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Baseball and Canadian Identity

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Baseball research generally acts as a window into the game — a means as it were to understand its underlying order and disorder, its hidden beauty and historic complexity. Less common is the view from the other side of the window in which the patterns of the game are a lens as it were into the outside world, a channel for making sense of a sometimes cruel but always intriguing place.

The view looking out is less common though its outline can be sketched in Franklin Foer's recent analysis of globalization from the perspective of soccer in **How Soccer Explains the World: An Unlikely Theory of Globalization**, and many years ago by C.L.R. James's **Beyond a Boundary**, on the impact of colonization in his home country of Trinidad and himself as understood through the game of cricket.

Likewise baseball provides a revealing portrait of the perplexing nature of Canadian identity, in what poet Donald Hall has called "the country of baseball". What it means to be Canadian, poised between the juggernauts of the United States to the south, Britain's imperial claims which are still retained somewhat in the Queen as Canada's Head of State, and the diverse nature of a country with two official languages, around 650 aboriginal First Nations, and a growing multi-cultural makeup, renders easy interpretations problematic.

Baseball has found itself over the country's history as a centre of many of these discussions but more dramatically in the acting out of their challenges. A noted English-Canadian social commentator Goldwin Smith lamented in the 1880s that, "The loyal Englishman who regards with pensive regret the adoption of a Yankee game may console himself with the thought that cricket and baseball have apparently evolved from the same infantine British sport."

A 1905 report, *The Americanization of Canada* cautioned that, "Baseball is becoming the National Game of Canada instead of cricket. It has a very deep significance, as has the fact that the native game of lacrosse is not able to hold its own against the southern intruder." While the Toronto **Globe** newspaper editorialized in response that, "Cricket fights an uphill battle to preserve old world culture on the frontier."

In 1927, Robert Ayre cautioned, in the leading Canadian intellectual journal, **The Canadian Forum**, that when Canadian children "bowed down to Babe Ruth", they demonstrated that Canada had been integrated into the "American Empire". And writing in the

Toronto Star newspaper about U.S President George Bush (the first) attending a ballgame in Toronto's SkyDome in 1990, Lawrence Martin said, "The fantastic success of baseball north of the U.S. border was yet another sign of the times. Major league ball now enjoyed charter membership in English Canada's new continentalist culture. In sports, as in music, film, and books it was a culture less conscious of borders."

This examination argues however that the issue of baseball's relation to a Canadian national identity goes much deeper than handy knee-jerk reactions to apparent incursions of American culture. It is rooted in world of folk culture only remotely sensed today but once a lively part of early Canadian society, it passed through a regional experimentation process every bit as dynamic amongst Canadians as Americans, and has been firmly entrenched in the play and evolving character of Canadian experience throughout the nation's entire history.

Folkloric Origins

It's often forgotten that baseball is connected to an earlier place-based lifestyle in which 95% of all human residents prior to the 20th century were born, raised, and died within five miles of the same location. It was a culturally authentic local world in which time-honoured traditions were interpreted in subtly distinct ways depending on this location. Much of what we now know as commercially successful baseball has its roots in old English village society, a stratified, but oddly comforting place for centuries, even millennia, of human living. It was characterized by a landed constancy whose end was a function of the rising industrial age and the enclosure of formerly shared property.

Folk games were one of the time-honoured traditions interpreted in different ways by each locality to suit its own needs. They in turn were only the latest staging of the earliest forms of ritualized expression with connections throughout northern Europe. They had evolved from the incorporation of play into belief's expression as worship. This worship celebrated a profound connection to the seasons of the year, particularly spring's return. Associated fertility rights were seen as essential for continuance of the species when human dominance over nature through technology and medicine was not foreseen, and when small collectives of 100 people or fewer realized that even other human tribes were its enemies.

Folk custom was a direct connection to this heritage and its games, though resembling each other, retained vestiges of local interpretation, a strategy not only for specialized identity but also security.

An old weird America with connections to folk culture has been described by writers like Greil Marcus and others as a clue to the survival of distinction in American culture. It has fed a popular culture

(in Marcus's case, popular music culminating in rock and roll), which has been commercialized to such an extent, that it appears to have deserted this antique culture.

