

THE 1942 UPROOTING OF JAPANESE CANADIANS

The year the Canadian government expelled more than 20,000 Japanese Canadians from their homes.

THE GOVERNMENT'S ANNOUNCEMENT

In late February of 1942, Prime Minister Mackenzie King enacted the *War Measures Act* and announced the forced removal of Japanese Canadians living on the west coast 'for reasons of national security'. This news came as a shock to that community. While many had suspected that first-generation male immigrants from Japan would be forced onto dangerous work camps, (as Canada was at war with Japan after the bombing of Pearl Harbour) none imagined that the federal government would take such an extreme measure.

Despite the rampant anti-Japanese racism within British Columbia during this time, most Japanese Canadians were deeply loyal to the country. The community came together to support the unemployed and to purchase \$300,000 in government Victory Bonds, but despite these efforts, the government deemed them "Enemy Aliens" and traitors to the country.

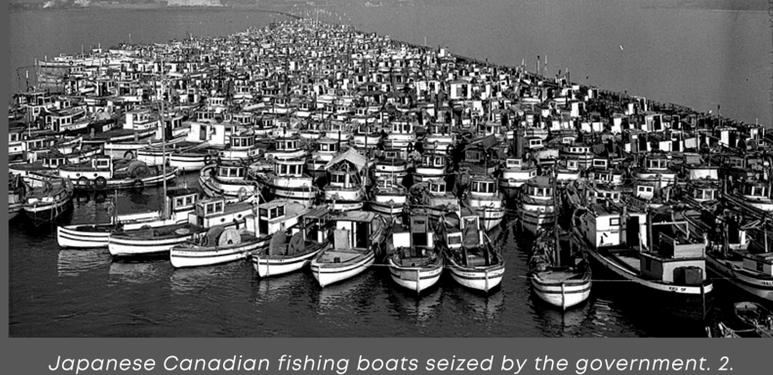
FORCED TO LEAVE THEIR HOMES AND BELONGINGS

Beginning on March 16th, 1942, families from fishing villages and coastal towns were forced out of their homes and sent by train to Vancouver for processing.



Japanese Canadians being removed from their homes in BC. 1.

These families were given just hours to pack up the limited belongings they were allowed to bring: 150lbs for each adult and 75lbs for each child. Everything left behind – homes, boats, cars, family heirlooms, etc. – would soon be seized and sold by the government.



Japanese Canadian fishing boats seized by the government. 2.

HASTINGS PARK: A HOLDING PEN FOR INTERNEES

Uprooted Japanese Canadian families were taken to Hastings Park in Vancouver where a livestock building had just been converted into a human holding pen. There, in the unrelenting stench of animal manure and maggots, these people would stay for days or even months.

Upon their arrival, Japanese Canadian families (women, children, elderly) were permanently separated from adult men who were were stripped and examined to determine their suitability for work camps. The rights to their property were signed over to the government.



RCMP constable checking documents of uprooted families. 3.

Accommodations were barebones: rows of bunkbeds with straw mattresses were each separated by just three feet of concrete, and each inmate received only three army blankets and a small pillow. Open troughs were used as toilets, and a total of 48 showers were built for a population that reached more than 3000. The kitchen could not provide for the dietary needs of babies and the elderly, and privacy was non-existent outside of the small, crudely constructed hospital.



One of the men's dormitories at Hastings Park. 4.

VOLUNTEER EFFORTS TO IMPROVE LIVING CONDITIONS

Japanese-Canadian volunteers within Hastings Park worked quickly to make improvements, building partitions, constructing desks for a temporary school, organizing recreational activities, and more. Through forming a liaison committee, they also managed to secure better nutrition, partitions for toilets, and a separate dormitory for teenage boys.

Despite all their hard work, nothing could make up for the traumas inflicted on the inmates, nor could they come anywhere close to the living standards they had enjoyed before internment.



A volunteer-run kindergarten class at Hastings Park. 5.

FAMILY LABOUR ON SUGAR BEET FARMS

Facing permanent family separation, thousands of inmates signed up to work on sugar beet farms in the prairies with their loved ones. Those families who were not accommodated by the program would end up separated without knowing if they would ever see their relatives again.

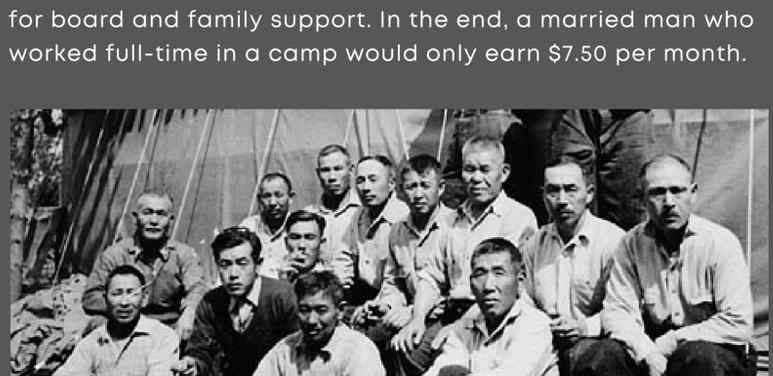


Japanese Canadian labourers on a sugar beet farm. 6.

ROAD CAMP LABOURERS

Forced to leave their families, able men over the age of 18 were moved to road camps in Ontario and the BC interior while those who did not comply were interned in prisoner of war camps.

These road camps were essentially prisons: men were escorted there by RCMP and were forbidden from leaving. They were only paid half of the standard rate for general labour, and the government deducted most of their earnings for board and family support. In the end, a married man who worked full-time in a camp would only earn \$7.50 per month.



A group of men in a road camp in British Columbia. 7.

Fearing for the families they had left behind, these men grew restless. By mid-June strikes began in several camps as men fought to be reunited with their families.

