

# MASCOTS IN CANADIAN BASEBALL

IF A WEDDING DJ SUGGESTS WE DO THE MACARENA, I WILL KEY THEIR CAR. BUT  
WHEN AN ANTHROPOMORPHIZED BEAR IN A BASEBALL JERSEY WANTS ME TO DO  
THE CHICKEN DANCE IN THE SEVENTH-INNING STRETCH, I'M UP AND FLAPPIN'  
QUICKER THAN YOU CAN SAY 'CRACKERJACK!' - KATIE-ELLEN HUMPHRIES

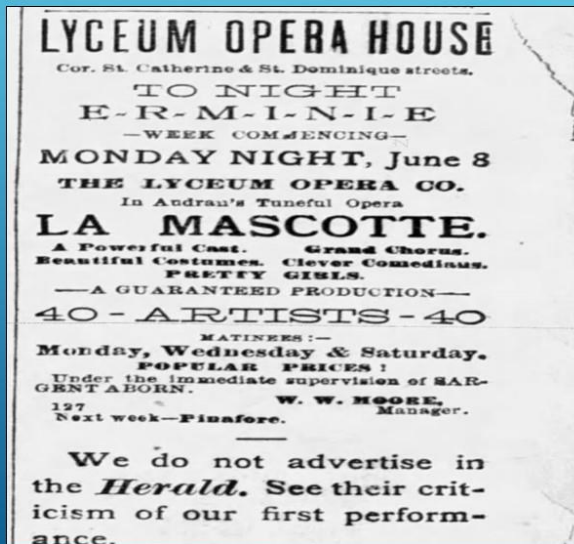
Presented by:  
Warren Campbell

Mascots have a very sordid history. A mascot was typically a local person of any differing heritage, or someone with a physical deformity. Team owners would dress the mascot up in team colours, and the players would rub the mascot's head or hunched back for luck. The thinking was that the more socially outcast a person was, the more likely he or she could be a good luck charm. John McGraw in 1911 actually used Charley Faust, a mentally challenged man and team mascot, in a league game where he pitched an inning and stole two bases. In the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, many teams including the Cubs, Tigers, Phillies and A's kept young people as mascots; the mascots would entertain the fans, gather the bats, and act as good luck charms for the players.

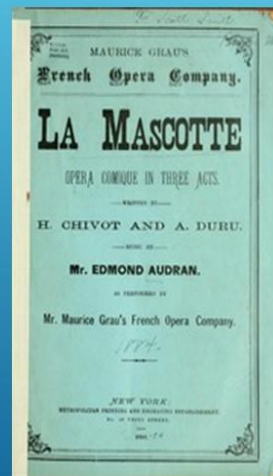
Although mascots have usually been very popular with the fans, we'll learn some examples of mascot failures in Canadian Baseball history. But let's start from the beginning. The word mascot comes from an 1880 French operetta entitled *La Mascotte*, which tells the story of a young woman who brings luck to those all around her. *La Mascotte* became a very popular theatrical show, playing

all over North America, thereby helping the word spread into usage. Here are some publicity features for the show's Montreal appearances:

## ORIGINS OF THE WORD "MASCOT"

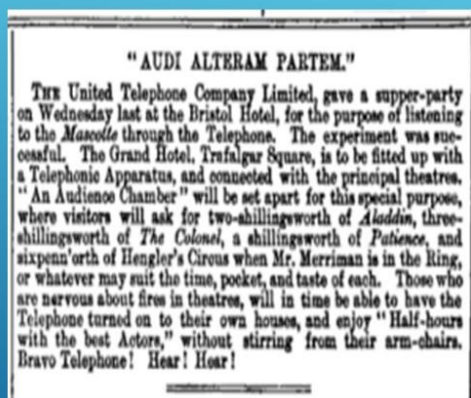


MONTREAL GAZETTE, 1891



The play was popular everywhere, spreading the word all over the world. Here's an example of the first "cable broadcast" of an event. A phone was used in

