



BREAKING THE COLOUR BARRIER:  
AN ORAL HISTORY OF THE  
CHATHAM COLOURED ALL-STARS (1932-1939)

# Breaking the Colour Barrier Curriculum Materials

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## Heritage and Identity: Changing Family and Community Traditions

- ❖ Grade 2 Lesson Plan
- ❖ Social Studies
- ❖ Language Arts
- ❖ Reading
- ❖ Writing

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## Grade 2 Lesson Plan

**Subject/Course:** Social Studies/Language Arts

**Grade Level:** 2

**Topic:** Heritage and Identity: Changing Family and Community Traditions

**Estimated time:** 3-4 x35 minute periods

### Curriculum Expectations

#### Social Studies

A 1.2 Students will compare their family's structure and some of their traditions and celebrations with those of their peers' families.

A 2.2 Students will gather and organize information on some of the past and present traditions and celebrations within their family and the community to which they belong, using primary and/or secondary sources that they have gathered themselves or that have been provided to them.

A 3.2 Students will identify some different groups in their community and describe some of the ways in which they contribute to diversity in Canada.

A 3.4 Students will describe some significant traditions and celebrations of their families, their peers, and their own communities, as well as some other communities in Canada.

#### Language Arts

##### Oral Communication

1.1 Students will identify purposes for listening in a variety of situations, formal and informal, and set personal goals for listening, initially with support and direction.

2.1 Students will identify a variety of purposes for speaking.

2.3 Students will communicate ideas, opinions, and information orally in a clear, coherent manner using simple but appropriate organizational patterns.

2.4 Students will choose a variety of appropriate words and phrases to communicate their meaning accurately and engage the interest of the audience.

2.7 Students will use a few different visual aids to support or enhance oral presentations.

##### Reading

1.1 Students will read some different literary texts and informational texts.

1.4 Students will demonstrate understanding of a text by retelling the story or restating information from the text, with the inclusion of a few interesting details.

1.6 Students will extend understanding of texts by connecting the ideas in them to their own knowledge and experience, to other familiar texts, and to the world around them.

##### Writing

1.1 Students will identify the topic, purpose, audience, and form for writing.

1.2 Students will generate ideas about a potential topic, using a variety of strategies and resources.

1.3 Students will gather information to support ideas for writing in a variety of ways and/or from a variety of sources.

1.4 Students will sort ideas and information for their writing in a variety of ways, with support and direction.

### **What will students be able to do?**

Students will:

- use a few reading comprehension strategies before, during, and after reading to understand texts
- demonstrate an understanding of the story
- follow instructions to complete a project
- compare a family tradition/celebration with a classmate's family tradition
- collaborate with a classmate to invent a holiday in honour of the Chatham Coloured All-Stars
- write complete sentences with appropriate punctuation
- communicate their ideas and information orally in a clear, coherent manner, using appropriate pace, tone, and volume
- make eye contact while delivering an oral presentation
- use vocabulary related to the topic of study
- leave spaces between words when writing
- spell familiar words correctly
- use a variety of strategies to spell unfamiliar words

### **How will students be evaluated?**

Rubrics will be used to evaluate writing and oral communication. Students will give an oral presentation about their holiday, discussing all required elements. They will show the drawing on their calendar and describe it. Students are encouraged to not read their sentences from their paper.

### **Materials/Resources**

- articles about the Blue Jays' event
- images of the team
- coloured pencils, markers, crayons
- worksheets

### **Prior Knowledge/Building Background**

Students need to know:

- how to write a complete sentence
- how to demonstrate appropriate listening behaviour when someone is speaking
- the importance of celebrations and traditions

It is beneficial for students to know that in the early 1800s, five Black families settled along McGregor's Creek in the tiny town of Chatham, then known as "the Forks". The village soon became a haven for runaway slaves who were escaping slavery and oppression in the United States. By 1850, a third of Chatham's population was Black.

Once here, Blacks in Chatham thrived in business, education, medicine, sport, and literary and cultural arts. News of their success attracted Blacks to the area from across North America.

The history of Blacks in early Chatham is not only of local significance; the years of Black contribution and participation in Southwestern Ontario left a fundamental impression on the national landscape.

Please visit <https://ckbhs.org/> for further information on Black history in Chatham.

