black all-stars, and finally became the first park in Canada and west of the Mississippi to play a night game under lights.<sup>88</sup> The success of night games led the owners of Con Jones Park to install lights in 1933, with an opening night game that featured the Asahis.<sup>89</sup> Later on his life, Brown eventually helped build a second ballpark, Capilano Stadium.<sup>90</sup> Athletic Park was important to the Vancouver community as it was the stadium which the city's Senior "A" League called home. The Senior League was the top amateur league in the city, and a league that the Asahis first participated in from 1927-1930.<sup>91</sup> Bob Brown's significant contributions to baseball in Vancouver helped the game to grow and prosper and his passion for the sport helped to cement baseball as a cornerstone in Vancouver's culture.

The importance of baseball in Vancouver's culture was evident by the dramatic growth of the sport in its early days, mainly attributable to the aforementioned Bob Brown. The growth of baseball in Vancouver supports Alan Metcalfe's claim that "By 1914...baseball was truly Canada's national sport and that no other game was played across the country with such steady and, sometimes, spectacular growth,"<sup>92</sup> Newspapers of the time attest to the admission of baseball as a cornerstone to Vancouver's sporting culture. As mentioned in Chapter 1, Martin and Copeland state that newspapers set priorities, from every major detail on the front page, to all the smallest stories contained within. Janice Waters' thesis analyzing the sport content of Canadian newspapers from 1927-1935 provides a rationale as to how newspapers are cultural producers and represent the demand of the community which the paper serves. Waters states that "there is some evidence that the sports page has shown an increasing sensitivity to the general social scene and to social change, and this in turn has probably influenced, consciously or unconsciously, the attitudes, opinions, beliefs, and interests of readers,"<sup>93</sup> She argues that, "Newspapers had always taken it upon themselves to report items that they had considered to be indicative of their reader's interest" and that, "During the thirties there was a noticeable decline in newspaper coverage of track and field which seemed to indicate waning public interest in the sport,"<sup>94</sup> What Waters, Martin, and Copeland argue is that newspapers indeed affect and are affected by culture. Newspapers reproduced what the public wanted to know; therefore, they were impacted by culture. At the same time, the papers had the ability to influence readership with what they published.

A content analysis of newspaper articles shows the frequency in which many sports were played in Vancouver. The more prevalent the sport was within the newspaper effectively demonstrated its value to the city's culture. Waters' thesis tracked the frequency and prevalence

with which sport appeared in the *Vancouver Sun* from 1927-1935, a period that progresses through the middle of this study's timeline. Within Vancouver, baseball was the most frequently reported sport in every year of the study except 1935, in which it was second to boxing/wrestling.<sup>95</sup> Baseball's prominence within the *Vancouver Sun* was also quite impressive, measured by headline length and width, placement on page, placement in paper, length of article, and the presence of a photograph.<sup>96</sup> Baseball was the most prominent sport in three of the years, and second or third for an additional three years.<sup>97</sup> The *Vancouver Sun* gave its readership what it wanted to see, a lot of baseball, while at the same time it can be argued that the *Sun* could have influenced its readers choices, such as sport preference, through the prominence of its baseball stories. The more prominent baseball was each year, the more space that the *Vancouver Sun* gave to the sport, allowing the editors to influence the quality of reports. Waters' thesis clearly shows that baseball, by the late 1920s and early 1930s, was an integral part of Vancouver's sporting culture and that the sport was widely accepted within the community, inclusive of the Japanese community, as the next chapter discusses.

### *Summary*

As Vancouver grew from a small town to a burgeoning city, it developed its own unique culture based on the early inhabitants' beliefs and economic opportunities that came with the development of the CPR. Vancouver became a city dominated by Caucasians of Protestant faith who worked in skilled trade jobs or in professions such as law and medicine. This led to the establishment of a homogenous population with a prosperous middle class. Having a breadth of economic opportunity made Vancouver a prime destination for Asian immigrants, specifically the Japanese. As more Japanese immigrants came to Vancouver, the amount of racism experienced by these immigrants increased. Through government-imposed Head Taxes and

immigration limits were created by the Provincial government and citizens of Vancouver rioted in response to the number of Japanese families within the city. The original citizens of Vancouver built their culture on Caucasian, Protestant beliefs and Japanese immigration threatened, in those citizen's minds, to diversify the city.

The Japanese immigrants mainly worked at manual labour jobs, including work on the railroads and within the fisheries. Their excellence in shipbuilding created a niche in which the Caucasians depended on them for quality boats and that fact created an acceptance that the Japanese were quality workers. Despite the Caucasians' demand for Japanese-built boats, the levels of racism remained constant and even led to riots in the Japanese enclave on Powell Street. The Japanese fought back to defend their livelihood and were not forced out of Vancouver. Over time, the Japanese immersed themselves in other areas of the city's culture.

Baseball, a sport that was extremely popular in Japan, was eventually engaged in by the Japanese living in Vancouver. Concomitant with, and due primarily, to Bob Brown's arrival in 1908, baseball flourished in Vancouver and was an important part of the city's culture, evidenced by its prominence in the two largest newspapers in the city, the *Vancouver Sun* and the *Daily Province*. Both papers reported on the various leagues in the city quite frequently, representing the people of Vancouver's desire to keep up with teams that they followed. The newspapers' coverage represented what the people wanted to read about, marking baseball as a clear priority within the city. Baseball's popularity was not solely within the province's Caucasian population though; a group of Japanese immigrants started their own team in 1908, the Vancouver Nippons, who were precursors to the Vancouver Asahis.

## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> Raymond Williams, *Culture* (Glasgow: Williams Collins Sons & Co. Ltd, 1981).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>8</sup> Norbert MacDonald, "The Canadian Pacific Railway and Vancouver's Development to 1900," *The British Columbian Quarterly*, no. 35 (1977): 10.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>12</sup> Bruce Macdonald, *Vancouver: A Visual History* (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1992), 26.

<sup>13</sup> Patricia Roy, *A White Man's Province: British Columbia Politicians and Chinese and Japanese Immigrants, 1858-1914* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1989), 65.

<sup>14</sup> Norbert MacDonald, "The Canadian Pacific Railway and Vancouver's Development to 1900," 8.

<sup>15</sup> Bruce Macdonald, 28.

<sup>16</sup> Norbert MacDonald, "The Canadian Pacific Railway and Vancouver's Development to 1900," 15.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 26. (Parentheses mine)

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 28 & 29.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>23</sup> Norbert MacDonald, "A Critical Growth Cycle for Vancouver, 1900-1914," *The British Columbian Quarterly*, no. 17 (1973): 28.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

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<sup>25</sup> Bruce Macdonald, 32.

<sup>26</sup> Norbert Macdonald, "A Critical Growth Cycle for Vancouver, 1900-1914," 35.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 40. Macdonald does not provide a specific date, but in his endnotes he details that data was collected between 1900-1914.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

<sup>29</sup> Rodney Benson, "News Media as a "Journalistic Field": What Bourdieu Adds to New Institutionalism, and Vice Versa," *Political Communication*, 23, no. 2 (2006): 189.

<sup>30</sup> Patricia Roy, *A White Man's Province: British Columbia Politicians and Chinese and Japanese Immigrants, 1858-1914* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1989), 82.

<sup>31</sup> Ken Adachi, *Two Monographs on Japanese Canadians*, ed. Roger Daniels (New York: Arno Press, 1978), 1.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> Jette, 3.

<sup>34</sup> Adachi, 7.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>36</sup> Masako Fukawa and Stanley Fukawa, *Spirit of the Nikkei Fleet* (Maderia Park, BC: Harbour Publishing Co. Ltd, 2009), 58.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 67-68.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 73.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 74.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

<sup>43</sup> Fukawa & Fukawa, 162.

<sup>44</sup> Peter Ward, *White Canada Forever: Popular Attitudes and Public Policy Toward Orientals in British Columbia* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002), 34.

<sup>45</sup> Introverted culture refers to the notion that the citizens, as well as the government of British Columbia, had little interest in settling the province with anyone who was not of British decent. The province adopted Protestant values in its mainly Caucasian population and was not interested in the values and differences of a diverse population.

<sup>46</sup> Jette, 3.

<sup>47</sup> Adachi, 3.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Issei refers to the original immigrants of Japanese immigrants, they were the immigrants who held their Japanese heritage in high regard and would not abandon important aspects of it, such as language and religion.

<sup>52</sup> Jette, 5.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Adachi, 1.

<sup>55</sup> Patricia Roy, *The Oriental Question: Consolidating a White Man's Province, 1914-1941* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2003), 185.

<sup>56</sup> Adachi, 4.

<sup>57</sup> Patricia Roy, *The Oriental Question: Consolidating a White Man's Province, 1914-1941* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2003), 192.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Adachi, 4.

<sup>60</sup> Patricia Roy, *The Oriental Question: Consolidating a White Man's Province, 1914-1941* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2003), 90.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 93.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 96.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 153.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 146.

<sup>65</sup> Daniel Heidt, "Howard Charles Green and Japanese Canadians," *British Columbia Studies*, no. 164 (2009): 32.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ward, 114.

<sup>69</sup> Brant Ducey, *The Rajah of Renfrew: The Life and Times of John E. Ducey* (Edmonton: The University of Alberta Press, 1998), 5.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> William Humber, *Diamonds of the North: A Concise History of Baseball in Canada* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1995), 94.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 93.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.



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<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 95.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 96.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 98.

<sup>79</sup> E-mail correspondence with Jason Beck, curator from the British Columbia Sports Hall of Fame, on June 11, 2013.

<sup>80</sup> Alan Metcalfe, *Canada Learns to Play: The Emergence of Organized Sport, 1807-1914* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1987), 88.

<sup>81</sup> Baseball-Reference.com, "Vancouver Horse Doctors." Last modified December 2, 2008. [http://www.baseball-reference.com/bullpen/Vancouver\\_Horse\\_Doctors](http://www.baseball-reference.com/bullpen/Vancouver_Horse_Doctors). (Accessed 15 July 2013)

<sup>82</sup> Tom Hawthorn, "Bob Brown," *Society for American Baseball Research*. <http://sabr.org/bioproj/person/eed8360d>. (Accessed 13 July 2013)

<sup>83</sup> Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame, "Bob Brown." Last modified 2013. <http://baseballhalloffame.ca/museum/inductees/bob-brown/>. (Accessed 13 July 2013)

<sup>84</sup> Hawthorn (Accessed 13 July 2013)

<sup>85</sup> Hawthorn (Accessed 13 July 2013)

<sup>86</sup> Hawthorn (Accessed 13 July 2013)

<sup>87</sup> BC Sports Hall of Fame, "Bob Brown." Last modified 2013. <http://www.bcsportshalloffame.com/inductees/inductees/bio?id=79&type=person>. (Accessed 15 July 2013)

<sup>88</sup> Hawthorn (Accessed 13 July 2013)

<sup>89</sup> National Nikkei Museum and Heritage Centre, "Asahi: Canadian Baseball Legends." Last modified 2007. <http://www.museevirtuel-virtualmuseum.ca/sgc-cms/expositions-exhibitions/asahi/index2.php?loc=en-CA>. (Accessed 10 June 2013)

<sup>90</sup> Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame, 2013 (Accessed 13 July 2013)

<sup>91</sup> National Nikkei Virtual Museum, 2007 (Accessed 10 June 2013)

<sup>92</sup> Craig Greenham, "Outfields, Infields and Battlefields: How the Great War Influenced Professional Baseball in Canada" Ph. D. diss., The University of Western Ontario, 2010, 3.

<sup>93</sup> Janice Waters, "A Content Analysis of Newspaper Sport Section 1927-1935" M.A. Thesis, The University of Western Ontario, 1981, 12.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 74.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 17-18.

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 73.

## Chapter 3

### **An Overview of the Asahi Baseball Team, 1920 to 1941**

Baseball in Vancouver grew tremendously with the arrival of Bob Brown. He resurrected the Vancouver Beavers, formerly the Vancouver Horse Doctors. As noted in the previous Chapter, Bob Brown was one of the forefathers of baseball in Vancouver, building Athletic Park in 1913 and establishing the Senior “A” League in Vancouver. As a pioneer of organized baseball in Vancouver, Brown laid the foundation for the sport to grow into the 1920s and 1930s; he did so through the creation of teams, leagues, and ballparks. The rise of baseball was not limited to the Caucasian population, as baseball’s popularity was widespread and played by different ethnic groups within the city. The Japanese were especially interested in baseball because it had been present in their homeland since the 1870s, when three American teachers transplanted the game while on an excursion.<sup>1</sup> The earliest known record of Japanese participation in Vancouver’s baseball community was in 1908, when the Vancouver Nippons were founded. The Nippons played ten seasons in Vancouver, and then disband before the 1918 season. Although the Nippons folded, the Vancouver Asahis had been in existence since 1914. In 1918, they were the only all-Japanese team in the city. When the Nippons folded, many of their star players joined the Asahis to help create a competitive team of the best Japanese baseball players in Vancouver.<sup>2</sup>

The Asahis added a level of permanence to Japanese participation in Vancouver’s baseball leagues, participating every year from 1914 until the Japanese relocation in 1941. In order to provide context regarding the team and transpose it to Vancouver’s culture in the next chapter, this chapter provides a history of the team and a discussion of major accomplishments that are later explained as events helping to create a level of sporting and cultural acceptance for

the Japanese team. This history focuses solely on the team, rather than individual players, as the Asahis did not place importance on personal accomplishments, placing the team above all else. An historical analysis of the Asahis as a whole is also more beneficial as this paper examines how the team experienced social and cultural acceptance, not just how a few individual star players may or may not have received benefits not normally afforded to the general Japanese population.

