



# Recommendations for Redressing Historical Wrongs Against Japanese Canadians in BC

COMMUNITY  
CONSULTATIONS  
REPORT

October 2019



Slocan internees arrive by train. Library and Archives Canada, accession number 1972-051, item 3191856

*For the Issei, Nisei, and Sansei ...*

*especially those who fell through the cracks,  
those whose life stories will rarely or never be told,  
those whose bodies, minds, and spirits never recovered from  
the poison inflicted by hatred and racist political agendas,  
those who died while interned or in the east  
before returning to their homes on the west coast,  
and those who never heard the words of a government apology ...*

*and for the generations who follow ...*





A row of large tents, Slocan Valley c.1942  
Nikkei National Museum 2010.49.11

## Acknowledgement

In seeking redress for its communities, the NAJC respectfully acknowledges the ongoing struggle of Indigenous Peoples throughout Canada.

## Glossary of Acronyms

<b>BC</b>	British Columbia
<b>LOI</b>	Landscapes of Injustice
<b>MLA</b>	Member of the Legislative Assembly in British Columbia
<b>MP</b>	Member of Parliament in Canada
<b>NAJC</b>	National Association of Japanese Canadians

## Glossary of Japanese Terms

<b><i>Issei</i></b>	First generation Japanese Canadians (generation that directly immigrated to Canada from Japan)
<b><i>Nisei</i></b>	Second generation Japanese Canadians (first generation born in Canada)
<b><i>Sansei</i></b>	Third generation Japanese Canadians (second generation born in Canada, often the children of internment survivors)
<b><i>Yonsei</i></b>	Fourth generation Japanese Canadians (third generation born in Canada, many of whom are of mixed ethnicity, in many cases a half Japanese ethnicity)
<b><i>Gosei</i></b>	Fifth generation Japanese Canadian (fourth generation born in Canada, many of whom are of mixed ethnicity, in many cases a quarter Japanese ethnicity)

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<http://najc.ca/bc-redress-appendices/>

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# Message from NAJC President

I am honoured to submit *Redressing Historical Wrongs Against Japanese Canadians in BC*, Community Consultations Report on behalf of the National Association of Japanese Canadians (NAJC) for consideration by the Government of British Columbia. This report outlines the results of the NAJC's consultations with the Japanese Canadian community to determine a meaningful follow-up to the British Columbia Government's Motion of Apology for Japanese Canadian Internment During the Second World War, passed by the British Columbia Legislative Assembly in 2012.

During the community consultations, we heard from members of our community who were directly affected by discrimination and internment. Some shared their stories, including painful family separations, denial of education, and racism. BC Redress is intensely personal for the Japanese Canadian community. Many Japanese Canadian families were long-time settlers in BC, like my family who came from Japan in the 1800s, and most of their descendants would still be living in BC if not for the aggressive actions of BC politicians before, during, and after the Second World War.

Like many other *Yonsei*, I did not know the history of our community or about internment. As a child, I remember going to the PNE (Pacific National Exhibition) in Hastings Park. I also remember my mother's reluctance to go to the petting zoo in the livestock barns. As an adult, I found out that her family, along with many others, was forcibly uprooted from their home on Vancouver Island with little notice and only a few suitcases. My mother, a little girl at the time, was heartbroken. From her family's clean, well-kept home, she ended up in the stench of the livestock barns in Hastings Park in Vancouver, then to live in a tent at the Popoff internment site in the interior of BC.

My mother's story is just one of many. We want to use our stories to educate and collaborate to eliminate racism. This work is timely as Canadian society currently faces rising challenges from populist and anti-immigrant movements. We strive for justice in the present and the future, as much as honouring our past and paying respect to our *Issei*, *Nisei*, and *Sansei*.

Given the role previous BC Governments played in the internment and dispossession of Japanese Canadians, we appreciate the current BC Government taking the first step to support these community consultations. We look forward to working with the BC Government on the next steps for meaningful measures to redress the violation of rights and financial and other losses for 22,000 Japanese Canadians, and to address the intergenerational impacts of government actions. By helping to ensure a degree of justice for Japanese Canadians, the BC government can help safeguard against any such future injustices.

Lorene Oikawa  
President, National Association of Japanese Canadians

# Executive Summary

With support from the British Columbia (BC) Government, the National Association of Japanese Canadians (NAJC) coordinated an extensive consultation process consisting of community meetings in nine locations in BC, virtual community consultations, an online survey, and written submissions from individuals and organizations in the Japanese Canadian community. The consultations were conducted between April and September 2019. All participants were asked to respond to the following question: *What should the Government of BC do to redress its history of racial discrimination and unjust actions that devastated the Japanese Canadian community?*

The following five themes emerged from the community consultations, ranked in order of importance:

- 1. Enhance Public School Education in British Columbia.** Japanese Canadian history should be embedded in the mandatory core public elementary and high school curricula and be available online. Professional development opportunities should be available for teachers at all grade levels on the Japanese Canadian experience. Academic grants should be established for research and the development of teaching tools and a digital library on Japanese Canadian history.
- 2. Take Concrete Steps to Combat Racism and Discrimination.** We encourage the BC Government to create an independent body to review and assess the BC Government's existing anti-racism strategy in consultation with affected communities and service providers. The independent body should also develop and coordinate BC-based anti-racism programs, services, and education resources, as well as developing policies to counter growing incidents of hate-motivated actions and speech.
- 3. Raise Public Awareness through Memorialization.** Funding should be provided to sustain the maintenance and operations of new and existing museums (especially the Nikkei National Museum), historic sites, and monuments, and to reclaim historic community spaces. To further reinforce memorialization, an official commemorative day should be established to celebrate the franchise and free movement granted to Japanese Canadians in 1949, accompanied by the construction of a physical memorial.
- 4. Create a Japanese Canadian Community Legacy Fund.** Establish a fund administered by the Japanese Canadian community to support community development programs, activities, and needs such as: seniors' care and housing, community wellness and healing programs, community gathering programs to rebuild fragile communities, scholarships for post-secondary students of Japanese Canadian descent, and anti-hate initiatives.
- 5. Deliver a Formal Apology Acknowledging the BC Government's Role.** We seek a formal acknowledgement of the wrongs committed by former BC Governments that led to the injustices faced by Japanese Canadians who suffered in mind, body, and spirit, and a sincere apology to those surviving Japanese Canadians directly affected by the injustices of incarceration, forced displacement, dispossession, and exile. The apology should be delivered by the BC Premier in the Provincial Legislature and the wording developed in consultation with the Japanese Canadian community.





Tashme, 1943. Nikkei National Museum 2012.45.1.12



# Introduction

# 1

This report summarizes the results of consultations held within the Japanese Canadian community to consider possible initiatives that the BC Government could undertake as a meaningful follow-up to a Motion of Apology that was unanimously passed by the Legislative Assembly of BC in 2012 in respect of the internment of Japanese Canadians during the Second World War.

In addition to providing useful insights into appropriate redress measures that could be undertaken by the BC Government, the consultation process provided an opportunity for Japanese Canadians to share family stories. Speaking publicly about their past was a deeply traumatic and painful experience for many. It was distressing to articulate the lasting impact of our shared experience on individuals, on families across generations, and on our community.

While a handful of respondents felt that it was far too late for the BC Government to meaningfully atone for its part in causing suffering to Japanese Canadians, the vast majority insisted that the BC Government could and should take meaningful steps to redress the past wrongs.

The findings from the Japanese Canadian community consultations yielded five themes that the NAJC strongly encourages the BC Government to explore further with the Japanese Canadian community in the immediate future. Acting on these recommended themes will demonstrate the Government's commitment to meaningful, concrete, and sustainable redress following the 2012 Motion of Apology. We believe that the findings in this report provide a solid starting point for BC to continue moving forward as a welcoming and inclusive society. In submitting this report, the NAJC expresses deep appreciation to all who contributed.

## Historical Context

### Japanese immigration to Canada

The first documented case of a Japanese person landing and settling in BC was in 1877. Like other migrants to the West Coast of Canada, Japanese Canadian settlers found work in various industries (such as millwork, mining, fishing, farming, building railroads, businesses). Despite our contributions to building BC's infrastructure and industries, Japanese Canadians faced marginalization, similar to other Asian minority groups and Indigenous peoples. After denying Chinese Canadians the vote in 1872, the BC Government continued in its anti-Asian sentiments, also denying Japanese Canadians the franchise in 1895 and South Asians in 1907.

Even in this early stage of immigration, Japanese Canadians sought justice and equity. For instance, in 1900, Tomekichi Homma legally challenged the BC Government's ban on voting rights for Asians. Homma won his case at the County and at the BC Supreme Court, but the BC Government refused to accept the decisions and appealed to the British Privy Council without the support of the Canadian Federal Government. By 1920, BC was one of two provinces in Canada that took advantage of the clause in the *Dominion of Canada Elections Act* that allowed provinces to exclude people from the franchise for "reasons of race."<sup>1</sup>

### Discrimination against Japanese Canadians

By 1907, the Japanese Canadian population was over 18,000 and growing. As with many other ethnic minorities, Japanese Canadians faced increasing racial discrimination and hostilities from white communities, including from the Asiatic Exclusion League, whose goal was to stop immigration from Asia. In September 1907, members of the League gathered at Vancouver's City Hall and proceeded to loot and vandalize Chinatown and then converged on Powell Street, threatening to kill Japanese Canadians. The Japanese Canadian community successfully defended themselves, but their actions were used against them – the mainstream media portrayed Japanese Canadians as vicious foreigners rather than as victims of hate-driven violence. The following year, an

<sup>1</sup> Saskatchewan also excluded those of Chinese origin, but the ban affected far fewer individuals than in BC. See *Elections Canada, A History of the Vote in Canada*, 2nd ed. (Ottawa: Published by the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer of Canada, 2007), 79.



1907 Riots. UBC Archives JCPC\_36\_017

informal agreement between the Canadian and Japanese governments was struck that restricted immigration from Japan to 400 males per year.