## LA MASCOTTE THE OPERA



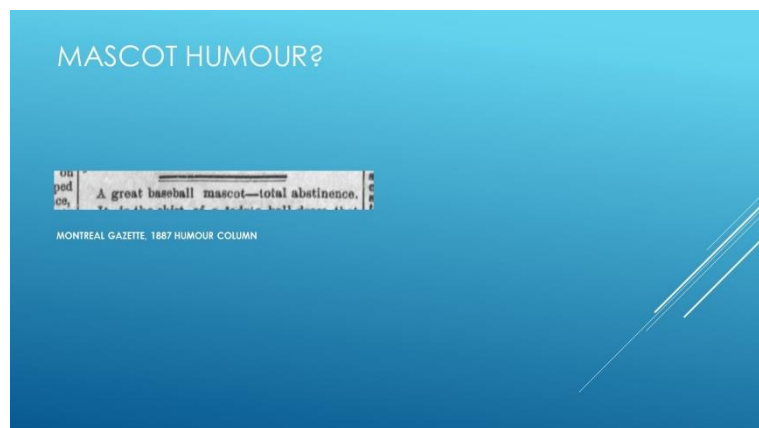
1882 AS OPERA SPREAD AROUND THE WORLD, HERE'S AN EXAMPLE WHERE LA MASCOTTE AIRED OVER A TELEPHONE FROM PRESTON TO MANCHESTER, ENGLAND.



1882 so that people in Manchester, England, could hear the opera from Preston, 50 miles away.

And here's an attempt at mascot humour from the **Montreal Gazette** in 1887:

The Toronto Baseball team of 1886 had Willie Hume, "a very small and very fat coloured boy" according to the **Globe** newspaper. They found Willie in Syracuse. Not much is known about him, but it's been documented that he would always dress in garish costumes and the crowd was always entertained. Here are stories from the **Buffalo News** telling us of his first games with the Toronto team, and of his departure from the team:



## WILLIE HUME

**GREAT BALL PLAYING.**  
**The Bisons Win a Game From Toronto and Tie Another.**  
**Over 3,000 People at Olympic Park Witness the Afternoon Contest.**  
**Ten Innings Played in the Morning—The West Ends Win the Regatta—Buffalo Footballists Victorious—Notes.**  
Yesterday morning's game at Olympic park between the Buffalo and Toronto teams was just about as interesting a contest as has ever been seen in Buffalo. The Torontos appeared in their zebra striped jackets and white breeches and little Willie Hume the colored cherub who guards the club's bats was decked out in a blue uniform covered with gold lace. Sullivan the old league umpire made his first appearance here this season. He was also uniformed, after a fashion, in a pair of almost skin-tight trousers and a quite, skin-tight blue jersey. The Buffalos wore their every day suits and Mickey Walsh his usual amile.

BUFFALO NEWS JUNE 1, 1886

who promised to come here.  
Little Willie Hume who used to do the Mascot act for the Torontos was missed yesterday. He proved too awfully fresh and was dropped at Binghamton. Willie's latest act was to advertise in the Syracuse papers that any club wanting a first class Mascot could secure his services.  
For the special 2.18 pacing race, purse

BUFFALO NEWS JULY 28, 1886

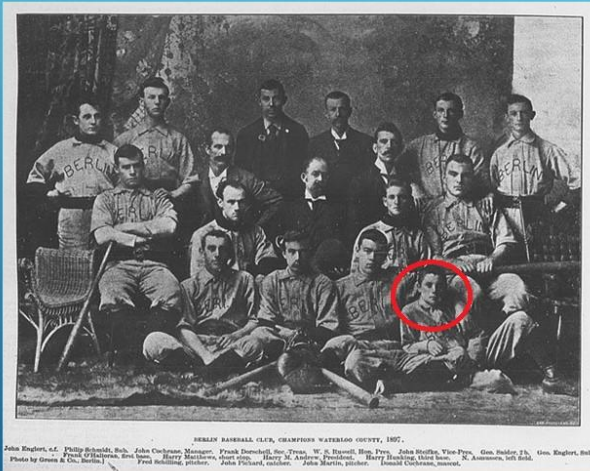
## Early Canadian Mascots

The Hamilton Hams baseball team hired a man they called "Man Morton, the Zulu giant" in 1889. You can use your imagination as to how he looked. Here



are the 1896 Berlin (Kitchener) and the 1908 Vancouver team photos, with their mascots highlighted:

## EARLY CANADIAN MASCOTS



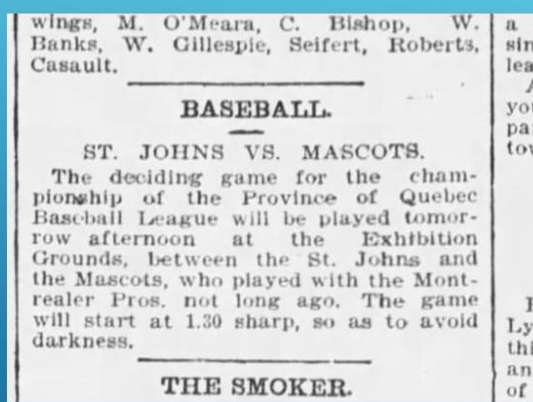
KITCHENER, 1896



1908 VANCOUVER BEAVERS, NORTHWESTERN LEAGUE

The word mascot became so popular in sports culture that there was a team named The Mascots in the Province of Quebec Baseball League:

## A TEAM CALLED "MASCOTS"



MONTREAL GAZETTE, 22 OCTOBER, 1898

They didn't win the championship.