### *Asahi: A History*

The Vancouver Asahis formed in 1914, playing their games out of Powell Grounds, located in the Little Tokyo district of Vancouver. The name Asahi was created by combining the Japanese words “asa” and “hi” from Kanji (Japanese language) symbols. Asa translates in English to “morning,”<sup>3</sup> while hi translates to “sun;”<sup>4</sup> Asahi means “morning sun”. Although no evidence was uncovered explaining why the Asahis chose this name, it can be inferred that it was done as an act of respect to their native land, Japan, which means origin of the sun<sup>5</sup> or more commonly in English, “land of the rising sun”. Japan is the English word for the country, as it is formally known as Nippon or informally as Nihon.<sup>6</sup> As mentioned in Chapter 1, the Asahis were formed by a local businessman, Matsujiro Miyasaki, who owned a clothing and food store at 200 Powell Street.<sup>7</sup> The core of the team was formed by Miyasaki, along with three brothers: Mickey Kitagawa, Yo Horii, and Eddie Kitagawa, as well as Tom Matoba.<sup>8</sup> Miyasaki managed the team until 1917,<sup>9</sup> but the three brothers and Matoba dedicated at least ten years of playing time to the Asahis.<sup>10</sup> When the Vancouver Nippons folded in 1918, the Asahis inherited many of their star players in an attempt to reinforce their own roster.<sup>11</sup> On top of recruiting players from the defunct Nippon squad, the Asahis maintained a well-managed farm system that generated a wealth of homegrown Japanese talent, and these prospects, in turn, matured with each year that

passed. The Asahis' farm teams were maintained at three levels. The youngest was the Clovers, then the Beavers, and finally the oldest farm team, in terms of age, was known as the Athletics.<sup>12</sup> Although the Asahis only played in low level city leagues before the 1920s, they succeeded in winning the International League Championship in 1919 to close out the decade, the first championship for the club.<sup>13</sup> With a championship title to their name, the Asahis entered the 1920s' with a chance to enter more competitive leagues in the city, not only to compete but at times, excel in those leagues.

1920 was an uneventful year for the Asahis, in terms of performance outcomes, in that the team finished with a 10-14<sup>14</sup> record and without any championships. Despite an underwhelming record, the Asahis managed to draw large crowds in 1920. The *Vancouver Sun* noted on 29 May 1920 that the Asahis drew one of the biggest crowds of the year.<sup>15</sup> When the league handed out its year-end awards, four Asahis were honoured, with Tom Matoba being named top base stealer; Eddie Kitagawa, the best outfielder; Miyasaki, the best infielder; and George Ito, the leading sacrifice hitter.<sup>16</sup> In 1921, the Asahis fared slightly better, losing the championship series of the Terminal League to Hanbury.<sup>17</sup> In the City League, the Asahis finished with a 13-8-2 record,<sup>18</sup> while The Daily Province team won the championship.<sup>19</sup>

Throughout 1921 the Asahis were constantly praised for their high level of excellence. The *Vancouver Sun* ran reports stating that the Japanese infield played a brilliant game,<sup>20</sup> and "Kitagawa goes down in defeat, not in disgrace,"<sup>21</sup> The latter article was especially full of praise for the Asahis because the *Vancouver Sun* acknowledged Kitagawa's skill, even when he did not manage to win a game. Although 1921 did not end with a championship, it did mark the first time that the Asahis travelled as a team to their native country in order to play against Japanese university teams. The Asahis set sail Aug 20, 1921<sup>22</sup> and arrived in Japan on September 9,

1921.<sup>23</sup> On the tour, the Asahis were accompanied to Japan by four Occidental players;<sup>24</sup> this exemplified that baseball was a sport that could be accepting of all people and even energize Caucasian players to explore a culture unknown to them. While in Japan, the Asahis visited the Baseball College of Japan, which was the only school of its sort located outside of the United States.<sup>25</sup> The visit to the College as well as to Tokyo represented an act of goodwill by the visiting and host nations, as the Asahis left gifts and a film on Canadian industrial development.<sup>26</sup> Pat Adachi claims that the 1,500 mile trip helped cement a positive relationship between Canadians and their Pacific neighbours, the Japanese.<sup>27</sup> When the trip concluded and the Asahis returned to Canada, there was no delay in getting back to the business of baseball. With a disappointing end to the 1921 season, the Asahis looked to make changes for the following campaign. The change did not come from a lineup shuffle but, instead, with a change in attitude and play style, created and mastered by the incoming manager, Harry Miyasaki.

In 1922, the Asahis engaged in Harry Miyasaki to lead the team; he was referred to by one of the most famous Asahis, Kaz Suga, as the “Manager of all managers,”<sup>28</sup> What Miyasaki brought to the Asahis and what distinguished him from other managers was his introduction of the media-dubbed “brainball” or “smartball” style of play.<sup>29</sup> This style of play focused on teamwork and team accomplishments, rather than individual accomplishments and the displays of personal talent that most Caucasian teams endorsed.<sup>30</sup> “Brainball” was more of a strategy game than the traditional form of baseball. Miyasaki’s style emphasized bunting, base stealing, and flawless team defence instead of the use of raw power to score more runs than the opponent.<sup>31</sup> This strategy worked well for the Asahis as they were smaller in stature than the typical Caucasian team and they were unable to produce players with the type of strength and power characteristic of Occidental teams. The difference in physical stature and play style led to

the Asahis strategy to be aptly named “little ball,” as opposed to “big ball” for the Caucasian teams.<sup>32</sup> The creativity and ingenious mind of Harry Miyasaki helped transform the Asahis into a successful and competitive team.

Under Harry Miyasaki’s style, one of the greatest Asahis ever to play the game flourished, a diminutive man named Roy Yamamura. In 1923, standing less than five feet tall,<sup>33</sup> Yamamura made his debut, embodying the defense and speed that Miyasaki’s brain ball required. Yamamura quickly established himself as the city’s premier shortstop. He was labelled by the *Vancouver Sun* as the fastest shortstop in the league,<sup>34</sup> as a premier hitter,<sup>35</sup> and multiple times, as a terrific fielder.<sup>36</sup> The *Daily Province* also recognized his consistent greatness, stating in one game recap that, “Young Roy Yamamura was again in the limelight with his snappy fielding.”<sup>37</sup> In 1931, Yamamura left the Asahis to play for the top team in Vancouver, the Arrows, who were pre-dominantly Caucasian.<sup>38</sup> The transition showed the talent Yamamura possessed and his ability to compete with the skill and size of Caucasian men, who were, on average, bigger than Japanese men. Miyasaki’s strategy for success eventually helped the Asahis gain a degree of acceptance in the community of Vancouver by drawing large crowds and the respect of the white community, some of whom owned and operated the newspapers.<sup>39</sup> Harry Miyasaki’s management of the Asahis was a pinnacle moment in their history and his passion to succeed brought the team to prominence in the 1926 season by virtue of taking home the Terminal League championship as winners of one of the highest city leagues in Vancouver.<sup>40</sup>

Throughout the 1926 season, the Asahis dominated their competition and both major newspapers consistently reflected this. By reading through the game recounts, it was clear that the Asahis mastered many of the skills required to play baseball at an elite level: pitching, fielding, base running, and hitting. On May 26 the *Vancouver Sun* stated that, “[The Asahi’s] got

good pitching from Nishi, ran the bases and fielded like big leaguers, and carried the punch with their bats.”<sup>41</sup> On June 4, the *Vancouver Sun* acknowledged the Asahis’ skill by reporting, “[The Asahis] bunch hits and field in sensational style,” which was again a testament to their prowess in two of the main faucets of baseball.<sup>42</sup> As the season came to an end, the *Vancouver Sun* also declared the Asahis “The niftiest fielding team in Vancouver.”<sup>43</sup> The *Vancouver Sun* was not the only paper to give the Asahis credit; as the *Daily Province* recognized the Asahis’ skill almost daily. Reports from the *Daily Province* stated that “The Japanese played their usual strong game in the field;”<sup>44</sup> “[Their opponent] couldn’t stop the Japs when they got on the paths;”<sup>45</sup> and “Nishi was invincible on the mound.”<sup>46</sup> The three quotes above represent the *Daily Province*’s view that the Asahis were a complete team, capable of excelling at any baseball skill. The Asahis’ combination of superior speed, pitching, fielding, and hitting made for a landmark season, not only for winning their first championship, but also because they showcased their ability to play with the Caucasian teams in all aspects of the game.

Due to the success of the Asahis in their 1926 season, the team made the transition to the aforementioned Senior “A” League, a league operated by Vancouver’s Mr. Baseball, Bob Brown.<sup>47</sup> The Senior “A” loop was the top city-wide league in Vancouver, where the best teams battled to become Vancouver’s elite league champions. Entering the Senior “A” League was a chance for the Asahis to show that they could compete with the traditionally much more powerful Caucasian teams. After their dominance of the very talented Terminal League teams, the Asahis finally got the opportunity to compete amongst Vancouver’s very best baseball teams. Quickly though, the Asahis learned that their brand of “small ball” no longer kept them competitive with the higher level teams. In 1927, the Asahis went 8-16-1, neither contending for a championship nor making the playoffs.<sup>48</sup> For example, the *Daily Province* routinely ran



headlines that read, “The Japs were Never in the Picture,”<sup>49</sup> and “Until the Seventh Inning the Japs were Helpless.”<sup>50</sup> Both headlines contained the word “Japs,” reflecting that the *Daily Province* went much further than simply explaining that the Asahis were uncompetitive, but also included racial language to differentiate them from the Caucasian teams. Similar headlines to these continued into the 1928 and 1929 seasons, wherein the Asahis failed to make any progress towards championships in the Senior “A” League. The Asahis were outmatched by the competition and their lack of power put them at too much of a disadvantage to field a competitive team. Due to this, the Asahis returned to the Terminal League following the 1929 season to try and recapture the success that they originally experienced in the years leading up to their 1926 Terminal League championship.

Returning to the Terminal League proved to be the right strategy for the Asahis; the team played extremely well and captured the first half championship.<sup>51</sup> Accompanied by the Asahis’ on-field achievements was their success in the grandstands as well. During the first half of the season, the *Vancouver Sun* routinely commented on the large crowds drawn by the Asahis, as well as how much the fans enjoyed watching the games.<sup>52</sup> Even after a three-year absence from the Terminal League, the Asahis were as popular as ever. After continued success in the second half of the season, the Asahis found themselves fighting for the Terminal League championship in August. On 27 August 1930, the Asahis captured the Terminal League Championship for the second time, beating the Shores in two straight playoff games.<sup>53</sup> Following this win, the Asahis moved on to the Senior Championships, but were eliminated in the first round, losing to the New Westminster team in two straight games.<sup>54</sup> The Asahis mastery of the Terminal League continued into the 1930s, with championships in 1932 and in 1933.<sup>55</sup> With three Terminal League championships in four years, the Asahis eventually expanded their play into two new

leagues: the Commercial League and the Burrard League, while playing for the Pacific Northwest championship<sup>56</sup> against teams of Japanese descent from places such as Fife, Washington.<sup>57</sup> Between games in two leagues and practices, it was assumed that the Asahi team members informed their managers of when they could play, as according to Pat Adachi's list of biographies,<sup>58</sup> more than the nine players required to play baseball were on the roster at a time. The Asahis also only competed in the championship series in the Pacific Northwest League; therefore games were not scheduled during the regular baseball season.

During the 1930s, the Asahis history closely mirrored that of the black barnstorming baseball teams in Nova Scotia. According to Howell, black teams rarely competed on teams of mixed race, but often competed against Caucasian teams in the province.<sup>59</sup> These all-black teams were also equally, if not more skilled, than their Caucasian counterparts and were able to draw large crowds to the games, much like the Asahis.<sup>60</sup> Some black players garnered enough respect among their peers to be invited to play for Caucasian teams. Freeman "Pete" Paris played for the New Glasgow senior all-white club, an experience similar to Roy Yamamura's, when he was asked to play for the all-white Vancouver Arrows.<sup>61</sup> The 1930's represented some relief from the heavier racist years in the 1920's, as non-Caucasian teams gained more support and players of non-Caucasian descent were able to earn roster spots on all-Caucasian teams.

In the 1934 and 1935 seasons, the Asahis fielded competitive teams, losing the Terminal League finals in 1935. Some Asahi team members' charged unfair officiating.<sup>62</sup> A two-year championship drought ensued. Although the years were likely disappointing from a championship perspective, many events occurred that made the Asahis an exciting team to watch. To end the 1934 season, the Asahis participated in a game against Babe Ruth's All-Star barnstorming team,<sup>63</sup> featuring future Hall of Fame players Jimmie Foxx and Lou Gehrig.<sup>64</sup>

Playing against Ruth was an exciting moment for the Asahis as he was Major League Baseball's most popular and talented player. The game itself drew a crowd of approximately 3,000 spectators, held the day before Ruth and the All-Stars went to Yokohama, Japan to play in the Orient.<sup>65</sup> The following year the Asahis played against the Tokyo Giants, who travelled from Japan to play against teams in Canada and the Northwestern United States.<sup>66</sup> The following two years were highlighted by games against travelling all-star teams. The Asahis achieved winning seasons once again and began to reclaim championships they were previously unable to defend. In 1936, the Asahis began a trend in which they won at least one major championship annually until they were forced to disband due to the 1941 Japanese internment and relocation.