It is important to note that the terms “coloured” and “negro” are no longer acceptable terms. “Black” and “African Canadian” are used to refer to Canadians of African descent.

### Vocabulary

challenges  
unfair  
celebration  
tradition  
symbol  
barriers  
success  
similarities  
differences

### **Teaching Strategies**

#### **GETTING STARTED**

Before introducing the holiday project, ask students to think of a challenge they overcame and praise each one as they share their stories. While discussing their personal challenges, ask them why they never gave up and how they felt about themselves when they overcame their challenge.

Inform the students that they are going to learn about a baseball team from Chatham, Ontario, who overcame some challenges. Ask them if they like baseball and if so, which teams are their favourites. Encourage students to predict some of the challenges the baseball team may have experienced. Show the students the article entitled “*Star Treatment.*” Ask questions about what they see and what they think the article is about.

Distribute the story “*All About the Chatham Coloured All-Stars*” to students.

#### Before Reading

What do you think this story will be about? Why?  
What do you know about the images on the page?  
Does anything on the page remind you of anyone you know or anything you’ve done?  
What questions would you like to ask the team?  
After looking at the page, what do you wonder?

#### During Reading

Have you ever been treated unfairly?  
What did that feel like?  
What comes to mind so far?  
Can you tell me what we’ve read so far, in your own words?

## After Reading

- What was the main message of the story?
- Why do you think the Toronto Blue Jays celebrated the All-Stars?
- What questions would you like to ask the Chatham Coloured All-Stars?
- What's the most important thing to remember about them?
- Can you retell the story in your own words?

## **WORKING ON IT**

Discuss holidays and traditions. Ask students to share some of the holidays they celebrate and some of the traditions. Then, students will complete the sheet *"My Family Celebrates."* Upon completion, they will share their responses with a classmate. They are encouraged to discuss similarities and differences.

## **CULMINATING ACTIVITY**

Review the instructions for the holiday project. Like the Toronto Blue Jays, students will honour the Chatham Coloured All-Stars. To do this, they will create a holiday. Once they understand all of the requirements, they will discuss ideas with a partner and complete the graphic organizer. They are encouraged to write complete sentences and to offer explanations for their choices (e.g. *"People will eat hot dogs and peanuts on this day because those foods are sold at baseball parks"*). Once they have received feedback on the graphic organizer, they will fill out the chart with complete sentences (e.g. *"The name of our holiday is All-Star Day. It is celebrated on July 6<sup>th</sup> because..."*). On the calendar page, student will draw and colour images that reflect their holiday. They will also write the month, the days, and the dates on their calendar.

They must include the following:

- a name for the holiday
- a symbol
- the date
- the significance of the holiday
- special clothing
- food
- traditions
- colours
- a bonus category

## **CONCLUDING ACTIVITY**

Students will present their calendars and holiday to the class.

## **EXTENSION**

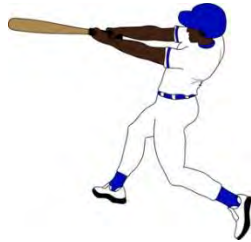
Students will glue their calendar pages on to construction paper and make a class bulletin board.

Students will write a story about the Chatham Coloured All-Stars.

Students will re-enact the story they learned about the Chatham Coloured All-Stars.

## All About the Chatham Coloured All-Stars

In the early 1930s, in the small town of Chatham, Ontario, a group of men got together and formed a baseball team. They were called the Chatham Coloured All-Stars.



Although they became popular and well-liked by many, sometimes they were treated unfairly. For example, they were not allowed to eat at certain restaurants or sleep at certain motels because of the colour of their skin. One time, a team didn't want to play against them when they realized that the players were black.

However, the team did not give up on their dream. In 1934, they won the Ontario championship. They were the first all-black team to do this.



In 2002, the Toronto Blue Jays honoured the Chatham Coloured All-Stars with a special day. The Blue Jays wore replica All-Stars' uniforms. They shared the history of the team and they celebrated their successes.

The Chatham Coloured All-Stars taught us what it means to never give up, even during challenging times. They are courageous Canadians.



# The Chatham Coloured All-Stars create a Holiday project

With a partner, create a holiday in honour of the Chatham Coloured All-Star baseball team. You must answer all of the questions.

What is the name of the holiday?