In the case of baseball, it is the northern spell, cat, om el maharg, la grande theque, stoolball, rounders and multitudes of other similar bat and ball games, which form the primitive but authentic origins of the game. In England this folk base of games had first been challenged by the ascendancy of cricket as the primary bat and ball game. Why? There are various theories but one is Cromwell's decision in the 17th century to send home the English nobility to their estates so he could rule the country through the beginnings of a parliamentary system. Stranded on their estates these nobles saw their peasants playing the folk game of stoolball in which a batter would attempt to deflect a ball away from a milk container. When these nobles began gambling on what had been innocent encounters they invested them with serious purpose, as well as a concern for results, which had never been there before. The pursuit of better players for one's team followed, as did a need for a standard set of rules so that money could be placed with confidence in the form of play.

By the 18th century the modern game of cricket was in place and all other bat and ball games were not just stopped in their development but also gradually faded from adult play to become little more than children's exercises. Hence the contemporary response of the English that baseball is little more than rounders played by young girls at beach resorts on bank holidays.

America had the first call on the English folk heritage of bat and ball games. In the New World there was less social stigma attached to playing games that might be thought of as children's. The first tentative local interpretations occurred in New England where townball emerged as a game played at village meetings.

Canadian locales also experienced the direct transfer of English folk culture and associated bat and ball games. The Nova Scotian newspaper of 1 July 1841, 26 years before Canadian confederation, noted that on 24 June 1841 the St. Mary's Total Abstinence Society of Halifax sailed to Dartmouth across the bay and there between 700 and 800 met, and at which, "Quadrille and Contra dances were got up on the green - and games of ball and bat, and such sports proceeded."

Though it does not contain reference to folk bat and ball games, the 1 October 1845 **Cobourg Star** does describe older village traditions. A local event was advertised with, "An intention to introduce the good old English Games customary upon such occasions." It includes mention of wrestling, jumping in the sack, hunting pigs, football, cricket, etc., "...by way of promoting merriment and good feeling among people." The custom of Devon and Cornwall was described as the background for the wrestling, and the advertisement concluded by

noting, "Hurrah for old England".

These references to an older English culture also hint at the evolution towards a more "rational" modern world with mention of temperance in Halifax and cricket in Cobourg. They reveal the gradual change from a stranger, undefined culture in which variety, the unusual, and the unrefined were coming under Victorian agencies of uniformity and propriety and would soon be institutionalized in mandatory education and the trappings of a modern social system, a word Peter Ackroyd says was not commonly used until the mid-19th century.

Canadians thus experienced the last vestiges of a once dominant folk culture. References to these pre-baseball bat and ball games abound in other widely varying geographic settings whose only commonality is that they occur in territory under British control.

For instance a recent report (www.sihrhockey.org) refuting Windsor, Nova Scotia's claim to be the birthplace of the modern game of ice hockey is critical of its dependence on a fictional account from a novel by Thomas Chandler Haliburton, **The Attaché: or Sam Slick in England** (London: Bentley, 1844), in which he wrote:

"And you boys let out racin', yelpin', hollerin', and whoopin' like mad with pleasure, and the playground, and the game of bass in the fields, or hurly on the long pond on the ice,..."

The Windsor supporters have claimed that, though fictional, the description was based on Haliburton's personal recollection of his time as a schoolboy at King's College School in Windsor from which he graduated in 1815. What is particularly interesting is the reference in the story above to "the game of bass in the fields" which is surely a game of base and might be, though remember this is a fictional account, a remembrance of something resembling primitive baseball or rounders being played in Windsor, Nova Scotia before 1815.

There are other tentative and intriguing comments on early baseball in Canada supporting this folk connection of early baseball. In the diary of Ely Playter found in the Public Archives of Ontario there is a notation of Wednesday 13 April 1803 at which time, "I went to Town [what we now know as downtown Toronto]...walk'd out and joined a number of Men jumping & Playing Ball, perceived a Mr. Joseph Randall [a farmer near Newmarket in Whitchurch Township, about 40 miles north of downtown Toronto] to be the most active..." Playter operated Abner Miles' tavern in the new community of York, which in 1834 was incorporated as the City of Toronto.