## Mascots from across Canada

The recurring theme henceforth is mascots becoming furry beings. Here are mascots from London, Ottawa and Edmonton:



And here are Slider the Snake from Calgary and Seal from Victoria:



## MASCOTS FROM AROUND THE COUNTRY



SLIDER THE SNAKE, CALGARY VIPERS  
NORTH AMERICAN LEAGUE 2011



SEAL, VICTORIA SEALS  
GOLDEN BASEBALL LEAGUE, 2008

and Homer and Crusher from Edmonton, and Bob Brown Bear from Vancouver:

## MASCOTS FROM AROUND THE COUNTRY



HOMER, EDMONTON TRAPPERS  
PACIFIC COAST LEAGUE, 2003



CRUSHER, EDMONTON CRACKER CATS  
NORTHERN LEAGUE, 2007



BOB BROWN BEAR  
VANCOUVER CANADIANS  
NORTHWEST LEAGUE, 2017

The Montreal Expos' first mascot was Souki, a one-year wonder in 1978, the team's first year in Olympic Stadium. He was patterned after Mr. Met, a character that had been retired a couple of years earlier. Here are some of Souki's different looks:

## MONTREAL EXPOS – THE SAD STORY OF SOUKI



Souki was Charles Bronfman's idea. He wanted something Star Warsish, but the image frightened children. At one point, a fan attacked Souki because the mascot made his child upset:

## MONTREAL EXPOS – THE SAD STORY OF SOUKI



Souki did have some memorable moments, however, including conducting an orchestra with the help of some of the Expos players:

...WITH A GOOD ENDING

MONTREAL GAZETTE, 1978

**THE MONTREAL SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA  
CELEBRATES THE 10th ANNIVERSARY OF THE  
MONTREAL EXPOS**

Come to a musical "Grand Slam" and celebrate together this 10th anniversary! Contribute to the success of your Orchestra by paying tribute to your Expos!

**JOIN THE PARTY AND HAVE A BALL.**

See SOUKI, the Expos' mascot conduct the Expos' musical theme.

See Gary CARTER, Steve ROGERS, Ross GRIMSLLEY, Tony PEREZ, Warren CROMARTIE at all trade their glove and bat to play the trumpet, percussion . . .

Hear the MSO, under the direction of Uri MAYER, play STRAUSS, LISZT, TCHAIKOVSKY, and better-known airs by Scott JOPLIN, Leonard BERNSTEIN, Leroy ANDERSON, "TAKE ME OUT TO THE BALL GAME".

This concert with wine and cheese tasting (at the tables only) is organized on behalf of the MSO.

**THURSDAY, AUGUST 10th at 8:30 p.m.\*  
MAURICE RICHARD ARENA**

Tickets at the tables: (wine and cheese included) on sale at the MSO (844-2857)  
\$20.00 per person

Tickets in the bleachers: on sale at the box offices of Maurice Richard Arena and Olympic Stadium.  
\$3.00 and \$4.00 (reserved seats)

\* doors open at 7:15 p.m.

He was eventually "put on waivers" according to one Expos press release. The truth was his costume was given to a fraternity at Universite De Montreal who conducted a public burial.

Then along came Youppi. Marketing manager Roger Landry wanted a character that you could take to the tavern with you on Friday nights! So they named this orange creature Youppi, which is French for Yippee. Youppi was designed by the same company that makes the Muppets and Jim Henson puppets (Youppi!, a creation of Acme Mascots, Inc., a division of Harrison/Erickson, Inc.) Youppi was designed by Bonnie Erickson, formerly a designer for Jim Henson, and the designer of Miss Piggy, Statler and Waldorf .

Quebecer Jean-Claude Tremblay makes mascots that are famous the world over, and he makes them from his workshop in Mascouche. When Youppi was created in 1979 (originally leased by the team, and eventually purchased) his early days were difficult. He was bulky and he didn't move that well, so the Expos brought in Tremblay. Tremblay had been working as an art teacher at a maximum security prison and had just been laid off. He didn't just revamp Youppi, he



## MONTREAL EXPOS – YOUPPI



*became* Youppi when the Expos asked him to perform as the man inside the costume. Tremblay was ecstatic to be putting smiles on so many faces.