To begin the 1936 season, the Asahis left the Terminal League and rejoined the Commercial League. The Terminal League folded shortly thereafter.<sup>67</sup> The Asahis may not have been solely responsible for the Terminal League's demise, but their popularity in Vancouver, especially among the Japanese, likely encouraged a major group of fans to change league loyalties. As 5,000 fans were likely disgruntled by the perceived unfair treatment the Asahis received from the umpires in the 1935 Terminal League championships, it is possible that many of these fans also turned their back on this league.<sup>68</sup> As the 1936 season progressed, the Asahis managed to challenge for the Commercial League championship. It was at that time that one of the darkest moments in their existence unfolded. In what could have been the championship clinching game, home plate umpire Stevenson called Joe Fukui out for not touching home plate after his home run, inciting rage in the Japanese squad.<sup>69</sup> The incident caused Ty Suga of the Asahis and Pete Mauro of the Patricia's to engage in a fist fight, one which umpire Peggy Duff tried to break up.<sup>70</sup> Incited with anger, one of the Japanese players struck Duff in the shoulder with a bat, sending the umpire to the hospital and inciting an estimated 1,000 Japanese fans to

rush the field. Police were summoned to disperse the crowd.<sup>71</sup> This incident resulted in the game being cancelled and replayed the next day, wherein the Asahis managed to play cleanly and win the Commercial League title. Sadly, the *Vancouver Sun* attributed the violence as a common occurrence amongst the Japanese residents of Powell Street, stating that there was, “Another of those lively riots for which Powell Street is notorious.”<sup>72</sup> Rather than commenting on unfair umpiring or the incident as an issue with baseball, the *Vancouver Sun* blamed it the Japanese and made it appear that violence was normal for them. In 1937, the Asahis again recorded a strong season and repeated as Commercial League champions. They also won the Pacific Northwest League champions, a lesser known league containing only teams of Japanese descent.<sup>73</sup>

In 1938, the Asahis again triumphed in the Commercial League, winning the championship for a third straight year.<sup>74</sup> Adding to their trophy collection, the Asahis won the Burrard League championship and the Pacific Northwest League championship in 1938, earning them a triple crown for the year.<sup>75</sup> In 1939 and 1940, the Asahis repeated as Burrard League champions, but lost as heavy favourites in the 1941 championship: “A surprise for a team that almost monopolised the cup in previous years.”<sup>76</sup> From 1938 to 1941 the Asahis won the Pacific Northwest League every year as well,<sup>77</sup> exerting their dominance and claiming the title as the top Japanese team in Southwestern British Columbia and the Northwestern United States. Unfortunately, the Asahis never again saw championship glory or got the chance to carry the Asahi name on their jerseys. With World War II (WWII) dawning and Canada’s allegiance to Britain and the United States, the country took drastic measures and interned most Japanese-Canadians on the West Coast.<sup>78</sup> This led to the disbanding of the Asahi baseball team and, although many of the former players engaged in baseball at their internment camps, none

rejuvenated the Asahi name post-WWII. Ironically, the Asahis met their demise when the team experienced their most successful, winning years- all due to a national ethnic bias that reflected sadly on Canada's treatment of its Japanese citizens.

### *Defining Racism*

World War II was a time of many heinous crimes due to racism, and although Canada did not engage in genocide, their internment of the Japanese/Canadian population on the West Coast was a blatant form of racism. In order to properly understand racism and discuss the racism that the Asahi team members faced throughout their playing careers, it is important to discuss what racism is and how it is perpetuated. As with culture, racism is not a simple term to define, nor is there one straightforward definition. Racism's definition is not simple because it encompasses another term, racialism, which in itself, is not inherently racist.<sup>79</sup> Kwame Appiah defines racialism as, "The belief that particular races share certain inherited traits (whether produced through culture or biology) that define a sort of racial essence."<sup>80</sup> Appiah then states that, "Racism, in contrast, uses these traits to create a physical, intellectual, and moral hierarchy."<sup>81</sup> Racism, by definition, associates particular traits with different races, but then uses those traits to create a hierarchy in which some races are inferior or superior to others.

Racism, like culture, is an ideology that constantly evolves and takes on new meanings and larger scope. The term "racism" was not used in the English language until the 1930s.<sup>82</sup> For the purpose of this study, the following explanation of the ideology of racism will be used to describe what the Asahis encountered during their playing days. This explanation was deemed acceptable because the definition described what the Asahis encountered, despite a lack of a generic term for most of the Asahis' playing years. Another important issue is whether to define

racism from an individual or institutional level. Ashley Doane articulated the idea of “colour-blindness” and its assertion that race should not matter, rather people should be judged on their character alone and, therefore, making it illegitimate to bring race into a discussion.<sup>83</sup> She argued that people who support “colour-blindness” think that the issue of race is a historical one and that it is no longer a significant problem in American society, as they choose to deflect the term and even ignore it.<sup>84</sup> In order to eliminate racism, Doane argued, changes to social institutions must be made so that the institutions that govern and create society do not perpetuate inequality.<sup>85</sup> Using Doane’s assertions and because most of the primary data in this study is derived from a social institution —the newspaper— the definition and explanation of racism that will be used will be from a societal and institutional point of view.

According to author Alain de Benoist, most of the definitions equated with racism up to, and including, UNESCO’s 1978 definition, deal with theory rather than behaviour.<sup>86</sup> Such theories describe racism as a dogma, doctrine, or system, but all agree on two primary principles: there is inequality among races and this inequality legitimizes the domination of “inferior races” by “superior races.”<sup>87</sup> To go one step further, de Benoist argued that there are five main elements that create racist ideologies. The first is a belief in superiority of one race, usually accompanied by an hierarchical classification.<sup>88</sup> Second is the idea that the superiority and inferiority of races is biological or bio-anthropological and therefore cannot be changed or eradicated. Third, the belief that, “collective biological inequalities are reflected in social and cultural orders and the biological superiority translates into a ‘superior civilization’ [thus implying]<sup>89</sup> a continuity between biology and social conditions.”<sup>90</sup> The fourth belief is that there is legitimacy in the domination of inferior races by superior ones,<sup>91</sup> and the fifth belief is that there are pure races through which miscegenation has a negative effect.<sup>92</sup> These five elements all link to one common

theme: “inferior” races are permanently fixed in their situation because they do not have the intellectual capital to change their status. “Superior” races can maintain their status because their perceived superiority lies in the biological make-up, which, in turn, creates social institutions producing more desirable social capital. Thus, racism in its simplest derivative occurs when one group of “superior” people truly believe that they are biologically predisposed to be “superior” to some other and/or any other race in existence. Using de Benoist’s five components of a definition of racism, this paper will discuss areas of racism that are often confused or ignored from full consideration and understanding in order to fully clarify the ideology of racism.

One major area of confusion is that racist ideologies always involve the exploitation of “inferior races.” This assumption is not always the case, as racism can also include the desire to banish another race, rather than exploit. The difference in the definition of the two is that exploitation, in this case, refers to taking advantage of the supposed inferior race, whereas banishment is the desire to rid an area of the population. A desire to banish a population is not always realized and is much harder to enact, as with the Japanese and Chinese immigrants to Vancouver. Extreme racism in the city and the desire to remain a fully Caucasian, Protestant community never led to banishing the Japanese. Without banishment, one way exploitation was achieved was through Head Taxes, a fee charged by the Canadian Federal Government to Chinese immigrants upon entry to Canada,<sup>93</sup> as well as the ability to assign the Japanese to menial labour jobs whose end product most poor immigrants could not afford (railway usage, for example). De Benoist explained this by stating that racist opponents of immigrant labour do not wish to exploit the workers, they preferred to see the immigrants removed from any job that they held.<sup>94</sup> The subordinate race within the hierarchy is removed from exploitation in this example, thereby showing that exploitation does not have to be the main goal of somebody with racist

ideologies. A second point of confusion is that hierarchies of races represent exclusion amongst different people. De Benoist argued that hierarchies are instead a system of integration and acceptance,<sup>95</sup> stating, “Jean-Pierre Dupuy writes that the most favourable context for mutual respect is not one where the principle of equality takes precedence, but rather where hierarchy is observed.”<sup>96</sup> The example given by Dupuy is the Indian caste system, which helps to ensure nobody is excluded. Hierarchy in the caste system brings individual worth into the equation and in doing so the hierarchical system promotes acceptance of subordination, creating equilibrium and tolerance of each community.<sup>97</sup> The wealthier classes of the caste system depend on each of the lower classes for goods that may not be extravagant, but are still essential for survival. This system ensures that even though people are hierarchically ranked, nobody is excluded. Although the Indian Caste system deals with social order, the idea that hierarchies can create order is the important point. As racial tensions in a city can cause a divide if a hierarchy can be achieved, there is a chance to prevent violence or reduce extreme tension. This was evident in Vancouver in the early 1900s when many Japanese were employed as fisherman and boat builders. As the Japanese became elite fishers and builders they were needed by the Caucasians, thus becoming a necessity. As a necessity to life, special treatment was conferred to some Japanese immigrants although they were lower in the racial hierarchy to Caucasians.

The Japanese-Canadian population was subjected to racism quite frequently, as explained in this chapter, and the Asahis were subjected to this racism as members of the Japanese community, inside and outside of baseball. As the majority of the population was Caucasian, the belief amongst many prominent Caucasian leaders was that the Japanese were an inferior population. One of those leaders, Francis Lovett Carter-Cotton, released a statement about the necessity of settling British Columbia with immigrants predominantly of British descent, as the



aliens lacked, “Many of the distinctive features of a settled British community.”<sup>98</sup> Carter-Cotton’s statement contains elements of the first and third assertions made by de Benoist: the belief in a superior race as well as biology and social conditions being linked. Carter-Cotton saw the Japanese as an inferior race whose biological make-up left them unable to create the social conditions inherent in a British-like population of. When head taxes and immigration limits were imposed in British Columbia, the government pointedly illustrated de Benoist’s second argument, that racism contains a belief that presumed inferiority of the Japanese was biological. The biological aspect could not be eradicated; this made eliminating mass immigration by Japanese immigrants, via high taxes and immigration limits, the ideal choice for the Canadian Federal Government. The argument that there is legitimacy in the domination of allegedly “inferior” races by “superior” ones was seen in the Powell Street riots. Fifteen-Thousand members of Vancouver’s population rushed into Powell Street as a mob, destroying property in the Japanese enclave. The lack of respect for the law and lack of protection offered by the Caucasian community showed that vigilante crimes against minorities were acceptable, whereas a mob crusading through a Caucasian enclave risked severe punishment. Only de Benoist’s point on miscegenation failed to manifest itself as an important point in the racism faced by the Japanese.

Of de Benoist’s five components of racism, four manifested themselves in the Japanese population of Vancouver in a general sense, thereby reinforcing the issue that racism in Vancouver existed. It is also important to discuss how the two components of racism that are generally mistaken also affected the community. Within Vancouver it was evident that the Caucasian population sought not to dominate the Japanese, but instead desired them removed or kept out from the beginning. In December of 1919, the Department of Fisheries in British

Columbia, under heavy scrutiny from Caucasian fisherman, decided it would systematically reduce the number of salmon licenses given to Japanese fisherman.<sup>99</sup> Then in 1926, The House of Commons Standing Committee proposed to reduce Japanese fishing licenses by ten percent per year, until they were to be eliminated in 1937.<sup>100</sup> These racist sentiments by the citizens of British Columbia and the British Columbian government represent forms of exclusion rather than exploitation.

Many businessmen in Vancouver petitioned the provincial government in 1928 for legislation limiting the number of shops that could be owned by Oriental citizens.<sup>101</sup> Laws were not petitioned to allow the enslavement or mistreatment of the Japanese; instead they were focused on limiting the economic opportunities of Oriental immigrants in British Columbia. These petitions sought to remove any potential reasons for immigrating to the province. When Japanese immigration became inevitable, a hierarchy (as discussed by Dupuy) was established. Many of the Japanese took lower-class jobs, such as mining, farming, fishing and boat building. Such jobs, while menial at the individual level, were of functional importance to the city. Since the Japanese excelled at boat-building, Caucasian building yards employed Japanese builders to enhance their product. This created a level of acceptance where the Japanese could co-exist with Caucasians in a labour and class based hierarchy similar to the Indian caste system.

### *Summary*

After playing in low level city leagues and finding a suitable style of play to match their skill set and stature, the Asahis became a formidable team. Under the tutelage of Harry Miyasaki the Asahis developed their “small-ball” strategy which focused on bunting, effective base running, and stellar team defence. This strategy helped them to capture the 1926 Terminal

League championship and establish themselves as worthy opponents and a team deserving of a place within leagues showcasing elite competition. Throughout the next 15 years, the Asahis played in various leagues such as the Commercial, Burrard, Senior “A,” and Pacific Northwest, in which they earned multiple championship trophies. In addition to league play, the Asahis hosted visiting teams from Japan and Base Ruth’s All-Star barnstorming team, testaments to their skill level and prominence in Vancouver’s baseball community. The Asahis were also involved in Vancouver’s first night game under stadium lights, an honour to which only they and their opponents could claim.