Despite the daily hostilities and government restrictions, the number of Japanese Canadian businesses continued to grow in the Powell Street area. In 1916, over 200 Japanese Canadians volunteered to enlist in the military to demonstrate loyalty but they were rejected; 196 of these volunteers travelled to Alberta to join the Canadian battalions of the British army. In the First World War, 54 Japanese Canadian soldiers were killed and 92 were wounded. The soldiers were promised the right to vote when they returned, but they had to wait until 1931 before receiving the franchise.

The lack of the franchise prevented Japanese Canadians, other Asians, and Indigenous peoples from entering the professions such as teaching and law. Likewise, workers from these communities were paid less than their white counterparts and denied entry into white unions. Despite these barriers, Japanese Canadians prospered in many of the industries where they worked. For example, Japanese Canadian fishers had over





**Notice in newspaper.**

Vancouver Public Library  
 Accession Number: 12851

half of the 3,267 fishing licenses in 1919. This success was met with further hostility, however. By 1925, nearly 1,000 fishing licenses were stripped from Japanese Canadians in an attempt to limit the competition they posed on white fishers.

During the Second World War, as Japan’s Imperial Forces expanded their military operations, there was a growing fear that the conflict would make its way to across the Pacific to the Canadian West Coast. From March to August of 1941, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) carried out compulsory registration of all Japanese Canadians over 16 years old and the BC Minister of Education H.G. Perry ordered an investigation of all Japanese Canadian students enrolled in public schools, citing them as potential problems.<sup>2</sup> However, these and other extraordinary measures taken against Japanese Canadians cannot be explained by war fears alone, as the measures far exceeded actions against persons of German or Italian heritage at this time.<sup>3</sup> The war fears stoked already existing anti-Asian and anti-Japanese Canadian sentiments in BC.

## Second World War

Shortly after Japan’s Imperial Forces bombed Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, Canada declared war on Japan and curfews and restrictions were imposed on Japanese Canadians. With pressures from anti-Asian organizations and politicians, in 1942 the Canadian Federal Government decided to use the *War Measures Act* to categorize all people of “Japanese racial origin” as threats to national security and strip their rights. This action was spurred in particular by high-ranking BC politicians, including BC Attorney-General R.L. Maitland, who declared on January 30, 1942 that Japanese Canadians were “a real danger on this coast” and stated the BC Government was demanding that Ottawa act.

Two members of the BC coalition government, BC Minister of Labour George Pearson and former Conservative MLA MacGregor MacIntosh, attended meetings in Ottawa on January 8–9, 1942 to lobby the Federal Government to remove Japanese Canadians from the coast.<sup>4</sup> Pearson told the legislature on January 23, 1942 that he had submitted “detailed proposals made by the Province.”<sup>5</sup>

All levels of the government were involved in this lobbying effort, from city councillors with the City of Vancouver to the Provincial Legislature, and Members of Parliament representing British Columbia in Ottawa, including MP Ian McKenzie. These individuals strongly advocated, both directly and indirectly, for the removal of Japanese and other Asian Canadians from BC.

<sup>2</sup> *Victoria Daily Times*, 18 December 1941, 2.

<sup>3</sup> See John Price, *Seventy-Five Years is Long Enough* (Victoria: University of Victoria, Centre for Asia-Pacific Initiatives, 2016), 6. Accessed from: [https://www.uvic.ca/research/centres/capi/assets/docs/MMP\\_Price\\_Working\\_Paper\\_v2.pdf](https://www.uvic.ca/research/centres/capi/assets/docs/MMP_Price_Working_Paper_v2.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> For first-hand accounts of this meeting, see Maurice A. Pope, *Soldiers and Politicians: The Memoirs of Lt.-Gen. Maurice A. Pope* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1962) and Escott Reid, *Radical Mandarin: The Memoirs of Escott Reid* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989).

<sup>5</sup> See Price, *Seventy-Five Years is Long Enough*, 7.

## Internment of Japanese Canadians

The federally-run military had refused to assist in the removal of Japanese Canadians, claiming they were not a threat. However, in response to political pressures from British Columbia, the Federal Government authorized the appointment of a BC-based body called the BC Security Commission to oversee the removal of Japanese Canadians. On February 24, 1942 Order-in-Council PC. 1486 empowered the Minister of Justice to control the movements of all persons of Japanese origin in the 100-mile “protected zone” along the BC coast. All Japanese Canadians living within the “protected zone” were forcibly removed from their homes, and their properties, businesses, and personal belongings confiscated by the Custodian of Enemy Properties. Men, women, and children of Japanese descent were given as little as 24 hours’ notice to leave their homes and were sent to internment or road camps. Men and women were separated from one another, but after protests from *Nisei* (second generation Japanese Canadians), the government permitted families to remain together. To keep their families together, many chose to work as forced labourers on sugar beet farms in Alberta and Manitoba.