“I was like ‘They pay me to do that?’ I had so much fun, but as a businessman, I thought I can make a business out of that,” he said. Through his company Creations JCT, Tremblay started selling mascots all over Canada, then the U.S. and even Europe and beyond. Another baseball mascot he has created is Raymond for the Tampa Bay Rays.

Youppi appeared in over 2000 games with the Expos. One of the most memorable was Aug 23, 1989 when Dodgers manager Tom Lasorda had enough of Youppi’s antics and told him to “Get the f\*\*\* off my dugout!” This was following a four minute delay when Eddie Murray and Lasorda argued an on-field triple play call by the umpires. An overexcited Youppi jumped up and down on the metal dugout, upsetting the manager of the visiting Dodgers. Youppi became the first mascot ever thrown out of a major league game. That game ended up going 22 innings, becoming the longest game in Expos history. Youppi actually returned to the game; here’s a picture (below right) of Lasorda yelling at him in the 13<sup>th</sup> inning.

## MONTREAL EXPOS – YOUPPI



The 1994 strike was hard on a lot of the baseball world but when Eddie the Eagle, mascot for the Australian Baseball League's Hunter Eagles, showed up to meet Youppi there was great disappointment at the Olympic Stadium. Youppi and Expos were out of work.



Because of the success of Youppi the Blue Jays felt they had to have a mascot as well. They worked with CHUM Media to try and create one themselves, but instead settled on BJ Birdy, a creation of Kevin Shanahan, an employee of nearby theme park Ontario Place. He created a bird costume for Ontario Place and a friend suggested the Blue Jays could use a mascot. Shanahan had never been to a game, but he went to see the Jays play and understood how it could work for baseball.

BJ Birdy also gained notoriety for being thrown out of a game on May 22, 1993, when an umpire's decision went against the Blue Jays. The umpire, Canadian Jim McKean, took exception to BJ Birdy's antics and had him tossed from the game.

## TORONTO BLUE JAYS – BJ BIRDY



### Ump thumbs Blue Jays' mascot

✓**B.J. Birdy**, the Blue Jays' mascot, was ejected from yesterday's game after grabbing his nose following a bad call by third-base umpire **Jim McKean**. Kaiser called an out on **Roberto Alomar's** fly ball in the eighth. But TV replays clearly showed the ball deflecting off LF **David McCarty's** glove and hitting the wall.

ning their first six Saturday games.

✓**Short of it: Ozzie Smith** broke **Larry Bowa's** NL record by playing in his 2,227th game at shortstop. The major-league record of 2,581 is held by **Luis Aparicio**.

✓**Who said it?** "Our pitching stinks."

✓**OK for Ozzie:** Chicago's **Ozzie Guillen** hit a two-run homer, his first sin-

In late 1999 it was decided that with attendance declining in Toronto the mascots needed a new look. BJ Birdy was retired, and replaced by Ace and

## TORONTO BLUE JAYS – ACE & DIAMOND



Diamond. The two began the 2000 season, but Diamond was dropped in 2003. The characters themselves were conceived and designed by Kelly Giannopoulos and Diane Semark. "We looked for the most interesting personality traits and



then actually gave the mascots a past, a sort of legend that went with their story." The duo were designed with distinct plumage and faces, reflecting their gender.

## TORONTO BLUE JAYS – ACE & DIAMOND



Their personality traits were modelled after Jim Carrey and Goldie Hawn, because "both of them have a wild and zany side."

In recent years the Blue Jays have added Junior, for Junior Jays Days.

## TORONTO BLUE JAYS – ACE & JUNIOR



Ted Giannoulas, the San Diego Chicken or Famous Chicken, is from London, Ontario and spent a lot of time hanging around baseball fields in this city. He remembers his days hanging around Labatt Park.

“The park used to have a hand-operated scoreboard,” he said. “I would run the scoreboard for 25 cents a game for the old London Pontiacs. Being a big baseball fan, I would find the general manager of the team and try to get selected to run the scoreboard. I learned to get to the ball park earlier and earlier. It was in the fifth grade. I didn’t win the race every time but quite often.”

One story that I heard from Ted was that in the early days he was doing his chicken act at an Elvis Presley concert in San Diego. Elvis couldn’t believe it, and stopped singing midway through a song and started laughing. He said, “There’s a chicken running around this auditorium! Doesn’t that chicken realize that my manager is named The Colonel?”

Finally, not everyone loves mascots. See this quote from Edmonton comedian Sean Lecomber:



Warren Campbell  
November 2018