Despite the Asahis on-field success, issues of racism plagued the team throughout its entire existence. The labels of “Nip” and “Little Brown Men” and “Jap” were all too common in the daily newspapers. The city of Vancouver may have allowed the Asahis to play baseball, but at the same time some institutions and people treated the team as second class citizens whose few rights on the field were stripped as they passed through the metaphorical portal that was the stadium gates back into the real world. Even the few rights they had on the field were constantly thrown into question, as Caucasian managers such as Don Stewart<sup>102</sup> never hesitated to use racial slurs against the Asahis in order to try and dampen their spirits and crush their will to play baseball. Even with city-wide newspapers printing articles demeaning the Asahis to their entire readership, the Asahis remained unfazed and continued to play the sport they loved, baseball.

A weaker team may have succumbed to the hatred and negativity surrounding them, but the Asahis did not allow themselves to falter; they instead continued to play the game they loved. The patience practised by the Asahis, taught by legendary manager Harry Miyasaki, allowed them to play for twenty-seven years with very few major on-field negative incidents, even when new players joined the team. Miyasaki taught his players respect and that only baseball took

place on the field, as he was notorious for removing any player who argued a call or made a gesture of disapproval.<sup>103</sup> In the following Chapter, the results of a content analysis of the *Vancouver Sun* and the *Daily Province* are discussed and the themes surrounding the Asahis are analyzed. These themes help not only to determine the level of racial abuse the Asahis received, but also help to determine if the Asahis were seen in a positive manner. A correlation between each year of the study and the degree of racism and praise the Asahis received is also documented to examine if, as time went on and the Asahis became entrenched in Vancouver's baseball community, they became accepted members.

## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> Pat Adachi, *Asahi: A Legend in Baseball; A Legacy from the Japanese Canadian Baseball Team to its Heirs* (Etobicoke: Asahi Baseball Organization, 1992), 1.

<sup>2</sup> National Nikkei Museum and Heritage Centre, "Asahi: Canadian Baseball Legends." Last modified 2007. <http://www.museevirtuel-virtualmuseum.ca/sgc-cms/expositions-exhibitions/asahi/index2.php?loc=en-CA>. (Accessed 10 June 2013)

<sup>3</sup> James Hepburn, *Japanese-English and English-Japanese Dictionary* (New York: M.D.F. Randolph and Co., 1891), [http://books.google.ca/books?id=Af0EAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA9&lpg=PA9&dq=japanese definition of asa&source=bl&ots=uzMq42FLnV&sig=96jWHRN8ha\\_qVGruFsYL-mZcjpI&hl=en&sa=X&ei=47M3UpLTMMMS9qQG-gYHABA&ved=0CGMQ6AEwCTgK](http://books.google.ca/books?id=Af0EAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA9&lpg=PA9&dq=japanese%20definition%20of%20asa&source=bl&ots=uzMq42FLnV&sig=96jWHRN8ha_qVGruFsYL-mZcjpI&hl=en&sa=X&ei=47M3UpLTMMMS9qQG-gYHABA&ved=0CGMQ6AEwCTgK).

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Louis Frederic, *Encyclopedia of Japan* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2002), [http://books.google.ca/books?id=p2QnPijAEmEC&pg=PA707&redir\\_esc=](http://books.google.ca/books?id=p2QnPijAEmEC&pg=PA707&redir_esc=).

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Mickey Kitagawa pitched until 1925; Horii played catcher until 1926; Matoba patrolled the outfield until 1930; and Eddie Kitagawa played centre field until 1931. Adachi, pages 17, 18, 19, and 23.

<sup>11</sup> National Nikkei Museum and Heritage Centre, 2007 (Accessed 10 June 2013)

<sup>12</sup> Adachi, 11.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> *Vancouver Sun* 1920 (there are no formal records of the Asahis win/loss records, this record was established through my personal research sifting through every page of the sports section in the *Vancouver Sun* from the start until the end of the Asahis season. The *Sun* was chosen as it provided more reliable coverage than the *Daily Province* for the year in question. A final note is that the *Sun* reported that the Asahis were to play a final game on August 14, but I was unable to find documentation of that game in future editions of the paper. Therefore it may or may not have been played, accounting for an error margin of +1.

<sup>15</sup> 29 May 1920, *Vancouver Sun*

<sup>16</sup> 21 August 1920, *Vancouver Sun*

<sup>17</sup> 10 Aug 1921, *Vancouver Sun*

<sup>18</sup> Pat Adachi, 32.

<sup>19</sup> 12 Aug 1921, *Vancouver Sun*

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<sup>20</sup> 6 July, 1921, *Vancouver Sun*

<sup>21</sup> 29 May, 1920, *Vancouver Sun*

<sup>22</sup> 7 Aug 1921, *Vancouver Sun*

<sup>23</sup> Pat Adachi, 32.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 33.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 33.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>29</sup> Shannon Jette, "Little/Big Ball: The Vancouver Asahi Baseball Story," *Sport History Review* 38, (2007): 5.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> National Nikkei Virtual Museum, 2007 (Accessed 10 June 2013)

<sup>34</sup> 20 April 1925, *Vancouver Sun*

<sup>35</sup> 17 June 1926, *Vancouver Sun*

<sup>36</sup> 10 Aug 1926, *Vancouver Sun*

<sup>37</sup> 10 May 1927, *Daily Province*

<sup>38</sup> National Nikkei Virtual Museum, 2007 (Accessed 10 June 2013)

<sup>39</sup> Jette, 9.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> 26 May 1926, *Vancouver Sun*

<sup>42</sup> 4 June 1926, *Vancouver Sun*

<sup>43</sup> 13 August 1926, *Vancouver Sun*

<sup>44</sup> 2 July 1926, *Daily Province*

<sup>45</sup> 29 July 1926, *Daily Province*

<sup>46</sup> 6 August 1926, *Daily Province*

<sup>47</sup> National Nikkei Virtual Museum, 2007 (Accessed 10 June 2013)

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<sup>48</sup> 30 July 1927, *Daily Province*. This record is based on games reported by the *Daily Province*; papers in the day would occasionally miss a game and this record is as accurate as I could get as there are no official season records.

<sup>49</sup> 29 June, 1927, *Daily Province*

<sup>50</sup> 14 July 1927, *Daily Province*

<sup>51</sup> 21 June 1930, *Vancouver Sun*

<sup>52</sup> 14 May 1930, *Vancouver Sun* and 29 April 1930, *Vancouver Sun*

<sup>53</sup> 27 Aug 1930, *Vancouver Sun*

<sup>54</sup> 30 Aug 1930, *Vancouver Sun*

<sup>55</sup> National Nikkei Virtual Museum, 2007 (Accessed 10 June 2013)

<sup>56</sup> National Nikkei Virtual Museum, 2007 (Accessed 10 June 2013)

<sup>57</sup> The leagues were determined by using the biographies on many pages of Pat Adachi's book on the Asahis history. The biographies listed achievements in each league mentioned.

<sup>58</sup> Pat Adachi, 17-169.

<sup>59</sup> Colin Howell, *Northern Sandlots: A Social History of Maritime Baseball* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), 181.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> National Nikkei Virtual Museum, 2007 (Accessed 10 June 2013)

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Pat Adachi, 106.

<sup>65</sup> National Nikkei Virtual Museum, 2007 (Accessed 10 June 2013)

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> 3 Sept 1936, *Vancouver Sun*

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> 3 September 1936, *Vancouver Sun*

<sup>73</sup> National Nikkei Virtual Museum, 2007 (Accessed 10 June 2013)

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Pat Adachi, 75.

<sup>76</sup> National Nikkei Virtual Museum, 2007 (Accessed 10 June 2013)

<sup>77</sup> Pat Adachi, 75.

<sup>78</sup> Peter Ward, *White Canada Forever: Popular Attitudes and Public Policy Toward Orientals in British Columbia* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002), 155.

<sup>79</sup> Tom Martin, "Own-Race-Absent Racism," *South African Journal of Philosophy*. no.1 (2009): 26.

<sup>80</sup> Janice Fiamengo, "Rediscovering our Foremothers again: The Racial Ideas of Canada's Early Feminists, 1885-1945," *Essays on Canadian Writing* 32, no. 75 (2002): 137.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Robert Miles and Malcolm Brown, *Racism*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: Routledge, 2003), 58.

<sup>83</sup> Ashley Doane, "What is Racism? Racial Discourse and Racial Politics," *Sport History Review* 32, no. 23 (2006): 259.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 268.

<sup>86</sup> Alain de Benoist, "What is Racism?" *Telos* 114, (1999): 11.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>89</sup> Square brackets are my own.

<sup>90</sup> De Benoist, 14.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Christopher Anderson, "The Senate and the Fight Against the 1885 Chinese Immigration Act," *Canadian Parliamentary Review* 30, no. 2 (2007): 21

<sup>94</sup> De Benoist, 17.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Ken Adachi, *Two Monographs on Japanese Canadians*, ed. Roger Daniels (New York: Arno Press, 1978), 3.



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<sup>99</sup> Ward, 122.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 134.

<sup>102</sup> Pat Adachi, 45.

<sup>103</sup> National Nikkei Virtual Museum, 2007 (Accessed 10 June 2013)

## Chapter 4

### **Racism, Praise, and Acceptance in the *Vancouver Sun* and *Daily Province***

The Asahis' twenty-seven years of existence cannot be succinctly described as consistent or predictable. There were many triumphant years that culminated in championships,<sup>1</sup> as well as many less performance-successful years that included the removal of the Asahis from top competition in Vancouver.<sup>2</sup> Not only were the Asahis judged by their performance as a baseball team, but they were also judged off the field for being a team comprised solely of Japanese men, at a time when the Japanese were heavily discriminated against. Throughout their playing years, the Asahis received some acceptance, in the way of praise and support from the city of Vancouver and its two main newspapers, the *Vancouver Sun* and the *Daily Province*. Although negative attention was prominent in many years, the Asahis slowly gained favour within each newspaper and were often cast in a positive light as time went on. Though the theme of racism in the press never fully eliminated, it was not always more prevalent than the theme of praise and acceptance. How well the team was received by the city was in a constant state of flux. As time went by and the Asahis became a permanent fixture at Powell Grounds, the once heavily criticized and racialized team became more accepted in Vancouver's media.

#### *Racial Themes Surrounding the Asahis*

Using the previous Chapter's definition of racism and examples of how the Japanese population was affected by it, racism and the ways in which the Asahis experienced it through the media can be examined and assessed. The Asahis were quite successful during their twenty-seven years of existence on the field, but that success did not come without off-the-field issues within Vancouver's community. As mentioned in Chapter Two, Vancouver's culture was

dominated by Protestant Caucasians of British descent; this meant that the Japanese population was a visible minority. Due to cultural and physical differences, the Caucasian population sought to limit not only the number of Japanese people in Vancouver, but also the rights of the Japanese. The racism endured by the Asahis was not limited to fans and opposing teams that they faced routinely; rather, it stretched beyond the field and into a major cultural producer, the newspaper (and back to the field again). Both the *Vancouver Sun* and *The Daily Province* routinely ran racist headlines throughout the 1920s and 1930s, using words and terms like “Japs,”<sup>3</sup> “Nips,”<sup>4</sup> and “Little Brown Men”<sup>5</sup> in what can be interpreted as an attempt to make readers see the Asahis as lesser Asian men, not as baseball players. By consistently using race to describe the Asahis, the newspapers created an image that the Asahis were unwanted Japanese people first and baseball players second. Comments such as, “The first tap of the gong,”<sup>6</sup> “Crack Japanese team,”<sup>7</sup> and “Midget second sacker,”<sup>8</sup> were used routinely and all belittled, literally and figuratively, the Asahis, which in turn changed the focus away from their baseball skill to their race and stature. The frequent and prolonged use of these terms drew attention away from the Asahis on-field dominance at times and created an image that the Asahis were somehow lesser and unequal to a Caucasian baseball team. Because newspapers only referred to “white” teams as Caucasian when they played the Asahis, the newspapers clearly were making race a point of conversation and giving it a privileged forum whenever they discussed the Asahis. In order to reveal, assess, and analyze the extent and prevalence of racism regarding the Asahis, a content analysis was done and is discussed fully within this chapter.

In order to analyze the theme of racism, a content analysis was done through an examination of the *Vancouver Sun* and the *Daily Province* during the years 1920 to 1941. To do this content analysis for the years considered in this sample, any words or phrases relating to

racism in each year studied were documented and counted based on frequency of use in the two media sources. The numbers of articles containing words or phrases deemed to contain racism were then divided by the total number of articles that contained any mention of the Asahis in order to determine the percentage of articles that contained racism. As noted in the previous chapter, the word racism did not even exist until 1932 and over time words take on new meanings, disappear from language, and become newly used in language. Due to this nuance of language, words and phrases were deemed to be racist when the same language was not used to describe the opposing team or the Caucasian population. The major examples were the use of the words “Japanese” and “Nippon(ese),” which were not normally racially-charged when speaking about the people of Japan. For this content analysis, Japanese and Nippon(ese) were considered racist terms because the Caucasian teams were never described by their ethnicity except when playing the Asahis, when ethnicity was a common differentiating factor in the *Vancouver Sun* and *Daily Province*. As the Vancouver Nippons existed before the Asahis, the Asahis were not even the first fully Japanese team in Vancouver’s baseball community; in some respects then, their creation should not have shocked the community. The Asahis existed for twenty-seven years, therefore constant use of the terms Japanese or Nipponese was not needed to describe the team, as most residents of Vancouver would have been exposed to the team through the media or game attendance. The Caucasian teams were also very rarely called by their race and instead referred to by their team name. The use of the word Japanese juxtaposed with and/or to describe the Asahis was meant to make sure readers knew that the team was different than most others in the city.