Three months later on 14 July 1803, and recorded in the 1878 **Belden Atlas**, a game of ball was played to decide who was to pay for the dinner following a three day meeting of the First Court of the Quarterly Sessions held in Hope Township of Newcastle District (about 60 miles east of the site of Playter's game). The game was

held on the property of a former American resident Leonard Soper on Lot 22 Concession 1 of Hope Township.

There are no further details. The lineups are unclear. The rules are a mystery. Is the play to be believed? Was it even primitive baseball, as we know it? The 1878 **Belden Atlas** account calls the Hope Township game "ball" but that might be as seen through the prism of later knowledge. The Playter reference may be to a different kind of ball playing more akin to a version of primitive soccer or rugby.

This is all we have but there are additional references to ball playing in other parts of Canada lending a certain credence to the "baseball" theory.

In western Canada, Schofield's 1913 **History of Manitoba** describes games of "bat" played in the 1830s by Scottish immigrants to the Red River Settlement. According to Wilson Green, "All but one player (no set number under say eight) dug a shallow depression in which he kept his 'bat' until getting a swipe at the dead or rolling ball in any direction. While one was doing this, another could slip his stick into the vacated base."

On Canada's Pacific coast James Robert Anderson's diary describes informal games of rounders played in Victoria, (part of what would become the province of British Columbia) around 1849. The game was also mentioned in accounts from around London, Ontario. Rounders never had currency in the sporting language of the United States. Preferred was the two worded "base ball" with its origins in southeastern England. Rounders accounts in Canada therefore almost surely have direct English transfer. The primitiveness as well of games dubbed "ball and bat" and others simply called "bat" or "base" speaks as well to their direct European importation - likely English but possibly influenced by other national strains.

The Regional game

Bat and ball games with folk identity were thus a part of both Canadian and American experience. The evolutionary track of such games to modern baseball occurred through both of these two countries and, not as widely believed, through the United States alone.

Baseball's transition before the Civil War from an informal, folk game to one characterized by the adoption of semi-formalized though regionally differentiated rules and play, largely within one's own club, made it a game still adaptable to local circumstance unlike cricket whose well-codified rules frustrated North Americans. They wanted to play a game that could be completed in several hours to conform to their busy work schedules and one that allowed for a greater exchange between offense and defense. Baseball was as well a game that still welcomed the unskilled, unlike cricket where a generation of skilled English cricketing immigrants intimidated native

Americans still learning the game. Given the choice many North Americans gradually opted for what was then the easier game to play, baseball.

In its developmental stages baseball passed from a folk stage of half remembered custom and no formal rules, through a regional stage in North America in which different more formal interpretations of the game were tried, to its eventual codification as what was at first called the New York Game. This may seem obvious from the very names of early forms of the game dubbed the Philadelphia, the Massachusetts Game which evolved from a variant of townball, and of course that of New York. Because these all occurred however in the territory of the United States the tendency has been to forget the nature of the game's evolution. Canada's part in this process affirms the grassroots, regional origin of baseball and in large measure its later growth and popularity.

We do have Canadian accounts of these early regional experiments with a newly emerging, and soon to be standardized, sport of baseball. The notes of Robert Sellar used in the preparation of his **History of the County of Huntingdon and Seigneuries of Chateauguay and Beauharnois** printed in 1888 included references to a game of early baseball played in this part of Quebec between rival stagecoach drivers and merchants of American descent around the time of the Lower Canada Rebellion (the Quebec-based portion of the rebellion in contrast to the Ontario-based Upper Canada one) of 1837.

The most famous account of an early baseball type game in Canada is that in Beachville, Ontario near Woodstock played on 4 June 1838. The description of this game appeared almost 50 years later in a letter in the 5 May 1886 edition of **The Sporting Life of Philadelphia**. Dr. Adam Ford of Denver, Colorado was born on a farm in Zorra Township of Oxford County probably in 1831 and wrote an account of the game following his exile to the American west after having been accused of poisoning a temperance leader in Ford's office in St. Marys Ontario.