Sugar beet farm in Manitoba. To avoid family separation, families forced into indentured slavery. Courtesy of Art & Keiko Miki Family Archives





Fishing Boats taken from Japanese Canadians. Canada. Department of National Defence, Library and Archives Canada, accession number 1967-052, item 3193627



Although the Custodian promised to hold properties in trust, these were sold in 1943 without the owners' permission at prices below the market value. The BC Government and the City of Vancouver actively supported the forced sale of properties and belongings. The revenues of these forced sales of victims' property were used to pay for their own internment. Historical research reveals that the BC Government was both directly involved in and benefitted from stripping the rights and appropriating the properties.<sup>6</sup>

In 1943, though education was a provincial responsibility, the BC Government refused to pay for the cost of educating 2,800 school-aged Japanese Canadians detained in camps in BC, denying the children the right to an education.<sup>7</sup>

## Post-war Discrimination

The Second World War ended with Japan's unconditional surrender on August 14, 1945.<sup>8</sup> However, the federal cabinet extended the executive powers of the *War Measures Act* and continued to restrict Japanese Canadians from returning to the West Coast, a deliberate plan to remove all people of "Japanese racial origin" from BC.<sup>9</sup> In 1946, the government introduced a Repatriation Bill forcing Japanese Canadians to choose between going to Japan or moving east of the Rockies.

Between 1947 and 1951, the Royal Commission on Japanese Claims, also known as the "Bird Commission,"<sup>10</sup> was charged with investigating and offering compensation to Japanese Canadians for property losses. The Bird Commission is largely remembered as an unjust resolution mechanism, given its narrow terms of reference, resulting in only a fraction of losses being addressed. Historians have cast the Bird Commission as a defensive mechanism by the Canadian government to limit financial compensation and to avoid the admission of greater injustice.<sup>11</sup> Of the approximately 15,000 Japanese-Canadian property owners who were dispossessed, just over 1,400 submitted claims; the total compensation awarded amounted to just over half of what was claimed by those 1,400 claimants.<sup>12</sup>

On April 1, 1949 – four years after the end of the Second World War – the last restrictions on Japanese Canadians were finally lifted and Japanese Canadians were allowed to return to the West Coast. In April 1947, franchise was given to Chinese and South Asian Canadians, but Japanese Canadians and Indigenous peoples were excluded. Japanese Canadians were finally given the right of citizenship in 1948, but only by 1949 in British

6 BC MLAs, Auditor General, and Minister of Labour were part of the BC Security Commission Advisory Board (British Columbia Security Commission, *Removal of Japanese from Protected Areas: Report Issued by the British Columbia Security Commission* [Vancouver, 1942]).

7 Numerous sources affirm this policy though the related correspondence has not been made public. See, for example, "Frank Moritsugu and the Ghost Town Teachers Historical Society," *Teaching in Canadian Exile* (Toronto: Ghost Town Teachers Historical Society, 2001), 3.

8 "The End of the Pacific War," *Veteran's Affairs Canada*, 2019 February 14. Accessed from: <https://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/remembrance/history/second-world-war/canada-and-the-second-world-war/pacwar>

9 In 1948, Liberal BC Premier Byron Johnson advised Prime Minister Mackenzie King to extend the Orders-in-Council to prevent Japanese Canadians, who were forcibly displaced from their BC homes, from returning to the West Coast (Ann Sunahara, *The Politics of Racism: The Uprooting of Japanese Canadians During the Second World War* [Toronto: James Lorimer and Company, 1981], 149). To further assure that Japanese Canadians could not return to the coast, the BC Government agreed to pay half the costs related to the continuing exile of Japanese Canadians beginning on March 31, 1948 (Cabinet Committee on Japanese Questions, Minutes, 15 January 1948, Record Group 25, Vol. 1868, 1939-263, 4, Library and Archives Canada).

10 Official title: *Royal Commission to Investigate Complaints of Canadian Citizens of Japanese Origin who Resided in British Columbia in 1941, That Their Real and Personal Property had been Disposed of by the Custodian of Enemy Property at Prices Less than the Fair Market Value*.

11 Kaitlin Findlay, *The Bird Commission, Japanese Canadians, and the challenge of reparations in the wake of state violence* (University of Victoria, 2018), 161.

12 Ann Gomer Sunahara, *The Politics of Racism: The Uprooting of Japanese Canadians During the Second World War* (Toronto: J. Lorimer, 1981), 142.

Columbia. Over 170 pieces of discriminatory legislation were enabled by BC politicians of all political stripes from 1872 to 1948. On January 24, 1947, the federal cabinet Order-in-Council on deportation of Japanese Canadians was repealed, but only after protests by churches, academics, journalists, and politicians. History bears witness that the measures to remove Japanese Canadians from the province preceded the Second World War, did not end with the war, and were based firmly in racism.

The Canadian Federal Government acted wrongly in 1942. Contrary to the arguments presented by BC politicians at the time, the RCMP and the Canadian Army advised that Japanese Canadians posed absolutely no security or military risk to the nation. It was strictly a BC problem. Nonetheless, in February 1942, the Federal Government invoked the provisions of the *War Measures Act* to order the removal of all persons of Japanese ancestry from the West Coast of Canada.