Why is this an important holiday?

When is it celebrated?



What colours are associated with the holiday?

What is the symbol for this holiday?



Name one special tradition.

What special clothing is worn?

What special foods are eaten?

\* Add in your own question and answer. Be creative!

Step 1. Read the story.

Step 2. Read the instructions.

Step 3. Fill out the sheet "My Family Celebrates" about a special holiday that your family celebrates.

Step 4. Complete the brainstorming sheet. Be creative and unique!

Step 5. Bring the brainstorming sheet to your teacher.

Step 6. Fill out the chart with your corrected responses.

Each partner must fill out their own chart.

Step 7. Draw and colour images representing your holiday on the calendar page.

Step 8. Fill in the month, days of the week, and dates on your calendar. Don't forget to include your special day!

Step 9. Present your chart and calendar to the class.



# My Family celebrates

Name \_\_\_\_\_

**Date**

**FOOD(S)**

**Why?**

**Name of holiday**

**special clothing**

**A tradition**

**COLOUR(S)**

**symbol(S)**



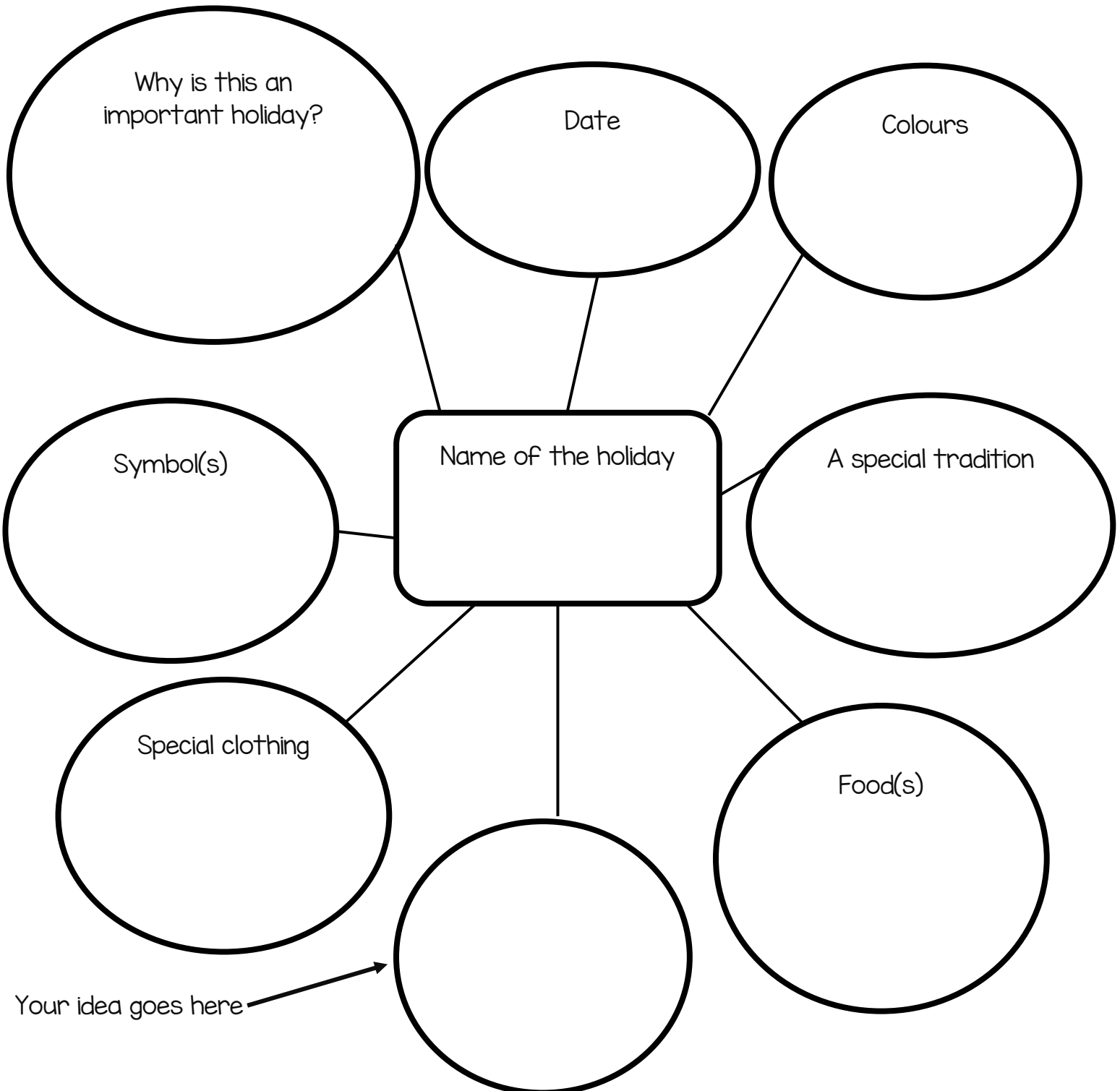




# The Chatham Coloured All-Stars **create a Holiday project**

## Brainstorming Sheet

Name \_\_\_\_\_



# The Chatham Coloured All-Stars **Holiday project**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Name	
Why?	
Food(s)	
Symbol(s)	
Clothing	
A special tradition	
Date	
Colour(s)	





# Holiday Rubric



Name \_\_\_\_\_

## writing

	Developing	Almost there	Good	Excellent
I leave spaces between my words and my printing is neat.	1	2	3	4
I spell familiar words correctly.	1	2	3	4