While both accounts were inspired by American examples it is more correct to see them as barely masticated regurgitations of a British influence. Our ability to say this relies on the Beachville game. It occurred in the midst of the only significant rebellion in the history of present day Canada. Those favouring a greater Americanization of the British colony of Upper Canada had led the failed Rebellion. Why we might ask would the citizens of Beachville publicly play such a quintessentially American sport particularly since the spectators were troops off to fight rebels whose cause had been supported by American arms?

The reason quite simply is that Beachville citizens would have found nothing peculiar in their primitive baseball play of 1838 because as yet the game had no national identity. Though the term "national

game" was first found in the 22 August 1855 minutes of New York's Knickerbocker Base Ball Club, the game did not have such general standing in the United States until after the Civil War.

This non-aligned game, which made its way into Upper Canada in this period, was adopted by new Canadians to meet their own needs and interests, and it was one with recognizable features to folk games they were already playing. As the game moved from a folk game towards standardization Canadians participated in the experiments with rules and styles of play. Organized teams first appeared in Hamilton in 1854 and London in 1855. The game they played was described in the 4 August 1860 issue of the **New York Clipper** as having several unique features.

"The game played in Canada," the **Clipper** reported, "differs somewhat from the New York game, the ball being thrown instead of pitched and an inning is not concluded until all are out, there are also 11 players on each side." It differed as well from the Massachusetts Game, in its strict adherence to 11 men on the field as opposed to the Massachusetts' rules, which allowed 10 to 14.

As well all 11 men had to be retired before the other team came to bat. Both games allowed the pitcher to throw the ball in the modern style, rather than underarm as in the New York rules. (Another indication of the game's regional roots in which experiment in some failed game was in fact in advance of the style promoted by the eventual dominant interpretation.)

This Canadian interpretation of baseball was part of the process of experimentation occurring throughout North America on baseball's eventual form. It remained popular in Ontario until the end of the decade, as did the practice of playing games only against the members of one's club and not against other teams or towns. Canadian adults were acknowledging by their participation that what was once a folk game had become a serious adult activity in North America.

As late as 1860 the Young Canadian Club of Woodstock was playing the 11 aside Canadian version of baseball. In 1859 however two teams from Hamilton and Toronto played the first recorded game in Canada using the New York rules. Perhaps not surprisingly given the standardization of play fostered by these rules this game also is the first mention of a game in Canada between teams representing rival cities.

It was not until the mid-season of 1876 however that the Canadian Association finally discarded one of its last rule variations from the National League. London general manager Harry Gorman said, "It has been found that the rules regarding called balls and strikes are too favourable to the batter, and the Canadian games as a consequence, do not compare on the record with American games of the same class, played under American rules. Playing under different

rules also leads to confusion and a change is very desirable."

The National Game

Baseball's ubiquitous place in the Canadian landscape is revealed in all parts of the country and each in turn reveals pieces of the Canadian identity.

Atlantic Canada provides a model of sectarianism imported from the old world, imposed in the new, and then eventually surmounted unlike in its originating place. In 1849 a clash of Irish Protestant Orangemen and Catholic Irish resulted in 12 deaths in Saint John, New Brunswick. Animosity did not disappear but it found safer modes of expression in cultural expressions such as baseball.

In Saint John, youthful supporters of the semi professional Shamrocks formed their own team the Roses, to play against a nearby seminary in 1893. In the Protestant south and east ends the Alerts were formed, but the sectarian edge to local rivalries was somewhat blunted by greater co-operation at the civic level. In 1897 the Roses best player, Frank "Tip" O'Neill and the Alert's star southpaw pitcher Jim Whelly were united on a city all-star team to play Halifax. As recently as the spring of 2005 alumni hockey teams from Catholic and Protestant-based schools in Halifax were playing each other in what they acknowledged to be a sectarian rivalry, but one based good naturedly on sports, and not ammunition.

In Saskatchewan pioneering wives were equal partners with their husbands largely because they were better educated being in many case former schoolteachers who married local homesteaders. They were leaders in pressing for adult education, libraries, and equality before the law. They also sympathized with daughters who wanted a chance to showcase their ability on the diamond in one of the avant-garde symbols of activity on the prairies.

Softball flourished between the wars and the All-American Girls League formed in 1943 provided a perfect venue for their athleticism. Canadian women made up 10% of that league's lineups but women from Saskatchewan were half of that Canadian total.