## 1988 Redress

The wrongs of the Second World War were formally acknowledged by the Prime Minister of Canada in the House of Commons on September 22, 1988. The acknowledgement was part of a Redress Agreement signed with the National Association of Japanese Canadians following extensive negotiations.<sup>13</sup> It also included compensation of \$21,000 for each individual directly affected by the Federal Government's actions, the creation of a \$12 million community fund, pardons for those who had been wrongfully imprisoned during the War, and Canadian citizenship for Japanese Canadians and their descendants who had been wrongfully deported to Japan at the War's end. In addition, the Agreement included \$24 million towards the creation of what is now the Canadian Race Relations Foundation, whose purpose is to work for the elimination of all forms of racial discrimination in Canada.

## 2012 BC Government Motion of Apology

More than two decades after the Canadian Federal Government's acknowledgement, on May 7, 2012, the following motion of apology was unanimously passed in the Legislative Assembly of BC:

*Be it resolved that this House apologizes for the events during the Second World War, when under the authority of the federal War Measures Act, 21,000 Japanese Canadians were incarcerated in internment camps in the interior of British*

<sup>13</sup> See Price Waterhouse, *Economic losses of Japanese Canadians after 1941: a study* (Winnipeg: National Association of Japanese Canadians: 1986).



**Slocan arrivals.** Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre 2001.9.97

*Columbia and their properties seized. The House deeply regrets that these Canadians were discriminated against simply because they were of Japanese descent and believes that all Canadians regardless of their origins should be welcomed and respected.*

The motion was introduced in the Legislature by Naomi Yamamoto, Minister of Advanced Education, and the Premier did not speak to it. Significantly, it failed to acknowledge that any wrongs were committed by former BC Governments.

## Subsequent BC Government activities with the Japanese Canadian Community

The BC Government undertook certain initiatives to recognize the Japanese Canadian experience in BC. For example, in 2015, the BC Arts Council contributed funding for the development of a “Hastings Park 1942” educational website and interpretive signage at historic Hastings Park



buildings, which were used in the 1942 detention of Japanese Canadians. In 2016, the BC Government initiated a Japanese Canadian Historic Places Recognition Program that included community consultations and that resulted in the recognition of 56 historic sites where Japanese Canadians made contributions to BC's diversity and prosperity. Finally, in 2017, to mark the 75th Anniversary of the internment of Japanese Canadians, the BC Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure placed the first permanent marker in BC to acknowledge the internment, at the Sunshine Valley Tashme Museum, east of Hope on Highway 3.

On April 19, 2018, the NAJC formally requested the BC Government to engage with the Japanese Canadian community in discussions on the form and scope of appropriate measures to redress the past wrongs. On March 20, 2019, the BC Government entered into a contract with the NAJC to coordinate community consultations to gather input and develop specific recommendations for possible legacy initiatives that incorporate the collective needs of the Japanese Canadian community and constitute a meaningful follow-up to the 2012 BC Government apology (see Appendix A). This report presents the results of those consultations.

## 3.1 Terms of Reference

The terms of reference of the March 20, 2019 contract between the BC Government and NAJC were to hold in-person consultations in the following nine locations in BC:

- Vancouver
- Burnaby
- Steveston
- Victoria
- Nanaimo
- Kamloops
- Vernon
- Kelowna
- New Denver/Nelson

In addition, virtual consultations were to be arranged for northern BC and for other areas of the province not readily accessible for in-person meetings, and an online platform (i.e. a survey) was to be created to obtain input from those unable to attend in-person or virtual consultation sessions. Japanese Canadians with ties to families forced out of BC were offered opportunities to provide inputs through virtual consultations or through NAJC member organizations located in other provinces and territories.

The NAJC used its own resources to go beyond the terms of reference of the March 20, 2019 contract. The consultation materials were first pilot tested in a community consultation and reviewed for their accuracy, effectiveness, completeness, and appropriateness; input obtained from the pilot was considered in the final analysis. In-person consultations were also held in other provinces. All consultation feedback was collated and analyzed to summarize the collective needs and desires expressed by the Japanese Canadian community. This report includes the findings from seventeen in-person and six virtual consultations involving 428 participants, as well as written submissions and responses to an online survey by another 165 individuals and organizations. Appendix C details the dates, locations, and attendance data of the consultations held by type, as well as the findings from each consultation.



Consultation in Vernon. Courtesy of Kevin Okabe

## 3.2 Consultation Formats

To ensure that the consultation sessions were consistent and the results gathered allowed for reliable collation and analysis, the NAJC first developed the question to be posed and the materials to be used at the sessions. Facilitators and recorders at each session were provided with tools including a PowerPoint presentation, a video titled *Swimming Upstream*, and handout materials, all of which were used to introduce the question to be addressed in small group discussions. Facilitators and recorders also received written guidance on their roles and were required to complete a Community Consultation Reporting Form providing summary information and details from each consultation. See Appendix B for all of the consultation materials used.