I have ways to help me spell unfamiliar words.	1	2	3	4
I begin my sentences with a capital letter.	1	2	3	4
I end my sentence with correct punctuation.	1	2	3	4
I write complete sentences that make sense.	1	2	3	4
Feedback				Total:

## speaking

	Developing	Almost there	Good	Excellent
I include all elements.	1	2	3	4
I use pictures to help describe my holiday.	1	2	3	4
I look at my classmates and my teacher.	1	2	3	4
I use vocabulary words related to holidays and the baseball team.	1	2	3	4
I speak clearly and at the correct volume and pace.	1	2	3	4
Feedback				Total:





**CHATHAM COLORED ALL-STARS REMEMBERED:**

York's Shea Stadium. The Blue Jays wore replica jerseys of the 1934 Chatham Colored All-Stars while the Mets wore New York Cubans' uniforms in the salute to the Negro League game. See Page 11 for game story.

AP Photo  
at New York  
Cubans' uni-

# Star treatment

Monday, July 15, 02  
C. D. News

## 1934 Chatham Colored All-Stars' surviving members overwhelmed by salute to their historic championship

By Mark Malone

The Daily News

TORONTO — Don Tabron and Sagasta Harding couldn't understand what all the fuss was about.

They were just a couple of good ball players on a great team.

Surely they didn't deserve to be treated like Hall of Famers by the Toronto Blue Jays or escorted onto the SkyDome field while thousands cheered Saturday.

"It didn't seem like I was worth it," said Tabron, 86, of Detroit. "Just part of a team a long time ago."

Their children knew better.

So did their teammates' children. And grandchildren. And great-grandchildren.

They came from Chatham and Windsor, from Detroit and Ypsilanti, from Buffalo, N.Y., and Washington, D.C.