In Alberta, pioneering Black settlers who came from Oklahoma in the early 20th century taught the Metis descendants of French and aboriginal parents the fundamentals of baseball in return for guidance in skills necessary to survive in a hostile wilderness setting. Baseball was being played in the same period by Mic Macs in Atlantic Canada, and amongst the Six Nations in Ontario.

In British Columbia in 1907 the 500 member Asiatic Exclusion League passed a resolution against admission of more Japanese arguing that they kept salaries artificially low because of their willingness to work at "coolie wages". A riot followed in which Chinese and Japanese were targeted.

Chinese Canadians reacted to these indignities by retreating further into their own communities. Japanese Canadians opted to immerse themselves in the culture of their new country. The Nippon baseball Club was formed in 1908 made up of young Nisei who played the game in the shadows of the Powell Street Grounds. By the 1920s the Asahi team was one of the most prominent in British Columbia and even toured Japan to help popularize the game there. They flourished until the late 1930s when the war marginalized their role and ultimately they were among those placed in internment camps.

Baseball in Canada did not follow the pattern of other sports with their reliance on national authorities such as the Government of Canada. Hockey (Stanley Cup), football (Grey Cup), lacrosse (Minto and Mann Cups), all found support from the country's Governor General. Nor did it find significant support in the university sector like football. It depended on commercial success and the entrepreneurial vision of civic leaders.

In Ontario, entrepreneurs have included a prominent 19th century brewer, and future mayor, George Sleeman who owned and promoted the Guelph Maple Leafs through the 1870s. Jake Englehart was owner of the London Tecumsehs, the famed winners of the International Association's inaugural 1877 season. He later became a vice-president of Imperial Oil. Knotty Lee was a sporting goods and multiple business promoter, but also a professional baseball leader in the early 20th century. Jack Kent Cooke defined the minor league owner's role in the 1950s with his Toronto Maple Leafs International League team. More recently Ted Rogers has proven to be a financial saviour of the Toronto Blue Jays.

Quebec however demonstrates the sharpest example of the Canadian search for identity. Quebecois had abandoned their province in record numbers in the 1850 to 1900 period seeking economic opportunity primarily in the New England states. They soon despaired however of the lost French culture and language skills among their children. They sent them back to Quebec for a high school and college education but of course these Franco Americans brought their new hobbies with them, one of them being baseball.

On St-Jean-de-Baptiste Day in 1876 in Ste Hyacinthe Quebec, the most revered day in French Canadian culture, a baseball game was played in a 95% francophone community. This was before hockey would penetrate their culture and in which lacrosse never had a significant impact. French Canadian entrepreneurs and players were active in the game by the turn of the century right up to the major league level. By the 1930s the Montreal International League team attracted the elite of francophone capitalism including Charles Trudeau who would die as the result of an illness contracted at the team's spring training.

His son Pierre would grow up fatherless under the tutelage of a

mother who introduced him to other perspectives on modern living. Later Pierre as Prime Minister of Canada would change the country's destiny and proclaim the state had no business in the nation's bedrooms.

Profile: Jackie Robinson

The story of Jackie Robinson is in some small measure a fine representation of a Canadian search for a national identity, in its early demonstration of that illusive spirit of egalitarian respect for other cultures.

"I owe more to Canadians than they'll ever know. In my baseball career they were the first to make me feel my natural self," Robinson is later supposed to have said in describing the magical summer of 1946. He faced many verbal attacks in the United States when he became the first Black player in organized baseball in the modern era. Fans of the hometown Montreal Royals of the International League however greeted him hospitably and affectionately.

Ironically the year before Richard Wright an esteemed Black American writer of the middle decades of the 20th century had also found greater acceptance in Canada than in his native United States. He wanted to go to France at the end of World War Two but because of travel restrictions spent two months in Quebec living anonymously on the Ile d'Orleans. Robin Winks says, "He savoured the financial independence that the mounting sales of **Black Boy** were giving him and sought out 'a way of living with the earth' rather than, as in New York, 'against the earth'."

