

History of Asahi

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In these unprecedented times, Asahi continues to try to keep the Asahi legacy alive. One of our key goals is to educate the youth about Asahi and it is quite inspiring that one of our members has decided to learn more about Asahi by completing research and report on the history of Asahi. I would encourage that more youth take this initiative. What better way of learning about Asahi than a student project. Something of great interest and the ability to share your findings to their peers and teachers.

Attached please find Matthew Hesse's Historica project about the Vancouver Asahi in his French immersion class. Although in French, it is a great example of a youth initiative to learn more about the history of Asahi and then sharing it amongst his class. Well done Matthew!! May more students follow you in this initiative. Files attached include an overview of the Vancouver Asahi, a biography of Harry Miyasaki, a description of the 1921 tour of Japan, a list of the team's championships, and a description of the internment of Japanese-Canadians during WWII. Also included is Matthew's powerpoint presentation.

Asahi – First Tour of Japan

The Asahi's first tour of Japan was in 1921. The Asahi were the first Nikkei team from Canada to be invited to tour in Japan. Dr. Seitaro Nomura, Asahi club president, had the idea to tour with a team from Vancouver, and inspired the Asahi to go. He put together a team of a dozen Asahi players and four Caucasian players from other city clubs. Back then, it was a tour requirement to include Caucasian players for promotional reasons. The Asahi took the steamship *Kashima Maru* and departed from Victoria in late August. It took about two weeks to reach Yokohama, Japan.

The Asahi played twenty-two games against university teams on their tour. The Asahi's first game was against the Tomon club. After that game, the Asahi continued on to Hoyu, Kansai, Tohoku and Hokkaido. On returning to Tokyo, the Asahi didn't play so well against Keio, Waseda, Rikkyo and Hosei. The Asahi's third-last game was a classic with lots of back and forth play. The spectators numbered in the 4000s. The Asahi's last games were against Keio University and Mita club, defeating them both. The Asahi's tour showed their Japanese relatives how successful they had become living in Canada. Back in British Columbia, their communities regarded them with new respect. The Asahi's popularity increased upon their return to Vancouver.



Harry Miyasaki

Harry Miyasaki led the Vancouver Asahi through their golden age. He was with the Vancouver Asahi from 1918 to 1929, first as a player and then as a manager. When he was a manager he invented a new way to play baseball, "Brainball". Brainball is a combination of small game and counter-power. Miyasaki didn't just perfect Asahi strategies to win games but also their succession system. The system the Miyasaki had created granted Asahi to have good players every year. Asahi was playing in a time where there was a lot of racial discrimination, so to gain the respect of the Caucasian teams the Asahi never protested a call. This is the reason why the Asahi was so popular in the Japanese community. As a result of the Brainball strategy, the Asahi has won 6 straight championships from 1936 to 1941.

There is not much information about Miyasaki as a child, but we did find a little bit of information about his childhood. His full name is Harry Sanzoku Miyasaki. He was born in Hawaii then he moved to Canada when he was a little boy. His name can be found in the graduates of Nippon Primary School (the equivalent of the primary and first secondary cycle) of 1907.

Harry Miyasaki started playing with Asahi in 1918 then started managing the Asahi in 1922. He was their manager from 1922 to 1929. In the 1920s baseball was comprised of great Caucasian players who dominated by hitting home runs or strong shots. So for the Asahi to counter the powerful players, Miyasaki invented Brainball. Brainball focused on strategy so the Asahi could score points. Brainball consist of bunting, walking, stealing and sacrificial fly balls. Miyasaki's strategy focused on speed and skill. He had the vision to bring together the best Japanese players to represent the Nikkei community (2nd generation of Japanese born in Canada). Miyasaki was the top manager of the Asahi and this is how he was named the "McGraw of the Powell Street " (McGraw was a legendary manager of the New York Yankees).

When Miyasaki was not training the Asahi, he worked in his laundromat. That is the reason for which he washed the players' uniforms and socks. Being a citizen of the United States, as soon as Canada declared war on Japan Miyasaki was considered a prisoner of war (POW) and was sent to Camp Angler.

Miyasaki had accomplished a lot with the Asahi club. He was a player when he won the 1919 International Championship. Miyasaki was appointed the coach and manager of Asahi in 1922. In 1926, he won the Terminal League Championship as a player and coach at the same time. With the style of play that Miyasaki introduced, the Asahi club won six consecutive championships from 1936 to 1941. In 2003 Harry Miyasaki was inducted into the Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame with the Asahi. Then in 2005, Miyasaki was also inducted into the British Columbia Sports Hall of Fame with the Asahi.

The Asahi was playing in a time of racial discrimination, but when the Asahi was playing Miyasaki was acclaimed by Japanese and Caucasians alike. Under the style of games that Miyasaki introduced to the Asahi club, the Asahi won six championships in consecutive years from 1936 to 1941. Winning these baseball championships was important for the Nikkei community because Asahi was the pride of their community.

Harry Miyasaki has unfortunately passed, but his heritage continues. Today the Asahi Baseball Association is following what he established almost 100 years ago, playing with respect and sportsmanship.

The Internment of Japanese Canadians

1941 was the last season For the Asahi because 22,000 people of Japanese origin were interned, and placed in the labour camps or internment camps within British Columbia. In December 1941 the Government of Canada used the War Measures Act to move people of Japanese descent within Canada. All people going to the intern camps were entitled to two small suitcases. The Asahi suitcases included their jersey, their gloves and photos of the team even though they were all sent to different camps. Before being sent to the camps, the Japanese were moved to Hastings Park where they were housed in livestock buildings before being transported to hastily erected camps and ghost towns in the interior of British Columbia.

The Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor in Hawaii, and Canada therefore declared war on Japan. As a result, the Government of Canada used the War Measures Act to intern all people of Japanese descent (75% of whom were Canadian citizens) residing less than 160 kilometers from the Pacific coast. The Japanese were "foreign enemies" and they were placed in internment camps or labour camps. The conditions in the camps were horrendous. Even though the guards were friendly, the Winter of 1942 was particularly severe. It was very cold in most places, and there was no running water.

In the camps, Asahi veterans created baseball teams. They also inspired young people who participated in the games. Then in 1943, on Canada Day, the Lemon Creek All-Stars coached by Ty Suga challenged teams in three nearby camps in the Slocan Valley. It was the first time that the Japanese were allowed to travel to reunite. After the liberation of the Japanese-Canadians at the end of World War II, the Asahi didn't play another game as a team. The Asahi could not return to home because they didn't have any money and nothing to return to in Vancouver. The Asahi, like other Japanese-Canadians, had nothing to return to since their property, business and home were confiscated and sold by the federal government.



Asahi Championships

- 1919 Vancouver International League Championship
- 1926 Terminal League Championship
- 1930 Terminal League Championship
- 1932 Terminal League Championship
- 1933 Terminal League Championship
- 1936 Commercial League Championship
- 1936 Terminal League Championship
- 1937 Commercial League Championship
- 1937 Pacific Northwest League Championship
- 1938 Commercial League Championship
- 1938 Burrard League Championship
- 1938 Japanese Pacific Northwest League Championship
- 1939 Burrard League Championship
- 1939 Pacific Northwest League Championship
- 1940 Burrard League Championship
- 1940 Japanese Pacific Northwest League Championship
- 1940 Burrard League Championship
- 1941 Japanese Pacific Northwest League Championship

