

国際交流協会ニュース

— Ichihara International Association —

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Lecture at Ichihara, Chiba on

"Vancouver Asahi"

By Mr. Yobun Shima, June 4, 2022

Some of you may have seen the movie "Vancouver Asahi" that aired in 2014, and the movie ends with a baseball team, created by pre-war Japanese Canadian immigrants, that was disbanded due to the Pacific War. Although the film did not depict in details, the Asahi team continued from 1914 to 1941, performing very well in the local leagues and winning 10 championships.

The Tokyo (Yomiuri) Giants team, founded in 1934 and featuring players such as Eiji Sawamura, Victor Starffin, and Shigeru Mizuhara, toured North America in 1935/36 and played the Asahi three times with three wins for the Giants.

The Asahi team was inducted into the Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame in 2003 and the British Columbia Sports Hall of Fame in 2005.

In 2012, after his retirement, Shima learned that his uncle was the first member of the Asahi team. Shima received an induction medal from the BC Sports Hall of Fame in 2014, when he learned that 1/3 of the Asahi inductees medals had remained unclaimed. That was when Shima's work began.



By forming a network of approx. 200 domestic and overseas Asahi contacts and working with the newly established baseball team Shin Asahi in Vancouver in order to have the names of unclaimed medalists publicized in search for their

families, many unclaimed medalists were successfully tracked down and medals were duly awarded. By now, there are five medalists families left unknown. During the course, he could take part in the gatherings for the Asahi families.

TV broadcasts, movies, books, newspapers and Japanese High School English textbooks have featured the history of the Asahi, including the unclaimed medals, by which the team restored its honor after the war. In 2019, Canada Post issued a commemorative stamp in honour of the Asahi.

Immigration is currently a world wide issue. By listening to Shima's lecture, we are reminded that Japan today is not always open to accepting immigrants. On the other hand, before World War II, we feel indebted to countries all over the world. And we feel regret for those immigrants who could not settle down there for some reason or another and had to face many difficulties.

Nevertheless, Shima's activities show us that we can make progress by connecting with our friends around the world. According to Shima, some of his contacts Japan/overseas wanted to participate even remotely, so the lecture was held for them in a hybrid form using ZOOM. As a result, the number of participants exceeded the maximum of 40, with about 10 additionally participating remotely. Moreover, there were 200 contacts, who could not participate in real time due to the time difference, but wanted to see the recorded video which was made possible later.

This time we did not allow Zoom participation from within Ichihara City. And there were even people who could not come to the venue due to traffic conditions within the city. We think that the real plus remote participation in hybrid has to increase from now on.