A complete list of racist words and phrases was not fully established before carrying out the content analysis; instead a short list was made that could be updated as the data were

analyzed. This allowed for the addition of words and phrases that are not commonplace in the current era. For example, there was “Little Brown Men”<sup>9</sup> a term that rarely, if at all, is used in today’s society. During the years 1920 to 1941, the term was used frequently and seemed to be a common, racially-charged nickname making fun of not only the skin colour of the Japanese, but also their stature. Having a list of words and phrases that could be changed as the study progressed was necessary because this study examined a period of over ninety-nine years after the Asahis came into existence. Without acknowledging that language was different now than from 1920 to 1941, this study may have missed several key terms that were prominent in that past, but lay dormant now. When a new term was discovered, the list of words and phrases was updated; the full and final list appears as Appendix A.

### *Themes of Respect and Acceptance Surrounding the Asahis*

The Asahis were frequent targets of racism, especially when the team first banded together in 1914; however, throughout their existence it appeared that people and the community of Vancouver gradually accepted the team, if judged by the *Vancouver Sun* and *Daily Province*’s growth of praise, and lack of racism, in their articles about the Asahis from 1920 to 1940. As time passed and the Asahis’ accolades continued to grow, support from the community at large seemed to grow as well. The team was not seen merely as a group of Japanese people playing a sport meant for Caucasians; rather, the Asahis were another team that was exciting to watch and in fact, belonged in Vancouver’s baseball leagues. Often drawing crowds much larger than the Caucasian teams,<sup>10</sup> the Asahis became popular within Vancouver’s baseball community. The Asahis were such a strong and popular team that Vancouver’s Mr. Baseball, Bob Brown (see Chapter Two), twice asked them to join his Senior “A” League.<sup>11</sup> A testament to their popularity, the Asahis’ membership in the Terminal League determined how well the league did

in terms of ticket sales, while their presence helped create longevity in the league's lifespan. When, for instance, the Asahis left the Terminal League following the 1935 season, the league folded the next year.<sup>12</sup> Having drawn 5,000 fans to one of their final Terminal League games, the Asahis were a premier spectator magnet in the city.<sup>13</sup> Vancouver's community showed their share of respect for the Asahis, at first begrudgingly but, as time went on, the team was seen as an important part of the baseball culture of the city. Due to the Asahis' longevity, they became quite prominent and admired by fans, reflected in their large attendance numbers in Vancouver's baseball community.

As with the concept of racism and concomitant racial themes, content analysis was done in order to determine if the Asahis were accorded respect and even acceptance as reflected in the *Vancouver Sun* and *Daily Province*. To begin, a list of words and phrases normally associated with respect and acceptance was created. As the content analysis was conducted, new words and phrases were added to the list because of the change in language over time and the fact that there are too many words associated with this theme to compile a comprehensive list. As baseball has its own jargon, as with most sports, some words and phrases associated with respect were omitted. Phrases used to exaggerate a victory such as, "Ex-Kings take bad drubbing" were omitted because they were used frequently and consistently in regard to any Caucasian or Asahi victory. Outside of baseball terminology, any adjective that praised the Asahis for their skill on the diamond was recorded since reporters had the option to be negative, positive, or neutral. For most of the articles studied, no reporter's names were given; it was impossible to tell if one or many reporters followed the Asahis, as well as to determine if different writers had differing opinions regarding the team. Some articles contained content which was racist in nature, as well

as content that included praise and respect. In these cases the article was counted twice and the word/phrase was recorded in each, respective thematic content analysis.

### *The Asahis in the Newspaper*

As previously mentioned, two major newspapers dominated print media coverage in Vancouver between 1920 and 1941- the *Vancouver Sun* and the *Daily Province*. These two newspapers produced daily publications (except for some Sundays), and tended to cover a variety of factors affecting the city, ones like business, sports, classifieds, and world news. For the beginning years (1920-1926) of this study, the *Vancouver Sun* contained more in-depth and consistent coverage of baseball and the Asahis than the *Daily Province* did. For this reason the *Vancouver Sun* was initially examined from 1920 to 1926, with the exception of 1923, in order to determine if the Asahis were covered in enough detail and with sufficient frequency for a more complete study to be done. The year 1923 was omitted in the *Vancouver Sun* because it was a randomly chosen sample year in the *Daily Province*, which yielded significant results to be included as part of the study. In an attempt to cover as many years as possible, only 1926, the year of the Asahis' first championship, was examined in both newspapers. Once it was determined that the Asahis were indeed given an equal amount of coverage when compared to other teams in Vancouver, the remaining years examined were chosen at random.<sup>14</sup>

**Table 1: Vancouver Daily Province Articles Containing Racism and Praise Pertaining to the Asahis' Baseball Team over Randomly Selected Seasons from March 1 until September 15, 1920 to 1941<sup>15</sup>**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Total Articles Involving the Asahis</b>	<b>Articles with Racist Themes</b>	<b>Articles with Praise and Acceptance Themes</b>
1923	13	5	3
1926	33	15	12
1927	29	14	13
1933	38	7	12
1937	25	5	14
<b>Total</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>54</b>

From Table 1 above, it is evident that articles printed about the Asahis were published regularly in each season examined, except 1923, which was the first year any form of consistent coverage about the Asahis appeared in the *Daily Province*. With seasons typically beginning in mid-April and ending in mid-August,<sup>16</sup> the Asahis' game reports were in the paper for approximately four months each year, on any day of the week, depending on when games were scheduled. Before mid-April, most reports about the Asahis stated the league they played in, grounds allocation, or schedules. Between 1920 and 1941 it seemed uncommon for teams to be given coverage on days in which they did not have a game or did not have a game the night before. During this span the Asahis played between 10 and 38 games in any given year<sup>17</sup> and therefore the number of articles written about the team was usually proportional to the number of games played. From the data above, the *Daily Province* had fluctuating levels of coverage, with 1923 being the lowest, likely due to an underdeveloped sports section in the early 1920s. In 1926 and 1933, the *Daily Province* had its strongest two years of coverage in terms of articles featuring the Asahis. These two years were also ones in which the Asahis won the Terminal League Championship.<sup>18</sup> As league champions, the Asahis had to play play-off games, which extended newspaper coverage deeper into the summer months.<sup>19</sup> In 1927 and 1937, the Asahis played twenty-five<sup>20</sup>



and twenty-one games,<sup>21</sup> respectively; there were more articles pertaining to the Asahis than there were games played.

**Table 2: *Vancouver Sun* Articles Containing Racism and Praise Pertaining to the Asahis' Baseball Team over Randomly Selected Seasons from March 1 until September 15, 1920 to 1941<sup>22</sup>**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Total Articles Involving the Asahis</b>	<b>Articles with Racist Themes</b>	<b>Articles with Praise and Acceptance Themes</b>
1920	25	6	8
1921	42	7	5
1922	27	6	5
1924	21	7	2
1925	40	7	10
1926	37	20	16
1930	36	11	12
1936	28	7	7
1938	16	1	7
1941	39	26	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>311</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>77</b>

In the *Vancouver Sun*, each year analyzed contained more articles about the Asahis than games played as there were often articles on non-game days. It seemed that the Asahis garnered enough interest to make it worthwhile to include them in the newspaper even on non-game days.

Articles that included content for both themes analyzed were counted in each thematic category, as with the *Daily Province*. This was done because when an article contained both racism and praise there was no objective way to determine which theme should be prioritized ahead of the other. Articles containing no themes generally included just the scores of the game from the night before, a box score, or a small paragraph informing the reader of who scored runs and during which inning. These articles were deemed to be neutral, as they only contained content that was baseball related and excluded any outside themes. Table 1 and 2 contain different years

of coverage because a goal of this study was to cover as many years as possible within the study period, therefore only 1926 was examined in both newspapers.

As with the *Daily Province*, the *Vancouver Sun*'s coverage was non-linear; it constantly dropped or rose, depending on the number of games. In nine of the ten years sampled, the *Vancouver Sun* published at least twenty-one articles about the Asahis. The outlier year, 1938, saw a shift of focus from amateur sport to American professional baseball as well as the Senior "A" loop; the highest level of baseball played in Vancouver.<sup>23</sup> Outside of 1938, almost every game the Asahis played was covered in the *Vancouver Sun* the following day, showing that the team was afforded at least the same coverage as the Caucasian teams. If the Asahis were unimportant to the press and its readers, they likely would have only appeared in the scoreboard section with no articles or full box scores present. The fact that their games were reported consistently and comprehensively was important to help understand that the Asahis did impact the baseball community of Vancouver. Having their games reported and commented on showed that the readers did care enough about the Asahis' existence for the two largest newspapers in Vancouver to publish articles about the team. An analysis of how the Asahis were portrayed and presented by each paper to their readership revealed that the themes of respect, praise, acceptance and racism were most consistently associated with the Asahis.

#### *Racism in the Daily Province and Vancouver Sun*

Being a baseball team comprised of all Japanese players created problems for the Asahis in the media. Japanese immigrants were perceived, in general, as lower-class citizens and were targets of political and community racism.<sup>24</sup> As the Japanese were already an un-wanted group in mainly Caucasian and Protestant Vancouver, the Asahis were a prime target for discrimination

in the newspaper. Over the course of their existence, the Asahis were constant objects of racial abuse in game recaps in both newspapers.

**Table 3: Racism in *Vancouver Daily Province* Articles Pertaining to the Asahis' Baseball Team over Randomly Selected Seasons from March 1 until September 15, 1920 to 1941**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Total Articles Involving the Asahis</b>	<b>Total Articles Including Racist Themes</b>	<b>Percent of Articles Including Racist Themes</b>
1923	13	5	38.46%
1926	33	15	45.45%
1927	29	14	48.28%
1933	38	7	18.42%
1937	25	5	20.00%
<b>Total</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>46</b>	

Table 3, above, reflects not only the number of articles containing racist themes, but also shows the percentage of articles with racist themes in order to gauge the frequency of racism in articles about the Asahis. In the *Daily Province*, the number of articles including racism continually grew from 1923 until 1927. During the 1923 season, the term “Japs” appeared to be a favourite term of the *Daily Province* as it was manifested in four of the five articles containing racism. Articles written by the *Daily Province* racialized the Asahis by stating, “The Japs got their lone counter,”<sup>25</sup> and, “On Saturday, Spencer’s handed the Japs their sixth straight defeat.”<sup>26</sup> The 1926 season saw the word Jap used quite frequently, but often combined with comments about the Asahis’ stature. On 30 April 1926, the *Daily Province* reported that the, “Japanese fought back like little heroes,”<sup>27</sup> and on 20 July 1926, Ty Suga was referred to as, “A clever little Japanese left hander.”<sup>28</sup> The racism contained in newspaper articles began to diversify and attack more than just the Asahis background.

In 1927, almost fifty percent of the articles written about the Asahis contained racist themes. Orientals became frequently used by the *Daily Province*, replacing Japanese as the most popular term outside of Jap. Even when the Asahis were victorious, the *Daily Province* often included racist terminology. After an Asahi win, the *Daily Province* proclaimed, “The Oriental third sacker pulled off the fielding feature of the evening,”<sup>29</sup> and after a tie it was reported that “The stands were in an uproar in the fourth inning when the Orientals came from behind three runs.”<sup>30</sup> The increase in racist themes was likely a reflection of what society either wanted to see or even expected from one of its main media channels. As stated by Janice Waters, “Newspapers had always taken it upon themselves to report items that they had considered to be indicative of their reader’s interest.”<sup>31</sup> Increased racism in the *Daily Province* was likely a reaction to and perhaps a reflection of the public’s general discomfit towards the Japanese people, regardless of their occupation or leisure activities. The Asahis may have been equal to the Caucasian teams on the field, but were still socially inferior in the eyes of the community and the media. After 1927, a dramatic decrease in the number of racist articles was discovered. The decrease in racist language displayed by the *Daily Province* was likely a reflection of the changing times in British Columbia, where acceptance of the Japanese was promoted via political and social initiatives.