# Key Findings

# 4

During community consultations, participants were asked to respond to the following question:

***What should the Government of BC do to redress its history of racial discrimination and unjust actions that devastated the Japanese Canadian community?***

This question elicited a broad range of suggestions. The following five areas represent a synthesis of the most common themes that emerged across the consultations.

## 4.1 Enhance Public School Education in British Columbia

One of the main findings of the consultation process was the desire to educate BC residents about the significance of the injustices done to Japanese Canadians, as a “never again” moment in Canadian history. Knowing about past injustices is necessary to prevent future injustices from being repeated. Yet, many students in BC are not exposed to the history of Japanese Canadians by the time they graduate from high school. Young British Columbians need to be aware of past human rights abuses committed in the province so that we as a society do not risk forgetting these injustices. Based on our consultations, the NAJC recommends the following:

### 4.1.1 Upgrade public school curricula

Respondents felt strongly that Japanese Canadian history should be embedded in the core mandatory public school curricula at elementary and high school levels. A review of the Core Competencies at all levels in the education system should be undertaken to ensure there are significant references to Japanese Canadian experiences at all levels in the education system. Themes would include: history of discriminatory legislation in BC; contributions of Japanese Canadians to BC’s development; dispossession, displacement, and racism in relation to contemporary issues, such as racial profiling, migrant stories, addressing hate, and the politics of difference. Also, the stories from survivors

(including online video interviews) or their living family members should be integrated into the curriculum to make this history come alive.

#### 4.1.2 Teaching materials should be available online

Making teaching materials available online enhances their accessibility across and beyond BC. The use of digital and online media will be important in engaging youth and future generations.

#### 4.1.3 Provide funding for professional development

The BC Government should provide funding for professional development opportunities for BC teachers at all grade levels on the Japanese Canadian experience. This includes using existing resources such as lesson plans and teachers already trained on this subject. Teacher professional development is a critical component in facilitating regularized education of the Japanese Canadian experience.

#### 4.1.4 Provide grants for studies and research

The BC Government should provide grants for academic studies and research to ensure continued historical research in this unique episode of BC's history and to develop additional teaching tools. To date, most Japanese Canadian literature and history have been published by small presses with limited copies available. The development and maintenance of an online digital library or database, such as the one being developed by the Landscapes of Injustice project,<sup>14</sup> and other technology tools will be necessary to ensure accessibility of this material for researchers, writers, and other interested members of the public. This work would include translation and digitization of books, reports, and community newsletters.

### 4.2 Take Concrete Steps to Combat Racism and Discrimination

With one voice, participants across consultations stated that our experience of racism and social injustice must not be repeated against our or any other community. Despite wider efforts, including the formation of the Canadian Race Relations Foundation, we continue to see random, sometimes lethal, acts of hate and bigotry across Canada. Unfortunately, racism and discrimination persist in BC in both overt and covert forms.

<sup>14</sup> See [landscapesofinjustice.com](http://landscapesofinjustice.com).



**Catholic High School in Slocan City. When the BC government abdicated its responsibility for education, the community looked to its members and missionaries to organize makeshift schools.** Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre 2018.10.10.95

In order to address this finding, the NAJC urges the BC Government to establish an independent body to:

- Review the existing anti-racism strategy and assess the effectiveness of existing programs;
- Consult with all affected communities and service providers;
- Assist, advocate for, and support refugee and other communities under threat of discriminatory acts and experiencing racial profiling;
- Conduct research on hate groups (particularly those driven by Islamophobia, white supremacy, and racism) and their activities including their use of social media and the effects of their hate-based messaging;
- Develop policy directives, program initiatives, and strategies aimed at promoting anti-racism, while also reducing hate and discrimination;
- Be an education resource and widely distribute strategies against hate; and
- Advocate for societal change predicated on inclusiveness and diversity.





Hastings Park Detention. Nikkei National Museum 1994.69.3.16

## 4.3 Raise Public Awareness through Memorialization

We noted a strong desire by the Japanese Canadian community to memorialize the past injustices and discrimination committed against us. Participants identified the following concrete forms of memorialization that can be used to broadcast our story more widely to help raise public awareness and preserve our history.

### 4.3.1 Provide funding for museums

The BC Government should provide regularized funds for the following:

- Support and sustain existing Japanese Canadian museums (especially the Nikkei National Museum in Burnaby), exhibits, and programs.<sup>15</sup>
- Establish new museums to recognize significant Japanese Canadian settlements.
- Social history exhibits, preferably travelling exhibits to tell our story using digital technology and a mix of video images and audio.
- Digitize a library of works about the Japanese Canadian experience.

