

## Canada's Japanese Canadian Timeline

**1833** - First recorded instance of Japanese shipwrecks off what would become British Columbia. Two survivors of a wreck off the Queen Charlotte Islands (now Haida Gwaii) are taken to England by employees of the Hudson's Bay Company. More shipwrecks occur over several decades. Sailors who managed to return to Japan may have faced prosecution by the Tokugawa government, which at the time prohibited travel to foreign countries. Some survivors are reported to have settled in Aboriginal communities along B.C.'s coast.

**1877** - Manzo Nagano—the first Japanese person known to land and settle in Canada—lands in New Westminster.

**1887** - Gihei Kuno, a fisherman from Mio-mura in Wakayama-ken, visits Canada and returns to Japan to recruit others to the village of Steveston, located at the mouth of the Fraser. Steveston becomes the second largest Japanese Canadian settlement pre-World War II; Mio (also known as America-mura) becomes one of the largest single sources of Japanese emigrants to Canada.

Official emigration to Canada commences with the opening of regular steamship service from Yokohama.

Yo Shishido, who takes up residence with husband Washiji Oya, a store proprietor on Powell Street, is the first Issei woman to settle in Canada.

**1889** - The first Nisei (second generation), Katsuji, is born to Yo and Washiji Oya. The first Japanese consulate opens in Vancouver.

**1893** - Yoichi Tanabe, who will open the nation's first Japanese Canadian tailoring shop, apprentices with a Chinese tailor.

White and First Nations fishermen stage a strike, demanding a reduction in the number of fishing licenses issued to Japanese.

**1895** - The B.C. government denies the franchise (voting rights) to citizens of Asiatic origin.

**1896** - Rev. Goro Kaburagi, ordained as minister of the Japanese Methodist church, establishes a Japanese language weekly, *Bankuba Shubo*.

**1897** - The Japanese Fishermen's Association is organized in Steveston, B.C. with Tomekichi Homma as President.

**1898** - Tokutaro Chikamura and Tsukichi Kato purchase 230 Powell Street—the first Japanese immigrants to own property there.

**1900** - Tomekichi Homma (see 1897), a naturalized Canadian citizen, applies for inclusion on the Voters' List. After refusal by the Collector of Voters, a B.C. judge declares *ultra vires* a clause barring Asians from voting—a decision overturned by the Privy Council of Britain. Those with Asian ancestry were also barred (until 1949) from jury duty, holding public office, and many jobs.

**1904** - Isaburo Kishida, a landscape gardener from Yokohama, designs and builds Esquimalt Gorge Park's Japanese Tea Garden, hugely popular; as a result, he is commissioned to redeem an exhausted limestone quarry—now the world-famous Sunken Garden of Victoria's Butchart Gardens National Historic Site.

**1905** - Canada's first Buddhist temple opens at the Ishikawa Hotel on Powell Street, Vancouver.

**1906** - Kyoritsu Nippon Kokumin Gakko, Canada's first Japanese language school, is established at 439 Alexander Street. A brick building soon joins the original wooden structure, and in 1920, it is named the Vancouver Japanese Language School.

At Vancouver public school Lord Strathcona, Japanese Canadian students are enrolled alongside whites for the first time.

Kumataro Inamasu is the first documented Nikkei living in southern Alberta.

More than 9,000 Japanese immigrants enter Canada from 1906-08.

### **1907 (September 9) -**

A mob of white supremacists gathers in Vancouver and inflicts severe damage on Japanese and Chinese immigrant quarters; Powell Street is extensively damaged. The riot is immediately followed by a general strike of Vancouver's Asian workers.



**Riot in Vancouver**

**1908** - The Hayashi-Lemieux “Gentlemen’s Agreement” restricts Japanese immigration to 400 male immigrants and domestic servants per year, plus returning immigrants and immediate family members. The “picture bride” marriage system (*shasshin kekkon*) becomes widespread.



### Japanese Picture Brides

**1909** - A directory of Japanese immigrant businesses shows 568 in the Powell Street area.

**1910 (March 5)** - A snow slide at Roger’s Pass buries 62 men. 32 Issei are among the dead—the largest single loss of life in Japanese-Canadian history. Victim families receive \$220 each.

**Baseball has become popular among Japanese Canadians. The first game between communities features the Victoria Nippons vs. the Vancouver Nippons.**