Quebec was seen as an island of calm refuge on a continent torn by racial division. French Canadians saw themselves as a people apart. It's not too extreme to argue that they sensed a common despair in the struggle of the Black community. Pierre Vallieres acknowledged this position in his autobiographical work "Negres blancs d'Amerique" (1968) which was translated in 1971 into the more pointed English title, "White Niggers of America".

This theme was publicly broached in the election of 1948. Quebec nationalist Andre Laurendeau called the provincial premier Maurice Duplessis, a "Negro king", for his resemblance to a tribal ruler in one of Britain's African colonies. By extension French Canadians were his "Negro" subjects. For Laurendeau the British counterparts in Quebec were the Anglo owners of industry who funded Duplessis' election campaigns in return for his quiet acquiescence in maintaining their low wages for the French Canadian working class. Writing in *Le Devoir*, Laurendeau said, "They dominate the Negro king but they allow him fantasies...One thing never comes to their minds, and that is to demand the Negro king conform to the high moral and political standards of the British."

Quebec writer Roch Carrier would compare Robinson to his

province's immortal Rocket Richard (the man with "something of the passionate glittering fatal alien quality of snakes" according to William Faulkner) as the standard bearer for Quebecois pride against a backdrop of second-class status.

These politically loaded observations however were founded on a dubious comparison. Quebecois had never experienced slavery, Jim Crow legislation, or explicit segregation. A French Canadian, Wilfrid Laurier, had become Prime Minister in 1891. One cannot, even in the world of science fiction imagine a Black man attaining such political status in the United States in the 19th century, and hardly less so in the present. Nevertheless Quebec became the focal point for one of the great moments, not only in sports, but in 20th century life.

As Richard Wright was celebrating the relative freedom his time in Quebec afforded him, Branch Rickey, general manager of the Brooklyn Dodgers was scouting players in the Negro Leagues for the ostensible purpose of starting a new all-Black league that would play in Brooklyn's Ebbets Fields when the Dodgers were on the road.

Robinson, a former Southern California football star and ex-soldier, impressed Rickey. The Dodger boss wanted to see how he would handle himself in a setting out of the major league spotlight. Montreal was the perfect location.

His decision to sign Robinson and a lesser-known Black player, Johnny Wright, to minor league contracts created only mild interest in Quebec where integrated competition went back in the Provincial League to the mid 1930s. One Montreal reporter would claim that Robinson's signing proved that the Canadian city was the most democratic place in the world. An American Tom Meany boldly stated, "Rickey felt he had the ideal spot in which to break in a Negro ballplayer, the Triple A farm in Montreal where there is no racial discrimination." **The Chicago Defender** newspaper editorialized, "It is ironical that America, supposedly the cradle of democracy, is forced to send the first two Negroes in baseball to Canada in order for them to be accepted."

Robinson's manager Clay Hopper, a Mississippi native with a financial interest in the cotton industry, was against integration. One day in spring training, Hopper asked Rickey, "Do you really think a nigger's a human being?" Hopper also had a hard time with French Canadian players on his team once calling pitcher Jean-Pierre Roy a "French son-of-a-bitch."

Montrealers on the other hand welcomed Jackie and his wife Rachel graciously. Answering an advertisement to rent an apartment on Rue de Gaspe in the overwhelmingly French speaking East End, the Robinsons nervously wondered if they'd be rejected as usually happened in white American neighbourhoods. Instead the proprietor invited them for tea, offered them the use of her kitchen and bedroom supplies, and leased the apartment without question. Rachel

Robinson later said, "It left us euphoric. All the months in Canada were like that."

Such is the ambivalent state of this nascent Canadian pursuit of a multi-cultural identity however that it should be noted that Robinson had little contact with Montreal's predominantly poor, working class, and small, Black community. They lived in the west end neighbourhood of St. Henri among other similarly impoverished French Canadians, immortalized in Gabrielle Roy's **Bonheur d'occasion** (1945). Pianist Oscar Peterson was born here and rose to musical fame under the enforced and often harsh tutelage of his father, an accomplished amateur musician, who worked as a sleeping car porter. Railroad work and domestic service were the limited jobs available for, respectively, Black men and women in Montreal. Their small numbers contributed to an invisibility which limited more explicit discrimination beyond the workplace. When a talent like Oscar Peterson entered Montreal's mainstream however he encountered the same derogatory slights practiced in other Canadian cities, as at least one hotel refused him entry to perform. Only the threat of bad publicity made them raise their prohibition.