### 4.3.2 Continue and expand upon the historic sites initiative

The BC Government should support the following historic initiatives:

- Continue to mark and provide interpretive information about the remaining 50 of 56 Japanese Canadian historic sites in BC.
- Produce and maintain monuments, public art, and interpretive signage to commemorate Japanese Canadian historic places.
- Reclaim use of historic community properties in the Powell Street area in Vancouver, now owned by the Province of BC or the City of Vancouver, for the use of the Japanese Canadian and broader communities.
- Restore and sustain the historic Japanese garden and tea house in BC.<sup>16</sup>

### 4.3.3 Proclaim a Commemoration Day

There was a suggestion during consultations to adopt April 1st as an annual official day to commemorate the day when Japanese Canadians were granted the right to vote and to move freely in Canada (including being able to return to the 100-mile “protected zone” in BC). This Day would be an occasion to remember not only the disenfranchisement Japanese Canadians, but also that of Indigenous peoples and other Asian peoples in the province. Many participants suggested it would be an important gesture to construct a physical memorial to the Japanese Canadian experience, similar to the Japanese American memorial in Washington, DC. Whether this is located in BC or Ottawa is an open question.

<sup>15</sup> These include the Nikkei National Museum in Burnaby, BC; the New Denver Internment Memorial Centre, Greenwood, BC; and museums, exhibits and/or programs found in other BC locations, including Kaslo, Chemainus, Kamloops, Cumberland, Steveston, and Lillooet.

<sup>16</sup> These would include gardens in Victoria, Nitobe Memorial Garden, Vancouver, Momiji Garden at Hastings Park, New Denver, Lillooet, Hope, and the Gulf Islands

## 4.4 Create a Japanese Canadian Community Legacy Fund

The participants argued strongly that the BC Government should establish a **Community Legacy Fund**, which is to be administered by the Japanese Canadian community to support community development programs, activities, and needs.

### 4.4.1 Seniors' care and housing

Funding is required to assist our survivors who were harmed by the Government's actions. The participants consistently emphasized the importance of providing culturally competent care, housing, and assistance, particularly for senior survivors who have suffered in silence and who require senior-specific and individualized care (e.g. mental health services) to help live out the remainder of their lives with dignity and respect. This includes seniors' supplements for survivors in hardship cases.

### 4.4.2 Community wellness and healing programs

Funding is also necessary to help rebuild the Japanese Canadian community that was devastated by decades of anti-Asian legislation (1895–1950), as well as incarceration, property dispossession, and forced displacement (1942–49). Wellness and healing programs are needed for individuals, families, and intergenerational families to address traumatic emotional and social effects of historic systemic racism.

### 4.4.3 Community gathering programs

Many *Yonsei* and *Gosei* Japanese Canadians have lost touch with their ancestral heritage due to Government actions. To help the younger generations to access their language and culture in a community space and to rebuild fragile communities, the Community Legacy Fund would support community gatherings, such as homecoming, conferences, intergenerational events, and festivals, as well as scholarships for post-secondary students of Japanese Canadian descent pursuing studies in BC.





Angler POW prison. Nikkei National Museum 1994.48.3

#### 4.4.4 Anti-Hate Initiatives

A Community Legacy Fund would help with outreach activities to address the needs of other vulnerable communities who face discrimination and may feel alone and isolated. With an intermarriage rate of over 90%, Japanese Canadians are members of virtually every ethnic community in Canada. We are connected to other communities not only within our own families, but also through the Japanese Canadian community's outreach. It is important to Japanese Canadians that our efforts to support the needs and future of our community will also benefit others. Our unique history can help bridge gaps and provide a shared understanding of the traumas others may face.



SS Meigs departs to Japan with exiled Japanese Canadians while government and RCMP officials watch, June 1946. Library and Archives Canada, accession number 1972-051, item 3193455

## 4.5 Deliver a Formal Apology Acknowledging the BC Government's Role

On behalf of survivors who suffered in silence – whose life stories have rarely or never been told – participants felt it is of the utmost importance to seek a meaningful acknowledgement of past injustices by the BC Government in the form of an appropriately worded and delivered public apology (see Appendix D for life stories). It is our hope that some of what BC Redress achieves will go towards acknowledging the harm done to the minds, bodies, and spirits of these individuals and to those surviving and directly affected by the injustices of incarceration, forced displacement, dispossession and exile. To the young man who contemplated suicide when he was herded into Hastings Park.<sup>17</sup> To the *Issei* woman who arrived at the Kaslo train station on the shore of Kootenay Lake and broke down from exhaustion and isolation from friends and relatives.<sup>18</sup> The public government apology would be sought

<sup>17</sup> Barry Broadfoot, *Years of Sorrow, Years of Shame: The Story of Japanese Canadians in World War II* (Toronto: PaperJacks, 1979), 94.

<sup>18</sup> Ken Adachi, *The Enemy that Never was: A History of the Japanese Canadians* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1976), 256.

on behalf of these two individuals and all those who were unable to simply carry on with their lives in the face of such adversity and overt politically-sanctioned racism.

### 4.5.1 Apology delivered by the highest level of the government

A formal apology by the BC Government for historical wrongs should be delivered by the Premier in the Provincial Legislature. Participants felt the Premier was the appropriate level of government official to deliver such an apology, not an MLA or a cabinet minister. Inviting Japanese Canadians to speak at this historic occasion would also be important to underline the community's acceptance of the apology.