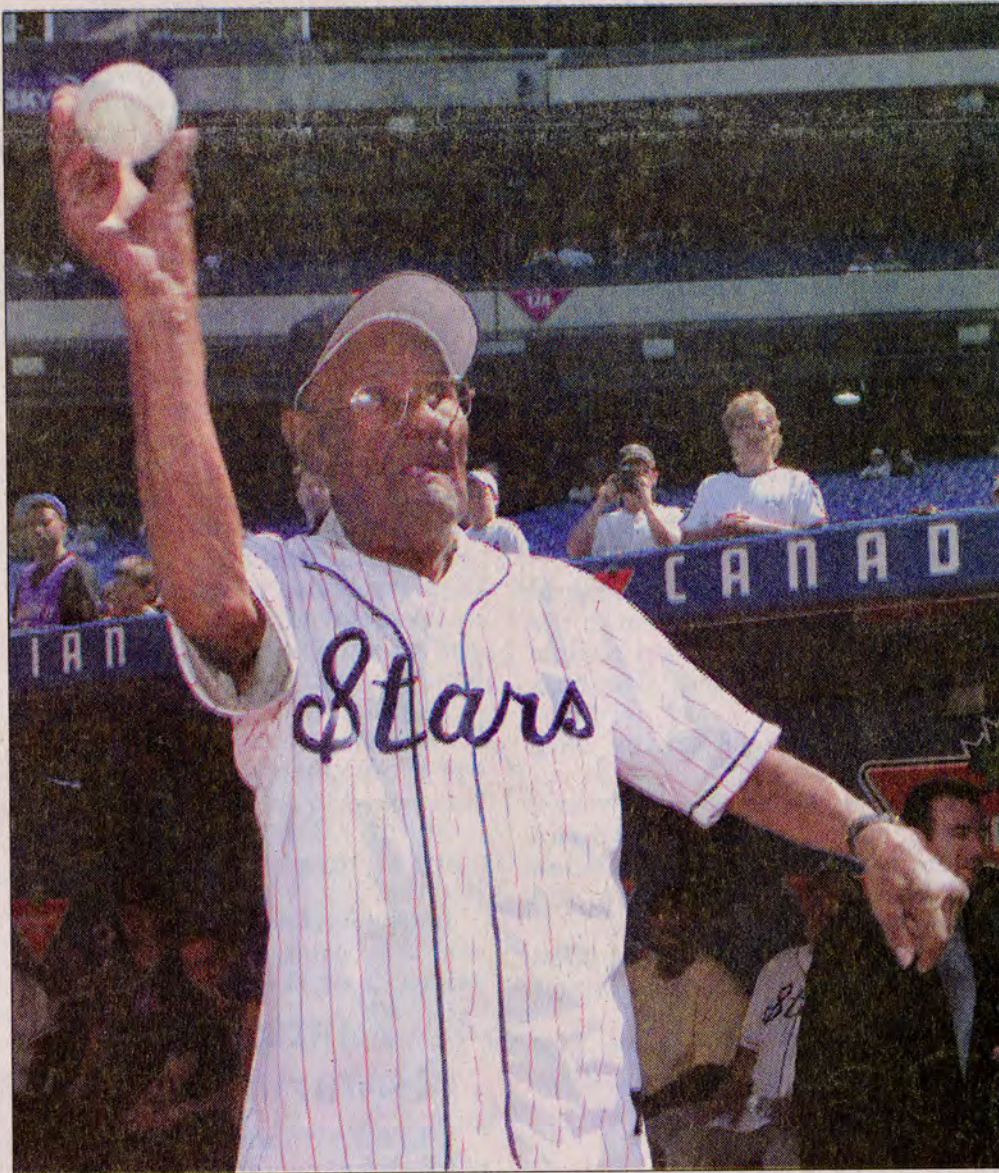
They came to see a tribute paid to the 1934 Chatham Colored All-Stars, a team which made history when black men had limited opportunities to make an impact.

The Colored All-Stars left their mark on baseball diamonds across Ontario. But their greatest legacy could be found Saturday in the stands.

Four generations of relatives, both blacks and whites, watched as the Blue Jays played the Boston Red Sox while wearing the uniforms of Ontario's first all-black baseball champions.

The Red Sox dressed in the road greys of the Boston Royal Giants.

"It's a chance to think about what those guys accomplished," said Chatham's Blake Harding, 54, whose father Wilfred and uncle Len played for the Colored All-Stars. "They just wanted to play baseball. But here we are years later — sons



Diana Martin Photo

### SAGASTA HARDING GETS IN A PRACTICE THROW ...before taking part in first-pitch ceremony

and daughters, grandchildren, great-grandchildren. It's pretty awesome that here they are in the SkyDome being honoured by major league baseball.

"It's one of those days when you sit back and realize life is pretty good."

Blake Harding wore a T-shirt with his father's name on the back. Later, he changed into another shirt that read, "I am Wilfred 'Boomer' Harding's son" on the front and "I am Len Harding's nephew" on the back.

Earl and Horace Chase handed

out buttons with a photo of their father, All-Stars legend Earl (Flat) Chase.

Down in the Blue Jays' dugout, 94-year-old Sagasta Harding sat next to grandson Robert Harding. Beside them was Don Tabron Jr. snapping pictures of his father.

Tabron Jr. grew up listening to his father — a shortstop and pitcher — talk about baseball. Stories of playing against Satchel Paige and visiting the segregated south with the Detroit Stars. Stories about the ugly racism he encountered in some towns and the kindness he found in others.