Due to high tensions in British Columbia between Caucasian citizens and Japanese immigrants, the government of Canada made it a priority to establish a strong, peaceful relationship with Japan. To help foster positive and peaceful communication between the two countries, Canada established a legation, which was a level below an embassy, in Tokyo in 1929.<sup>32</sup> This legation was the third Canadian one in the world; the other two being in Washington and Paris. The Tokyo delegation represented Canada’s dedication to improving its relations with the Asian continent, specifically Japan.<sup>33</sup> The legation in Japan was given the

authority to assign up to 150 visas per year, once passports were granted by the Japanese Foreign Affairs Office.<sup>34</sup> Canada's decision to foster a strong relationship with the Japan may also have come from the amount of goods Japan imported from Canada. In 1929, Japan imported almost thirty-eight million dollars' worth of Canadian goods, creating a trade surplus of almost twenty-four million dollars in Canada's favour.<sup>35</sup> Japan was Canada's fourth largest trading partner at the time; therefore any negative treatment of Japanese citizens living in Canada may have led the Japanese government to reduce its import level from Canada.<sup>36</sup>

In response to Canada's establishment of a legation in Tokyo, Japan followed suit in 1929 by upgrading its consulate in Ottawa to a legation, thereby showing that the Japanese respected the Canadian efforts to improve the relationship between the two countries.<sup>37</sup> With the federal government fostering a peaceful relationship with Japan, the general realization that racism was not tolerated at the federal level likely led to modest toleration and varied levels of acceptance at the provincial and municipal level. The *Vancouver Star* reported that unless British Columbians wanted to be like the southern states, Orientals must be allowed to take part in communal life as their abilities and education justified.<sup>38</sup> This sentiment echoed the belief that Oriental citizens needed to become accepted members of the community. While some societal institutions, like the newspaper, reported in support of acceptance, other institutions, like the church, appeared to display an attitude of mere toleration. The Anglican synod claimed that its members treat Orientals in a Christian manner and that they were equals, but at the same time some clergymen warned that there were racial and cultural differences.<sup>39</sup> The attempt by the federal government in 1929 to increase acceptance of Japanese-Canadians likely led to the *Daily Province* taking a less racist stance towards the Asahis.

**Table 4: Racism in the *Vancouver Sun* Articles Pertaining to the Asahis' Baseball Team over Randomly Selected Seasons from March 1 until September 15, 1920 to 1941**

Year	Total Articles Involving the Asahis	Total Articles Including Racist Themes	Percent of Articles Including Racist Themes
1920	25	6	24.00%
1921	42	7	16.67%
1922	27	6	22.22%
1924	21	7	33.33%
1925	40	7	17.50%
1926	37	20	54.05%
1930	36	11	30.56%
1936	28	6	21.43%
1938	16	1	6.25%
1941	39	26	66.67%
<b>Total</b>	<b>311</b>	<b>98</b>	

The *Vancouver Sun* was not an unbiased newspaper, but it did not have a similar growth in racist articles up until 1927 as did the *Daily Province*. The number of articles containing racist themes stayed relatively stable between 16.67% and 33.33% between 1920 and 1925, excluding 1923 as it was not examined. In 1920, the only racist term discovered was “Japs,” and it was used primarily in place of the Asahi team name. One headline read, “Japs gave students sound lacing.”<sup>40</sup> Another article stated, “Lefty Simmons holds Japs to five hits.”<sup>41</sup> A third article read, “CPR takes City League game from Japs.”<sup>42</sup> A report in 1921 took the racism even further and symbolically stated the “Japanese infield played a brilliant game from the first tap of the gong.”<sup>43</sup> There was no gong present at the game, yet the *Vancouver Sun*’s reporter implied that since the Asahis were Japanese, a gong always represented the start of an event.

During the 1922 season, two terms to describe the Asahis made their first appearances in the *Vancouver Sun* since the start of the study in 1920. On 16 June 1922, the *Vancouver Sun* ran an article stating that, “The locals have won out in their first three and expect to add another

scalp to their belts at the expense of the Sons of Nippon.”<sup>44</sup> Although Nippon is the proper way to say Japan in the Japanese language (as discussed in Chapter Three), the Caucasian teams were never referred to as Sons of Canada, which represented the *Vancouver's Sun's* motive of differentiating the Asahis racially. Little Brown Men also made its first appearance in the *Vancouver Sun* when an article read, “Yoshioka will twirl for the little brown men.”<sup>45</sup> This phrase not only pointed out the Asahis difference in complexion compared to the Caucasians, but also referred to their smaller stature, which was common amongst the Japanese population. From the beginning of this content analysis it was clear that the *Vancouver Sun* had a plethora of terms at their disposal in order to differentiate the Asahis racially.

Newspaper reports from 1924 and 1925 contained a similar pattern in racist terminology, with the shortened term Jap giving way to Japanese and Nipponese. The word Nipponese was used on three different occasions in 1924, while the term Japanese was used in five different articles in 1925. Both terms, like Jap, were often used as a replacement for the Asahi team name. In this way the *Vancouver Sun* could ensure their readers knew the Asahi's ethnicity. Articles stated that, “The Nipponese booted the ball often and hard and lost out 16-8,”<sup>46</sup> and, “The Nipponese gave their poorest exhibition they have ever shown,”<sup>47</sup> during the 1924 season. During the 1925 season, phrases such as, “The Japanese have always been noted for their speed and fielding,”<sup>48</sup> and “[The] Japanese take lead in Terminal,”<sup>49</sup> were used with regularity. These phrases show that the *Vancouver Sun* may have had fluctuating levels of racism overall within its articles, but the words and phrases used were still just as negative with each passing year.

In 1926, the number of articles that contained racist themes jumped dramatically to 54.05%, almost 9% higher than the *Daily Province* in the same year. The spike in racial comments was likely attributable to the Asahis' dominance of the Terminal League in 1926.

According to the *Daily Province*, the Asahis compiled a record of twenty wins, five losses, and three ties,<sup>50</sup> while the *Vancouver Sun* reported the Asahis' record of twenty-three wins, six losses, and four ties, which culminated in a Terminal League championship.<sup>51</sup> The difference in records by each paper is likely due to games that went unreported by one of the papers. As the Asahis dominated the Caucasian teams at a time when Japanese people were framed as socially inferior, the newspaper writers likely reacted by trying to stand up, somehow, for the Caucasian population by demeaning the Asahis based on their race. The racism exhibited by the *Vancouver Sun* in 1926 was uncommon for the paper up to that point. Racism contained in articles during the 1926 season reverted back to the use of the term Jap, as well as Japanese, over terms like Oriental, Nipponese, and little brown men. In the wake of the Asahis' dominance, it appeared that calling them by their team name gave them too much of an equal standing with the Caucasian teams. Instead, phrases such as, "Only two hits off Jap hurler,"<sup>52</sup> and, "He couldn't stop the Japs when they got on the paths,"<sup>53</sup> were used in place of the Asahi name. The term Jap differentiated the Asahis and made their race appear to hold more importance than their unity as a baseball team.

After 1926, the *Vancouver Sun* followed the trend of the *Daily Province*, gradually exhibiting less racially-themed articles, likely connected to Canada's attempt at building a stronger relationship with Japan and amongst its Japanese citizens. In 1930 and 1936, the levels of racism returned to their pre-1926 levels, hovering around 30% and 21%, respectively. Racism in articles during 1930 veered away from the norm of focusing on ethnicity and often referenced the small stature of the Asahis, a common feature amongst Japanese men. Statements such as, "The little men walloped the ball,"<sup>54</sup> "Little Roy Yamamura,"<sup>55</sup> and, "[The] diminutive M. Malkawa,"<sup>56</sup> were frequently seen within the *Vancouver Sun*. Reporting on the Asahis' stature



was likely more acceptable than commenting on their race, especially when the Canadian government was trying to establish a positive relationship with Japan. During the 1938 season, the Asahis received the lowest amount of racially-charged coverage, at just over 6%; this can likely be attributed to the fact that only sixteen articles were published about the team during this year. The sample size is much smaller than most other years, as professional and elite sport took precedence in the paper over amateur city leagues; the lone racist comment was, “White Pines were victims of a vicious 15 hit Nippon attack.”<sup>57</sup>

In 1941, the Asahis experienced the highest amount of coverage with racial themes, more so than in any other year of their existence. Racist words and phrases encompassed everything that the Asahis had witnessed before; words like Japanese, Japs, Nips, Nipponese, Nippons, and statements about their size were constantly inserted into articles. One *Vancouver Sun* headline read, “Rising sun is hot for Yehle,”<sup>58</sup> commenting on Japan being the land of the rising sun and likely Yehle’s inability to handle even his own countrymen, who were seen as inferior. With two-thirds of the articles containing racist comments or wording, the Asahis were heavily discriminated against all season long within the *Vancouver Sun*. This discrimination and racism was likely related to the rising hostile relations that Japan and the Allied Nations experienced during the late pre-war years of World War II. In a *Sun* article on 3 September 1941, sportswriter Alf Cottrell subtly, but directly asserted, that the league does not want the Asahis to win the championship and it did not matter who won, so long as the Asahis did not.<sup>59</sup> The Commercial League of Vancouver did not want the Asahis winning the championship, as it may have been seen as a Japanese victory during a tense time period. Newspapers like the *Vancouver Sun* likely reflected this negative, racist sentiment by making the Asahis appear as inferior

people who reflected their home country's political ideologies, despite the fact that most of the Asahis were, by then, born in Canada.<sup>60</sup>

Through an examination of the *Daily Province* and *Vancouver Sun*, it was clear that racism was ascribed to the Asahis throughout articles written in each newspaper from 1920 to 1941. In the beginning, the racism might have been linked to the public's perception of Japanese people being inferior to the dominant population of Vancouver. Once the Asahis won a championship in 1926, the racism spiked, likely because the Caucasian teams were now clearly perceived as athletically inferior on the baseball diamond. As the federal government attempted to quell the blatant racism in the country, specifically British Columbia, there was a noticeable decrease in the amount of racism in newspaper articles surrounding the Asahis. Finally, when the political circumstances of World War II inflicted social and ethnic stigmas, due to Canada's allegiance to the Allied forces beginning in 1939 and Japan's ongoing war with another Allied force, China, racism again became a dominant theme in the newspaper when the Asahis were being discussed.

#### *Praise and Acceptance in the Daily Province and Vancouver Sun*

Negativity and racism surrounded the Asahis throughout their existence, but despite the racism and belittlement that followed the team, the Asahis experienced much support and praise as well. There is no defining article in either newspaper that explains why the Asahis garnered positive attention, as they were a team comprised solely of Japanese men, a group which was heavily discriminated against since they had immigrated to Canada. The Asahis may have garnered positive attention because of their athletic prowess, how they broke down the barrier that only Caucasian men could play baseball, their lengthy list of accolades, their longevity, or

another unforeseen reason. The following content analysis examined the themes of praise and acceptance in order to determine when the Asahis received the most positive qualifiers in the press as well as the amount that they received in each year studied.

**Table 5: Praise and Acceptance in Vancouver *Daily Province* Articles Pertaining to the Asahis' Baseball Team over Randomly Selected Seasons from March 1 until September 15, 1920 to 1941**

Year	Total Articles Involving Asahis	Total Articles Involving Themes of Praise and Acceptance	Percentage of Articles Containing Themes of Praise and Acceptance
1923	13	3	23.08%
1926	33	12	36.36%
1927	29	13	44.83%
1933	38	12	31.58%
1937	25	4	16.00%
<b>Total</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>54</b>	

In the *Daily Province*, the themes of praise and acceptance followed the same pattern as the theme of racism. Slowly the amount of praise and acceptance afforded to the Asahis rose from 1923 until 1926, when such positive comments reached a peak of 44.83%. The positivity and praise found in the *Daily Province* often included statements about the tremendous crowd sizes watching the Asahis. Their home opener was reported as having a, “Record breaking attendance,”<sup>61</sup> with a regular season game on June 12 having, “One of the largest crowds of the 1927 baseball season.”<sup>62</sup> After this peak, themes of praise and acceptance declined in both 1933 and 1937, along with the theme of racism, leading to a higher rate of neutral articles. Neutral and unbiased articles contained neither of the themes examined in this study, as these articles usually contained just a box score and/or a game summary. On 12 July 1921, the Asahis beat the Hudson Bay Company’s team 7-5 and the only meaningful sentence in the article was that the Asahis had won Kitagawa’s four previous starts.<sup>63</sup> The article provided the score of the game as

well as a fact. It did not contain a thematic issue or reporter's opinion. Therefore it was seen as neutral. As expected, the themes of praise and acceptance were lower than that of racism because other citizens saw the Japanese as second class. One intriguing discovery was that after 1926, although the number of articles representing praise and acceptance dropped, there were still 13% more articles including themes of praise and acceptance than those that included racism in 1933. In 1933, the *Daily Province* writers exhibited praise when describing the Asahis, *versus* their prior style of ascribing racism. Articles often praised the Asahis' skills honed under Harry Miyasaki: efficient base running and flawless defence. One reporter commented on the Asahis' speed, stating; that the "Asahis did some fast base running in that frame and had the Oilmen tossing the ball around so fast that their aim suffered,"<sup>64</sup> while another report spoke to the Asahis' fielding ability, stating that the Asahis made "Sparkling fielding plays without the semblance of an error."<sup>65</sup> 1933 was also a year in which the number of articles with no themes attached to them reached 50%, which appeared to be a move towards neutral reporting. Although 50% of the articles did not contain a theme, it may have been representative of a movement towards treating the Asahis as just another baseball team, rather than one that needed to be singled out, whether for good or bad. The year 1937 showed a reversal of fortunes for the Asahis as articles that involved racism were found 4% more often in articles than praise and acceptance. Although racism was more prevalent in articles during the 1937 season, the Asahis were still referred to as a classy team,<sup>66</sup> in what can be seen as a sign of respect towards them. What can be inferred from this single year's set of articles was that the *Daily Province* appeared to have moved towards less biased sport reporting, in which support and disdain were kept to a minimum in the articles. With 64% of articles being neutral, a change to journalism, where favour or negativity were abstained from while writing articles, became more prominent.