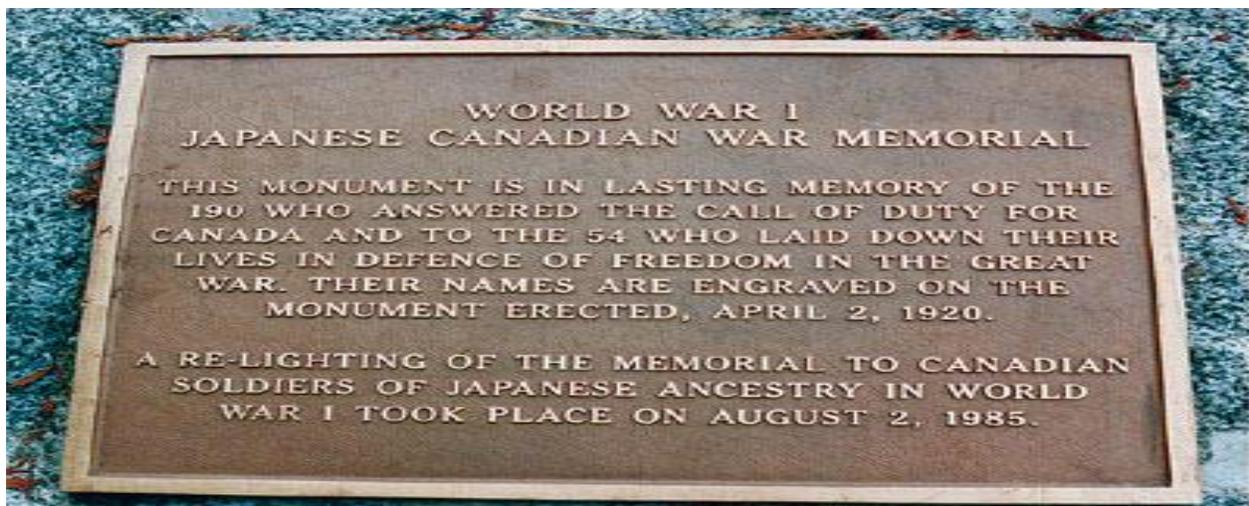


**1911** - The Asahi baseball team is formed. Quickly famous for its sacrificing, base-stealing, and fielding, the team becomes the most popular in the Lower Mainland with a legion of non-Issei fans.

**1916** - Chitose Uchida becomes the first Nisei (second generation) to graduate from a Canadian university as a qualified schoolteacher. She is unable to secure employment other than teaching English to the Japanese.

**1916-17** - Hoping to prove their loyalty, over 200 Issei volunteers attempt to enlist in the Canadian Army. After being rejected in British Columbia, 195 Issei and one Nisei (Private George Uyehara) travel to Alberta to join Canadian battalions of the British army and are shipped to Europe, where 54 are killed and 92 wounded.

**On April 9, The Japanese Canadian War Memorial cenotaph is officially unveiled near Lumberman's Arch in Stanley Park on the third anniversary of the Battle of Vimy Ridge. Sitting atop the sandstone column is a marble lantern containing an eternal flame. Says Sergeant Yasuzo Shoji, veteran of the 52nd Battalion of the Canadian Expeditionary Force: "We don't forget what we owe to Canada and we were proud to fight when Britain declared war on the common enemy."**



**1918-1919** - The Canada-wide influenza epidemic claims over 100 Japanese Canadians.

**1919** - Japanese fishermen control nearly half of Canada's fishing licenses (3,267). The Department of Fisheries reduces the number of licenses granted to anyone "other than white residents, British subjects and Canadian Indians." By 1925, nearly 1,000 licenses have been stripped from Japanese Canadians.

**1920** - Japanese Canadian mill workers under Etsu Suzuki form the Japanese Labour Union, the first Japanese Canadian union.

**1922** – Lord Byng, attended by both Japanese and non-Japanese, becomes the first in B.C. to hire a Japanese Canadian, but teacher Hide Hyodo is permitted to instruct only Japanese Canadians.

**1924** - Labour union newspaper *Minsbu* (The Daily People) begins publication under the leadership of Etsu Suzuki.

**1926** - The Asahi Baseball Team wins the Terminal League Championship—the first of several over the next 15 years.

**1929** - Jun Kisawa, an Issei fisherman, wins a court battle to overturn restrictions against Japanese-Canadians using motorized fishing boats.

**1930** - June Shige Yoshida of Chemainus, B.C. (Vancouver Island) forms the first Japanese-Canadian Boy Scout troop in the British Empire. Having been barred from joining a local troop five years earlier, he studied on his own by correspondence, earning the highest possible rank and a warrant from the Boy Scouts of America that granted him the right to form his own troop.

**1931** - World War One Issei veterans receive the franchise, becoming the only Japanese Canadians qualified to vote.

**1936** - The Japanese Canadian Citizens League—the first of its kind—is founded and sends a delegation of Nisei citizens to Ottawa to plead unsuccessfully for the franchise.

To mark Victoria's 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, the Japanese-Canadian community donates hundreds of ornamental cherry trees that bloom to this day.

**1938** - On November 24, *The New Canadian* is established as the first English-language Japanese Canadian newspaper—motto: “The Voice of the Second Generation.” Its first editor, Shinobu Peter Higashi, is replaced by Tom Shoyama; Irene Uchida, Muriel Kitagawa, and Toyo Takata were among the Nisei employed.

The first Canadian-born Buddhist Minister, Takashi Tsuji of Mission, B.C. is ordained. He departs later for the United States, where he is elected Bishop of the Buddhist Churches of America.