"All the stories he's told me, it's like he's finally getting his due for all the hard work he put in," said Tabron Jr., 23. "He's finally reaping the benefits."

Tabron and right-fielder Sagasta Harding are the only Colored All-Stars who lived long enough to see the team finally honoured by the baseball establishment.

Yet, there's no trace of bitterness. No sense of entitlement. Just gratitude for the surprising and long-deserved recognition.

"I didn't know what to think," said Harding of Romulus, Mich. "I know they've been awful nice to me here. And I do want to thank the participants who took part in this, to make this event real. This is once in a lifetime."

Not that he expected to see it in his lifetime.

"No, never," he said. "Never thought of it. But I wouldn't have missed it for the world."

The two Colored All-Stars, wearing replicas of their old jerseys, threw out the ceremonial first pitches. They were joined in the pre-game celebration by Horace Chase.

See STARS Page 12

# Stars

Continued from Page 9

"(I was) very humbled, to tell you the truth," said Chase, 66, of Chatham. "I felt so honoured to be out there on the field. It was a life dream. A field of dreams, being out there with those two guys..."

"I think they were in awe. They were enjoying themselves so much, they were almost speechless. I told them, 'You've done so much, this is your reward.'"

Blue Jays pitcher Corey Thurman expressed the same sentiment upon meeting Tabron and Harding.

"It's an unbelievable feeling, being African-American and knowing what these guys had to go through," Thurman said. "Well, not really knowing because it was so tough, but they paved the way for people like myself and all African-American people in the game of baseball."

The Colored All-Stars, most of whom hailed from Chatham and North Buxton, began barnstorming across Ontario in 1932.

They joined Chatham's City Baseball League in 1934 and went on to win the provincial intermediate 'B' championship. The team disbanded in 1939, though several players got back together after the Second World War on the Chatham A.C. Taylors.

"(Pitcher) Flat Chase and (catcher) Don Washington, they were the backbone of the team," Tabron said. "Flat could have played on any team in the country. He was a pitcher and a hitter. He hit the longest balls in every park we had played in."

"He threw the ball so hard that nobody wanted to pinch hit against him. They refused to pinch hit when it started getting dark. In fact, in Chatham he hit one fellow and broke three ribs."

"Every park that we played in, it was a newspaper-type home run — hitting the ball out at dusk and getting it back in at dark."

When Chatham Coun. Larry Mansfield Robbins was a youngster, he and the other neighborhood kids took hitting lessons from Chase.

"He'd demonstrate how to hit the ball a mile," Mansfield Robbins said. "One of his favourite tricks was standing in his backyard on Foster Street and hitting the ball over the houses to Stirling Park."

Mansfield Robbins had two uncles, Stanton Robbins and Hyle Robbins, on the Colored All-Stars. He even has a medallion from Stanton Robbins commemorating the 1934 season that he sometimes wears on a chain.

He organized a bus trip taking 56 people from St. John's Lodge to the game. They were part of a Chatham contingent conservatively estimated at more than 300.

Total attendance was 28,112 on a warm and sunny day. On Sunday, the Blue Jays distributed comic books featuring the Colored All-Stars and the Toronto players.

"I'm glad the Blue Jays decided to do this while there's still two of them alive," Blake Harding said. "If they waited another year, they might not be here."

"To see the All-Stars and the Negro Leagues honoured the way they are today, it's very gratifying," added Toronto's Robert Browning, 59, son of Len Harding. "I'm very proud to know my father played for the team."

The Colored All-Stars never had the chance to take their careers much farther than Chatham. It wasn't until 1947 that Jackie Robinson broke baseball's colour line. By then, the All-Stars were well past their prime.

Tabron liked Flat Chase's chances of making the major leagues. He wasn't as positive about his own.

"I thought I might have made the No. 1 minor (league)," he said. "I thought my hitting as a short-stop would have kept me out of the majors. I was not a great hitter."

Back then, ball players were happy to find a diamond with some grass. Many fields were just dirt and gravel.

Tabron chuckled when asked how it felt to finally step onto a big-league field, with a retractable roof and artificial turf and seating for more than 50,000 fans.

"Wish I could have done it earlier in life," he smiled. "It's something you never anticipate doing. You wonder if you were worth all of that."