### 4.5.2 Apology wording developed in consultation with the Japanese Canadian community

Given the complexity of the injustices, which include actions that by current international standards constitute “ethnic cleansing”, it is desirable that the wording of an acknowledgement be developed in consultation with the Japanese Canadian community. The apology's words should address the specific actions undertaken by the BC Government before, during, and after the Second World War and acknowledge and include the following points:

- From 1895 to 1949 the BC Government passed over 160 discriminatory anti-Asian and anti-Japanese laws. BC was the only province in Canada to withhold the right to vote from its Japanese Canadian citizens;
- Due to forced removal, 60% of Japanese Canadians now live outside of BC, while in 1942 over 95% lived in British Columbia. Over 4,000 Japanese Canadians were deported and exiled to Japan, including those born in Canada;
- The BC Government refused to fulfill its responsibility to provide education to Japanese Canadian youth; and
- In 1945 Canada was an original signatory to the United Nations (UN) Charter and three years later was instrumental in the creation of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, all whilst violating those said values to appease the racist agendas of BC politicians.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Then Liberal BC Premier Byron Johnson advised Prime Minister Mackenzie King to extend Orders in Council to prevent Japanese Canadians, who were forcibly displaced from their BC homes, from returning to the coast (Ann Sunahara, *The Politics of Racism: The Uprooting of Japanese Canadians During the Second World War* [Toronto: James Lorimer and Company, 1981], p. 149). To further assure that Japanese Canadians could not return to the coast, the BC Government agreed to pay half the costs related to the continuing exile of Japanese Canadians beginning on March 31, 1948 (Cabinet Committee on Japanese Questions, Minutes, 15 January 1948, Record Group 25, Vol. 1868, 1939-263, 4, Library and Archives Canada).





Hastings Park – youth at desks in makeshift school. Nikkei National Museum 1994.69.3.23

It is said that hope and optimism can be a form of resistance, and we know that for many this was a way forward. However, we must also honour and remember those who never recovered from the poison inflicted by the pervasive hatred and the political tools used to enable a racist agenda. We would dedicate such an apology to those who died in Eastern Canada, having never returned to their birthplace in BC, those who never heard the words of a government's apology, and those who died while interned, like Tomekichi Homma, who lost his case for enfranchisement in 1902. This apology would be for all the forebears who fought tirelessly for dignity and equality in Canadian society.

## 4.6 Other Findings

No amount of redress can return the lost youth, opportunities, and futures that were stolen from Japanese Canadians due to the actions of former BC Governments. However, Japanese Canadians undeniably suffered significant financial losses. There was a range of responses from support for individual financial compensation, to opposition to such a move. Some felt that financial compensation could also acknowledge to the general public the seriousness of the wrongs committed by former BC Governments.

# 5

## Conclusion

This report has described the five major themes arising from consultations with the Japanese Canadian community. These themes represent our community's responses to the question as to what, in general, the BC Government can and should do to follow-up on its 2012 apology for the internment of Japanese Canadians during the Second World War. We have been encouraged by the widespread support of the community in Vancouver and BC, as evidenced by signatures collected at the 2019 Powell Street Festival. We urge the BC Government to continue to engage with the Japanese Canadian community to explore these themes further in the weeks and months ahead, and ultimately to reach a negotiated BC Redress agreement with the community.



Consultation in Vancouver. Courtesy of Susanne Tabata



# Appendices

See the complete dossier of appended documents and materials at:  
<http://najc.ca/bc-redress-appendices/>

## Appendix A • BC Government Proposal and Contract

Initial Proposal to BC Government  
Cover Letter to Terms Sheet  
Term Sheet BC Government Contract  
Signed BC Government Contract  
Addendum to Contract  
Schedule A to Contract

## Appendix B • Consultation Materials

PowerPoint Presentation for Sessions  
*Swimming Upstream* Video  
Consultation Organizing Guide  
Consultation Reporting Form  
Press Release for Consultations  
Advertising Poster for Consultations  
Summary of Discriminatory Legislation  
Listing of Discriminatory Legislation  
Summary of BC Government Apologies  
Frequently Asked Questions and Answers

## Appendix C • Consultation Data

Summary Statistics from Consultations  
Summary of Consultations inside BC  
Summary of Consultations outside BC  
Summary of Online Consultations with BC Residents  
Summary of Online Consultations with non-BC Residents  
Summary of Online Web Submissions from BC Residents  
Summary of Online Web Submissions from non-BC Residents  
Summary of Written Submissions from BC Residents  
Summary of Written Submissions from non-BC Residents  
Submissions from BC-based Organizations  
Submissions from Organizations Outside of BC  
Results of Early Consultations held in BC

## Appendix D • Personal Stories and Reflections

Biography for Mary Kitagawa  
Biography for Mits Sumiya



Consultation in Nanaimo. Courtesy of Eiko Eby.

The community consultations were conducted by the National Association of Japanese Canadians (NAJC) BC Redress Steering Committee and the NAJC Executive Director.

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Hastings Park Livestock Building. Nikkei National Museum 1994.69.3.20





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Slocan exiles depart by train, 1946. Tak Toyota, Library and Archives Canada, accession number 1972-051, item 3191856