**Table 6: Praise and Acceptance in *Vancouver Sun* Articles Pertaining to the Asahis' Baseball Team over Randomly Selected Seasons from March 1 until September 15, 1920 to 1941**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Total Articles Involving Asahis</b>	<b>Total Articles Involving Themes of Praise and Acceptance</b>	<b>Percentage of Articles Containing Themes of Praise and Acceptance</b>
1920	25	8	32.00%
1921	42	5	11.90%
1922	27	5	18.52%
1924	21	2	9.52%
1925	40	10	25.00%
1926	37	16	43.24%
1930	36	12	33.33%
1936	28	7	25.00%
1938	16	8	50.00%
1941	39	5	12.82%
<b>Total</b>	<b>311</b>	<b>77</b>	

The *Vancouver Sun*'s reporting that included themes of racism and acceptance did not produce a pattern like the *Daily Province*. Until the Asahis' first championship in 1926, the *Vancouver Sun* appeared to have little praise for the Asahis. Even when praise was granted to the Asahis, it was usually accompanied by a racist term in the same sentence. The *Vancouver Sun* reported that, "The Japs played a snappy game in the field,"<sup>67</sup> as well as the "Japanese have always been noted for their speed and clean fielding."<sup>68</sup> Aside from 1920, the articles including themes of praise and acceptance never rose above 25%. Interestingly, only in 1924 did the theme of racism appear in more than 25% of articles in the *Vancouver Sun*. This might suggest the idea that the *Vancouver Sun* was a more restrained paper in the early 1920s than was the *Daily Province*. Another major difference between the two papers was that the *Vancouver Sun* had two years, 1920 and 1925, in which the themes of praise and acceptance appeared more often than did the theme of racism. In 1920, the increased amount of praise and acceptance for the Asahis within the *Vancouver Sun* can be attributed to frequent reports on how well attended Asahi games were.<sup>69</sup> The Asahis

appeared to have some favour in the *Vancouver Sun* because the bigger and more prominent theme each year was not always racism. In 1926, the year of the Asahis' first Terminal League championship, the theme of praise and acceptance rose to over 43%, a large increase from the 25% reflected in the year prior. As the Asahis won more often, the newspaper lost its neutrality and themes of racism, praise, and acceptance became almost everyday occurrences in the articles. Although the theme of racism made more appearances in 1926, the Asahis were clearly acknowledged positively as well for their performance during the season.

After 1926, the Asahis had a change of fortune in the *Vancouver Sun* and were portrayed more positively than in the past. In 1930, 1936, and 1938 more articles were written about the Asahis that contained themes of praise and acceptance than articles that contained themes of racism. This change in writing was significant because an all-Japanese team received more positive media attention than negative. Even more relevant was the rapid decline in articles that contained racism, which in 1926 were at an all-time high of 54.05%, but by 1938, were at an all-time low of 6.25%. In 1938, the amount of praise and acceptance had reached a 50% level, which revealed that the Asahis were seen quite positively in the *Vancouver Sun*. The positive support for the Asahis by the *Vancouver Sun* in the 1930s suggests that the team became simply another team in Vancouver, rather than one defined, and by extension, diminished, by its race. The final year in the study, 1941, showed hostile reporting about the Asahis, with praise and acceptance appearing in articles only 12.82% of the time. As discussed earlier, Japan was a member of the Axis powers during World War II, while Canada remained aligned with the Allied powers of the United States, Britain, and France. These different allegiances probably reignited a strong sentiment of racism amongst Canadians towards the Japanese, a likelihood which was reflected in the newspaper.

### *Summary*

Through newspaper content analysis it was clear that the Asahis were seen in different ways by the media. Racism in the print media followed the team until its demise in 1941. Thus, despite a twenty-seven year existence, the Asahis were never completely perceived by the media as just a baseball team. Being comprised solely of Japanese men, the Asahis were consistently described as different than the rest of the teams in Vancouver, something the *Vancouver Sun* and *Daily Province* reporters repeatedly felt the need to underscore. The racism that the Asahis encountered in the newspaper varied from year to year, but never disappeared completely from all articles in a given season. During the 1930s, the number of articles including racist themes declined as both newspapers veered between towards neutral and positive articles regarding the Asahis. In 1938, the *Vancouver Sun* almost completely eliminated racism from its articles, reaching a low of 6.25%, but in 1941, world events led to a renewed escalation in the amount of racist commentary from the same paper. The Asahis began to be treated as just another baseball team.

Although the theme of racism followed the Asahis throughout the team's existence, it was not the only important theme that the team encountered in the newspaper. The Asahis received praise and even what could be seen as acceptance in the newspaper. As with racism, the amount of praise and acceptance that the Asahis garnered fluctuated each year, but patterns still emerged. In the 1920s, within the *Daily Province*, the amount of praise that the Asahis received rose each year; in 1933, the amount of praise was higher than the amount of racism within the paper. The *Vancouver Sun* also became more positive in its articles towards the Asahis. In 1920 and 1925, praise and acceptance appeared more than the theme of racism. Despite the widespread racist attitude in the city of Vancouver, one of the two largest papers

went against the social norm and accepted the Asahis, having chosen to respect the team more than vilify it racially. In the 1930s, the *Vancouver Sun* consistently printed more articles that praised the Asahis team in each sampled year of the study. In addition to producing more positive than negative articles, the percentage of articles printed containing racism was reduced in each successive year studied, giving the appearance that reporters cared more about the Asahis' skill than their ethnicity. In 1941, the concluding year of the study, the *Vancouver Sun* reversed its 1930s stance when the reporters stood by the Asahis and accepted them; instead, the paper verbally discriminated against the team during the prelude World War II. Overall, the Asahis experienced racism and praise at varying levels from each newspaper. The important trend discovered throughout this content analysis was that in the 1930s the Asahis were seen in a positive light, with themes of praise and acceptance taking the forefront over the previously dominant theme of racism. With the Asahis earning favour in a major cultural producer, the news media, it appeared that by the 1930s the team was recognized as an important part of the city of Vancouver, an acceptance that dissipated with the events and political alliances attached to the outbreak of World War II.



## Endnotes

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- <sup>1</sup> National Nikkei Museum and Heritage Centre, "Asahi: Canadian Baseball Legends." Last modified 2007. <http://www.museevirtuel-virtualmuseum.ca/sgc-cms/expositions-exhibitions/asahi/index2.php?loc=en-CA>. (Accessed 10 June 2013) The Asahis were Terminal League champions in 1926, 1930, 1932, and 1933; Commercial League champions 1936-1938; Burrard League champions from 1938-1940; and Pacific Northwest champions from 1936-1941.
- <sup>2</sup> 23 June 1937, *Daily Province*
- <sup>3</sup> 18 May 1920, *Vancouver Sun*
- <sup>4</sup> 22 May 1941, *Vancouver Sun*
- <sup>5</sup> Shannon Jette, "Little/Big Ball: The Vancouver Asahi Baseball Story," *Sport History Review* 38, (2007): 10.
- <sup>6</sup> 6 July 1921, *Vancouver Sun*
- <sup>7</sup> 14 May 1924, *Vancouver Sun*
- <sup>8</sup> 12 June 1933, *Daily Province*
- <sup>9</sup> Jette, 10.
- <sup>10</sup> 11 May 1920, *Vancouver Sun*. There are many newspaper occurrences where statements are made about the size of the crowd at the Asahis games, references have been previously made as well.
- <sup>11</sup> 15 May 1937, *Daily Province*
- <sup>12</sup> National Nikkei Virtual Museum, 2007 (Accessed 10 June 2013)
- <sup>13</sup> National Nikkei Virtual Museum, 2007 (Accessed 10 June 2013)
- <sup>14</sup> The remaining years chosen were 1930, 1936, 1938, and 1941.
- <sup>15</sup> The number of articles including the Asahis was gathered by random sampling of the sport section from March 1 until April 15, then daily reading from April 16 until August 31, unless the Asahis were still playing, in which case the research stretched into September. The number of articles is correct to my own knowledge, although there is a possibility that some articles were missed due to misplacement in papers or the microfilm being too blurry to read.
- <sup>16</sup> Baseball season in Vancouver started no earlier than April 18, in any of the seasons studied.
- <sup>17</sup> The *Daily Province* reported ten games in 1923, while the *Vancouver Sun* reported 38 in 1941. As with the two prior endnotes, these records are the best I could gather from the newspapers examined. Games sometimes went unreported.
- <sup>18</sup> National Nikkei Virtual Museum, 2007. (Accessed 10 June 2013)
- <sup>19</sup> 13 Aug 1926, *Vancouver Sun*. Article before first playoff game.
- <sup>20</sup> Record gathered from game reports throughout season.
- <sup>21</sup> Record gathered from game reports throughout season.

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<sup>22</sup> The number of articles including the Asahis was gathered by random sampling of the sport section from March 1 until April 15, then daily reading from April 16 until August 31, unless the Asahis were still playing, in which case the research stretched in to September. The number of articles is correct to my own knowledge, although there is a possibility that some articles were missed due to misplacement in papers or the microfilm being too blurry to read.

<sup>23</sup> From 6 May 1938 until 16 May 1938 in the *Vancouver Sun*, the newspaper was examined daily; when a game played on 17 May 1938 by the Asahis went unreported the following day, random sampling was started.

<sup>24</sup> Pat Adachi, 45.

<sup>25</sup> 18 June 1923, *Daily Province*

<sup>26</sup> 3 July 1923, *Daily Province*

<sup>27</sup> 30 April 1926, *Daily Province*

<sup>28</sup> 20 July 1926, *Daily Province*

<sup>29</sup> 21 June 1927, *Daily Province*

<sup>30</sup> 13 July 1927, *Daily Province*

<sup>31</sup> Janice Waters, "A Content Analysis of Newspaper Sport Section 1927-1935" M.A. Thesis., The University of Western Ontario, 1981, 12.

<sup>32</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, <http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/n-america/canada/episode.html#3>.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> John Meehan, *The Dominion and the Rising Sun: Canada Encounters Japan, 1929-1941* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004), 9.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Waters, 12.

<sup>38</sup> Patricia Roy, *The Oriental Question: Consolidating a White Man's Province, 1914-1941* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2003), 148.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> 27 May 1920, *Vancouver Sun*

<sup>41</sup> 5 June 1920, *Vancouver Sun*

<sup>42</sup> 10 June 1920, *Vancouver Sun*

<sup>43</sup> 6 July 1921, *Vancouver Sun*

<sup>44</sup> 16 June 1922, *Vancouver Sun*

<sup>45</sup> 19 June 1922, *Vancouver Sun*

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<sup>46</sup> 21 May 1925, *Vancouver Sun*

<sup>47</sup> 23 July 1924, *Vancouver Sun*

<sup>48</sup> 20 April 1925, *Vancouver Sun*

<sup>49</sup> 2 July 1925, *Vancouver Sun*

<sup>50</sup> Asahis' record was compiled through all articles collected from 16 April 1926 to 19 August 1926 in the *Daily Province*.

<sup>51</sup> Asahis' record was compiled through all articles collected from 16 April 1926 to 24 August 1926 in the *Vancouver Sun*.

<sup>52</sup> 6 May 1926, *Vancouver Sun*

<sup>53</sup> 29 July 1926, *Vancouver Sun*

<sup>54</sup> 8 May 1930, *Vancouver Sun*

<sup>55</sup> 5 June 1930, *Vancouver Sun*

<sup>56</sup> 23 Aug 1930, *Vancouver Sun*

<sup>57</sup> 10 June 1938, *Vancouver Sun*

<sup>58</sup> 16 September 1941, *Vancouver Sun*

<sup>59</sup> 3 September 1941, *Vancouver Sun*

<sup>60</sup> Jette, 2007. Jette states that by 1908, most of the Vancouver Nippons team was Nisei, or the first generation to be born in Canada; therefore by 1941 most players were Canadian born.

<sup>61</sup> 9 May 1927, *Daily Province*

<sup>62</sup> 12 June 1921, *Daily Province*

<sup>63</sup> 12 July 1921, *Vancouver Sun*

<sup>64</sup> 12 May 1933, *Daily Province*

<sup>65</sup> 12 June 1933, *Daily Province*

<sup>66</sup> 16 July 1937, *Daily Province*

<sup>67</sup> 15 May 1922, *Vancouver Sun*

<sup>68</sup> 20 April 1925, *Vancouver Sun*

<sup>69</sup> 11, 18, 22, 29 May 1920, *Vancouver Sun*. Each article had the game attendance reported in the article

## Chapter 5

### Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

#### *Summary*

The main purpose of this study was to examine how the Vancouver Asahis used baseball as a means of acceptance within their community. Specifically, this acceptance was tied to the Asahis skill and performance on the field, an acceptance that led to periods of domination over the Caucasian teams in various leagues within Vancouver. This study examined two of the main media sources in Vancouver between 1920 and 1941, the *Vancouver Sun* and the *Daily Province* newspapers, in order to decipher how the Asahis were represented throughout this era and determine changing attitudes toward the team. The theme of racism was analyzed as a concept and then compared with the themes of praise and acceptance for nature and frequency of use within both newspapers. Through content analysis, this study aimed to determine if the Asahis were eventually afforded more praise and acceptance than condemnation through racism within both papers. As most citizens within Vancouver were extremely racist towards immigrants of Japanese descent, this study examined whether or not the Asahis' play on the baseball diamond created a niche in which they were largely accepted within the city. As the media, specifically the newspapers for this study, often represented values that members of a community held, a content analysis of the themes within the articles of the *Vancouver Sun* and *Daily Province* was used to help determine if the Asahis were, at some point, accepted in Vancouver.

