

Historica Canada Education Portal

The Asahi Baseball Team: The Japanese Canadian Experience

Overview

Have your students explore the Japanese Canadian experience in Canada in the twentieth century through sports. Students will examine the remarkable story of the Asahi baseball team as a window into this history. Students will be asked to use primary source material and explore the concepts of continuity and change in history.

Aims

Prescribed Learning Outcomes

- Apply critical thinking skills, including questioning, comparing, summarizing, drawing conclusions and defending a position, to make reasoned judgments about a range of issues, situations and topics.
- Assess the development and impact of Canadian social policies and programs related to immigration, the welfare state and minority rights.
- Assess Canada's role in World War II and the war's impact on Canada.
- Generate and critique different interpretations of primary and secondary sources.
- Assess and defend a variety of positions on controversial issues.

Concepts in Historical Thinking

Continuity and Change

1. Identify time periods and turning points.
2. Make a reasoned judgement as to progress and decline in Canada's relationship to ethnic minorities.

Background

Students should be able to complete the task without much background knowledge. However, the teacher may glean richer responses if students have fuller background knowledge of Canadian history. Experience working with primary source material and the Benchmarks concept of Continuity and Change is helpful but not essential.

Activities

Time Allowance: 2-3 periods (60 minutes)

Procedures:

1. Some students may have no formal introduction to the concepts of Continuity and Change from the Benchmarks of Historical Thinking. As a way to introduce this concept to students, ask them to identify any points in their lives that could be seen as turning points or tipping points, moments when things changed dramatically. Are there periods that seem to separate them from others? Solicit responses from the class.

2. Explain that these concepts – change and continuity, periods, and turning points – help us understand history. Historians divide history into periods, but what criteria do they use to establish divisions? What distinguishes an era of time and separates it from others? Are there any examples of either periods or turning/tipping points that students can identify from their knowledge of history?

3. Display the image of the [Asahi Baseball team](#). Conduct an informal primary source assessment of the picture. (e.g., Who is in the photograph? What are they doing? What is in the foreground? Background? Why was it taken? Which flags are on display? Why do you think they chose to display both the Japanese and BC provincial flags?)

4. Have the students conduct brief research on the Japanese Canadian Experience throughout the twentieth century. How have Japanese Canadians' experiences in Canada changed over time? What has remained the same? How have perceptions of Japanese Canadians changed or remained the same? How has Canada as a nation changed or remained the same? What is the effect/legacy of the Asahi baseball team on baseball and sport in Canada?

Extension

Using the image, their texts, and any other sources they can research independently, have students construct the text for a plaque commemorating the Asahi baseball team and the experience of Japanese Canadians through the twentieth century. What other events, turning/tipping points, and periods would students choose to highlight in Japanese Canadian history?

Resources

["Japanese Canadians," The Canadian Encyclopedia](#)

["Vancouver Asahi," The Canadian Encyclopedia](#)

["A Proud Benchwarmer," a podcast about the Vancouver Asahi by The Canadian Encyclopedia](#)

[National Association of Japanese Canadians](#)

Counterpoints: Exploring Canadian Issues Scarborough, Ontario:
Prentice-Hall, pp. 126-127. Osborne, Jari (Writer & Director). Karen King-
Chigbo (Producer). (2003)

Sleeping Tigers: The Asahi Baseball Story. Montreal, PQ: National Film
Board of Canada.