Jackie Robinson appears never to have had such experiences in Montreal. In the next few months, a white sportswriter Sam Maltin and his wife, Belle, befriended the Robinsons. Sam described himself as a Jewish socialist. He wrote for the **Montreal Herald** and also for sympathetic American papers like the **Pittsburgh Courier**. He and Belle took the Robinsons to classical concerts of the type Rachel had enjoyed in Los Angeles. They introduced them to Herbie Trawick, whose team, the football Alouettes, made overtures to Robinson about playing for them. Jackie had been a star player at UCLA but Rickey forbade any two-sport ambitions.

Robinson lead the league with a .349 batting average, scored a league leading 113 runs, and swiped 40 bases. The Royals defeated Newark in the first round of playoffs and then eliminated Syracuse to advance to the Junior World Series title against Louisville. Fans in the southern city taunted Robinson unmercifully and after winning the first game the Royals fell behind two games to one.

Returning home the team was heartened by their fans' response. "We discovered," Robinson said later, "That the Canadians were up in arms over the way I had been treated. Greeting us warmly, they let us know how they felt ...All through that first game [at home] they booed every time a Louisville player came out of the dugout. I didn't approve of this kind of retaliation, but I felt a jubilant sense of gratitude for the way Canadians expressed their feelings."

Nor was the fans' reaction the only uniquely Canadian touch. Playing in early October the temperature dropped below the freezing point. Despite having taken a 4-0 lead the Kentucky team succumbed to the taunts of 15,000 fans and the weather. Louisville's pitcher walked the bases loaded in the 9th and the Royals scored two to send

the game into extra innings. Jackie Robinson drove in the winning run in the bottom of the tenth.

Milder weather brought out nearly 18,000 fans for game five and again Robinson starred as his booming triple in the seventh put him in position to score the winning run. For good measure he bunted home Al Campanis with two out in the 8th. In game six Robinson was brilliant both in the field and on the base paths. In the 8th inning the Louisville pitcher went through a routine of fake throws and real ones in an unsuccessful attempt to pick Robinson off first and then second. The crowd howled.

The Royals protected an early 2-0 lead for a series victory. Robinson was mobbed by jubilant Montrealers who supposedly cried "Il a gagné ses épaulettes", a line immortalized in Roger Lemelin's *The Plouffe Family* which became the defining French language television self image in the 1950s. He was carried about the field in a scene so moving that Robinson's friend Sam Maltin wrote, "It was probably the only day in history that a Black man ran from a white mob with love instead of lynching on its mind." It remains the greatest moment in Montreal baseball history.

Robinson went on to a hall of fame career with the Brooklyn Dodgers but the historic import of Robinson's role and play in 1946 lifted a minor league title into the realm of the mythic. Robinson's breakthrough was one of the first significant steps in the fight for equal rights following the Second World War. Canadians have rightly celebrated the important role they played in Robinson's ascent.

Conclusion

Baseball is an entry point into the nature of Canadian identity. It is as much Canada's game as that of the United States. The game's abiding regional character has continued in cross border, north-south, rivalries with nearby American states for over 150 years. This has been against the tide of traditional, east-west, sports organization which developed in a pan-Canadian fashion, in lacrosse, football and hockey. In the 19th-century baseball sunk significant roots into the Canadian landscape during its adoption as America's national game.

This occurred because Canadians either knowingly or unconsciously recognized that this game was actually North American, and it neither threatened their sense of national identity nor did they see a need to continue with their own rules such as they did with Canadian Football, or to wrap it in a Canadian framework as they did with hockey.

So perhaps here is the quintessential piece of Canadian identity — participants in the evolution of game from folkloric through more formal local adaptations, through participation in its standardization yet continuing regionalism. Canada is a country always in the process of coming into being. Balanced between European origins and

American proximity, and mindful of an always evolving social makeup, we understand that hockey may be deemed our national sport but baseball is the true barometer of our identity.

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