Culture, as a concept, was an integral part of this study, therefore a definition and meaning of the term was of paramount importance. An essential point in developing the concept of culture was that culture is ever changing, and is constantly influencing and being influenced

by the people that create it. Culture draws on history to develop social norms and mores that a group of people live under. As time passes and these laws, written or unwritten, change, the culture a group of people adhere to is influenced by the change in laws. As time passed and people's beliefs changed, the culture surrounding them was changed to include these new beliefs, while retaining and inculcating with beliefs from the past. The development of culture as a concept was important as Vancouver and its culture was examined from the city's incorporation, until 1920.

Vancouver's location on the Pacific Coast made it ideal for a railway terminus. Thus, in 1885, the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) declared Vancouver as the city that would become its final stop in the west. The addition of a railroad, combined with Vancouver's access to the Pacific Ocean, and the Orient, helped the population grow from 2,000 in 1886, to over 100,000 in 1910. Business and the economy developed rapidly, leading to a wealthy population of professionals and the development of a middle-class, making Vancouver a preferred location for immigrants. Vancouver's ability to attract immigrants eventually became a cause for concern for its citizens and government, as one of the main immigrant groups, the Japanese, were unwanted by the majority of citizens. The population of Vancouver was mostly of Caucasian descent and of Protestant faith; that cultural majority seemed to hold the belief that the Japanese greatly altered the city's demographic homogeneity. Despite efforts by the government, such as imposing Head Taxes and immigration limits, Japanese immigrants still came to Vancouver and attempted to carve out their own lifestyle in the city.

By 1920, over 15,000 Japanese immigrants lived in Vancouver. Most were forced into menial labour jobs, such as mining and railroad building. Due to heavy discrimination, the Japanese immigrants bonded together, not only in the Japanese exclave on Powell Street, but also

in the workforce. The Japanese excelled in boatbuilding and dominated in terms of the workforce. By 1919, there were nineteen registered Japanese boat builders and their skill was highly touted, leading Caucasian fishermen to accept the Japanese in their role and allow them to use their skills to produce quality boats. Despite the willingness of the Japanese to work any job that Caucasians gave them, they still faced heavy discrimination, especially because of their close-knit community on Powell Street. In 1907, a riot that included over 15,000 Caucasians ensued on the street as a protest against Japanese immigration, representing unwillingness to accept the Japanese at that point in history. The riot did not deter the Japanese; they fought for their right live in Vancouver, despite intense racism from the Caucasian population. Even in the face of widespread racism, the Japanese managed to establish livelihoods within Vancouver and started to enter more than just the workforce; they eventually made their way into leisure activities, like baseball, a sport dominated by Caucasians.

Baseball's roots trace back to 1838 in Beachville, Ontario, but the sport made its official documented debut in Vancouver in 1887. Despite its popularity amongst American gold miners, baseball was not well established in Vancouver until Bob Brown, deemed Vancouver's Mr. Baseball, came to the city in 1908. Brown was a revolutionary when it came to baseball in Vancouver; he founded the Beavers in 1908 and built Athletic Park in 1913. He eventually created the Senior "A" League, whose members were the most elite teams in the city. Athletic Park hosted the Senior "A" teams, as well as Babe Ruth's Touring All-Star team, and the first game under lights in Canada. Brown eventually built Capilano Stadium, adding to his list of contributions to Vancouver's baseball development. Brown was the most significant individual, in terms of his contributions to baseball, in Vancouver and helped to develop it into one of the most popular sports in the city between 1920 and 1941. Baseball's widespread appeal in the city

was not limited to Caucasians, as the Japanese were accomplished baseball players in their home country.

The love of baseball by the Japanese helped lead to the formation of the Vancouver Nippons in 1908, the first team was comprised solely of Japanese men in Vancouver. In 1914, six years after the creation of the Nippons, a second all-Japanese team was created and named the Vancouver Asahis. Before the 1918 season commenced, the Vancouver Nippons folded and some of their star players joined the Asahi roster, adding to its talent pool. In 1922, Harry Miyasaki became the manager of the Asahis with grander dreams of winning the Terminal League championship because of its status as a top league within Vancouver. Under Miyasaki's tutelage, the Asahis developed their own brand of baseball —small-ball— which focused on bunting, base stealing, and perfection in the field, thus allowing them to compete with the more powerful Caucasian teams. In 1926, four years after Miyasaki's appointment as manager, the Asahis won the Terminal League championship and, in doing so, became one of the top teams in Vancouver. Over the next fifteen years, the Asahis went on to win multiple championships in the Terminal League, Burrard League, and Pacific Northwest League, cementing their status as perennial contenders and champions. They played in the first game under lights in Canada and hosted Babe Ruth's all-star team, reflective of their value as an important part of Vancouver's baseball community. Despite their success on the field, the Asahis were often victims of racial abuse throughout their existence, from members of the community and from media outlets such as the *Vancouver Sun* and the *Daily Province*.

Racism constantly surrounded the Asahis throughout their playing years as terms like Nip and Jap were used as adjectives in the *Vancouver Sun* and *Daily Province*. Even the terms Japanese and Nippon held racist connotations, as both newspapers constantly reminded their

readers, through articles, that the Asahis were an ethnic team. As ethnic terms were only used to describe the Caucasian teams when they played the Asahi—a way to differentiate each team. The use of racist language was especially prevalent during the 1920s, as reporters rarely produced articles that did not contain some form of racial description. During the early 1930s, there was a shift in the language used to describe the Asahis, whether it was from the Canadian government's attempt to build a stronger relationship with Japan or the Asahis' constant success on the field; reporters appeared to favour the Asahis. Newspaper reports contained praise for the team far more often than they contained racist language, giving the appearance that both newspapers began to accept the Asahis as just a baseball team and not portray the players as merely a group of Japanese men playing a sport for Caucasians. Through baseball and the Asahis' success, it appeared that the Asahis gained a degree of acceptance within the community. Caucasian fans cheered for them and their following was one of the largest in the city. The legendary Bob Brown twice invited them to play in his Senior "A" League, a request that the Asahis turned down after their original attempt to compete. With such a large following within the city, acknowledgement of their skill by Bob Brown, and acceptance within the press, it appeared that the Asahis had, to a degree, gained acceptance within the community.

### *Conclusions*

The Asahis' skill on the diamond helped create a niche in which they could prove that the Japanese were not an inferior population in the primarily Caucasian city of Vancouver. Despite widespread discrimination, the Asahis' domination of Caucasian teams helped create a realm in which they were not seen as inferior to Caucasians. By minimizing and, at times, nullifying the racist belief that the Japanese could not compete with the Caucasian teams, the Asahis actually gained acceptance within Vancouver's baseball community. Their attendance records and ability



to draw Caucasian fans in support of their team first mirrored this acceptance. Despite playing in leagues lower than the Senior “A” League, the Asahis consistently drew large contingents of Caucasian fans to their games. As Caucasian fans were willing to watch and pay, to see lower tier baseball, the large crowds that the Asahis drew clearly showed that they were extremely popular amongst Caucasian fans. Decreasing racism in the community and support for the Asahis amongst Caucasian fans represented changing attitudes and a possible newfound belief that the Asahis were at least athletic equals.

One of the biggest areas of perceived acceptance was in the *Vancouver Sun* and the *Daily Province* newspapers. Both papers published many racist articles in the early 1920s, with only the *Vancouver Sun* publishing more articles containing praise over racism prior to 1926. This racism was prevalent through the years that the Asahis were not winning prominent championships, with only an International League championship to their name prior to 1926. By winning the Terminal League championship, the Asahis became one of the top teams in Vancouver, proving not only could they compete with Caucasian teams, but they could also defeat them. In what appeared to be an effort to protect the long held notion that the Caucasian race was superior to all others, the *Vancouver Sun* and *Daily Province* published record levels of racist articles in 1926. As Caucasian teams continued to be beaten by the Asahis, the ability to defend the supremacy of whiteness slowly faded, likely prompting the newspapers to make one last attempt to diminish the accomplishments of the Asahis by defining the team by its ethnicity. With less evidence to maintain the belief that the Japanese were inferior baseball players, the newspapers’ views of the team and, concomitantly, article content, changed.

After 1926, a shift in the themes that were embedded in the articles published by the *Vancouver Sun* and *Daily Province* began to emerge. From 1930 to 1940 there was a sharp

decline in the number of articles containing racism in both papers, with an increase in the amount of praise and acceptance shown. In this decade, the Asahis won a championship every year except 1931, 1934, and 1935, with multiple championships per year coming in the latter half of the decade. The level of dominance and the sustained excellence that the Asahis exhibited all but erased the notion that Japanese baseball players could not compete with Caucasian baseball players. Having no concrete evidence to rationalize racism towards the Asahis, as well as a changed attitude amongst the population of Vancouver, both newspapers seemed to alter the nature of their reporting to reflect what the population believed. The Asahis' skill in baseball created a realm that was dominated by the Japanese and likely commanded respect of the community and media.

By effectively dispelling the notion that the Japanese were inferior on the baseball diamond, the Asahis changed the way they were represented in the press. Their skill led to admiration within the newspapers and praise for a team that could compete with and often defeat the Caucasians. When Bob Brown held the first night game in Canada he could have chosen any two Caucasian teams, but instead chose the Asahis, likely for their popularity and ability to draw a large crowd. The Asahis' skill became the defining factor for the team and the community and newspapers could not argue differently. Acceptance for the Asahis and fair treatment as a baseball team was necessitated, as they were a premier team in Vancouver, backed by the community. With a large contingent of fans, including Caucasians, the newspapers very likely had to reflect what their readers felt, which was acceptance and praise for the Asahis.

This study added to the already existing body of knowledge that is Canadian baseball history by discussing a team that is not regularly acknowledged. As mentioned in Chapter One, the amount of sources available that pertains strictly to the Asahis is minimal. Sources that link

the Asahis to the social factors surrounding them are even rarer to find. By analyzing how the Asahis were perceived from 1920 to 1941 in the media and community, this study was able to show that attitudes towards the team changed based on conditions surrounding the Asahis. As the team became successful on the field, they attracted a larger number of Caucasian fans and the local newspapers began to report on the team with positive adjectives in articles, rather than demeaning the team based on their race. As government policy changed to become more accepting of Japanese immigrants and world events like WWII caused racist attitudes to re-emerge, it was evident in the newspapers that the Asahis were affected by social and political views. The Asahis ability to garner acceptance through their skill on the diamond also represented the power that baseball, the most popular sport at the time in Vancouver, had in terms of being able to influence community relations. Overall, this study went deeper than previous research in terms of connecting the Asahis to the culture that they were immersed in, while discussing how the team was able to use baseball as a means to change their own standing within that culture.

### *Recommendations for Future Research*

The game of baseball proved to have a dramatic impact on the way the Asahis were perceived by the community and media of Vancouver. Their dominance of the sport changed the themes associated with the team in both the *Vancouver Sun* and the *Daily Province* newspapers, from themes of intense racism, to themes of praise and acceptance. Future researchers may be interested in determining whether other teams constructed solely of one minority, in other cities across Canada (such as black baseball players in the Maritimes), were able to use their skill in a sport to gain acceptance within media and community. Vancouver was also home to the all-Japanese Nippons from 1908 until 1918; determining how they were represented by the media,

especially in their early years, might help determine why the Asahis were created. If the Nippons were the recipients of extreme racism in the community and the press, the creation of the Asahis seems illogical, but acceptance of the Nippons, only one year after the Powell Street Riot, also appears illogical. Examining how the Nippons were perceived would add to a missing piece of history within Vancouver's baseball community.

The Asahis' creation dates back to 1914; therefore an analysis of the team within the *Vancouver Sun* and *Daily Province* may also help researchers determine how the team was perceived in comparison to the already established Nippons. Pat Adachi compiled the most in-depth history of the Asahis in terms of player biographies, letters, and pictures, and even with the inclusion of this study, there are many years of newspapers that can be analyzed. Researchers looking to compile statistics about the team as well as continue the content analysis in this study would still have a plethora of material to analyze. Using Janice Waters' thesis as a model, determining the prominence of the Asahis in the newspapers may also be of interest to researchers looking to compare the Asahis coverage to that of Caucasian teams. This type of study would provide even more depth to the way that the Asahis were portrayed by the *Vancouver Sun* and *Daily Province*, especially in determining if the Asahis were given an equal level of coverage, not just the themes portrayed. This study helped answer one question of many that surround the Asahis, revealing a change in attitudes amongst Vancouver's print media and baseball community towards the Asahis. Future researchers would have much to choose from if they wished to pursue an interest in a team that has few links left to its important place in Canadian sport history.

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## **APPENDIX A: Complete List of Terms and Phrases Containing Racist Themes in the *Vancouver Sun* and *Daily Province***

1. Japs
2. Japanese
3. Nips
4. Nippon
5. Clever
6. Tap of the Gong
7. Sons of Nippon
8. Little Brown Men
9. Crack Japanese Team
10. Oriental
11. Little Heroes
12. Little
13. Midget
14. Rising Sun references

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