**1937** - Theoretical physicist Shuichi Kusaka, recipient of a Governor General's Award, graduates from the University of British Columbia. He studies later with A-Bomb developer J.R. Oppenheimer and, at Princeton, with Albert Einstein.

**1938-40** - RCMP keep surveillance on the Japanese community, but no subversive activity is recorded.

**1941 - January 7:** In a split decision, a Special Committee of the Cabinet War Committee recommends that Japanese Canadians not be allowed to volunteer for the armed services on the grounds that strong public opinion is against them.

**March to August:** Compulsory registration of all Japanese Canadians over 16 years of age is carried out by the RCMP.

**December 7:** Japan attacks Pearl Harbor; Canada declares war on Japan. Under the War Measures Act, Order-in-Council P.C. 9591 requires that all Japanese nationals and those naturalized after 1922 register by February 7 with the Registrar of Enemy Aliens.



**December 8:** 1200 Japanese fishing boats are rounded up by the Canadian Navy; Japanese language schools close; insurance policies are cancelled. Three Japanese-language newspapers are closed down by R.C.M.P. and *The New Canadian* becomes the sole paper allowed to publish. Newly bilingual, it becomes the main source of community news and government policy directives.

**1941 - December 16:** Order-in-Council P.C. 9760 requires that all persons of Japanese origin, regardless of citizenship, register with the Registrar of Enemy Aliens.

The light atop Stanley Park's Japanese-Canadian War Memorial is extinguished.

Of the 23,303 persons of Japanese origin in Canada at the time, 75.5% were Canadian citizens (60.2% Canadian-born and 14.6% naturalized).

**1942 - January 16:** Order-in-Council P.C. 365 creates a 100-mile 'protected area' on the coast of British Columbia from which male enemy aliens are excluded.

**1942 - February 24:** Every male Japanese Canadian between the ages of 18 and 45 is ordered removed from the 100-mile-wide "protected area" of B.C.'s west coast.

**1942 - February 26:** Mass evacuation of Japanese Canadians begins; some given only 24 hours' notice. Cars, cameras and radios confiscated for "protective measures". Curfew imposed. **1942 - March 4:** Japanese Canadians are ordered to turn over property and belongings to Custodian of Enemy Alien Property as a "protective measure only".



**1942 - March 25:** The B.C. Security Commission initiates a scheme of forcing men to road camps and women and children to “ghost town” detention camps. On April 21: First arrivals at detention camp in Greenwood, B.C.



**Japanese Canadians arriving by train at internment camp**



**1942 - May 21:** First arrivals at camps at Kaslo, New Denver, Slocan, Sandon and Tashme, British Columbia.

**Japanese internment camp in British Columbia**

**1942 - June 29:** The Director of Soldier Settlement is given authority to buy or lease confiscated Japanese Canadian farms; 572 farms are turned over without consulting owners.



**1942 - November 30:** First Kaslo issue of *The New Canadian* is published. The newspaper and its staff are moved to the “ghost town” on Kootenay Lake in late October. *The New Canadian*, the primary source of information between camps and across the country, is used by government to disseminate information.

The first Canadian-born Buddhist Minister, Kenryu Takashi Tsuji (ordained on the eve of World War II), was interned in Slocan over the war. He departed post-war for the U.S., where he served as National Director (1958) and Bishop (1968) of the Buddhist Churches of America.





By the end of 1942, 12,029 were in detention camps in the interior of B.C.; 945 men were in enforced labour camps; 3,991 were placed as labourers on sugar beet farms in the Prairie provinces; 1,161 were in

voluntary self-supporting sites outside the 'protected area'; 1,359 were given special work permits; 699 were interned in prisoner-of-war camps in Ontario; 42 were repatriated to Japan; 111 were in detention in Vancouver; 105 were in hospital in Hastings Park; approximately 2,000 were living outside the 'protected area' and allowed to remain in place. They were required to register, give up prohibited items, and had their activities restricted.

**1943 - January 19:** Order-in-Council P.C. 469 allows the government to sell Japanese-Canadian property held in custody without owner consent.





**1944 - August:  
Deportation to Japan**

The Government announces a program to disperse Japanese Canadians throughout the country, to separate those who are “loyal” from those who are “disloyal,” and to “repatriate” the disloyal to Japan.

People are gradually released from camps if they agree to move east of the Rocky Mountains. They encounter severe hostility from the public. Many cities, among them the City of Toronto, are closed to persons of Japanese ancestry.

The Japanese Canadian Committee for Democracy and the Co-Operative Committee on Japanese Canadians (a white, mainly Christian group) are organized to assist in re-settlement.

**1945 - January:** Second-generation (Nisei) permitted to enlist in the Canadian Intelligence Corps after pressure from the British government. Those remaining in the camps are canvassed for “loyalty,” and told to choose between “repatriation” to Japan and immediate movement east of the Rocky Mountains. Some 10,632 people—facing uncertainty and unable to confirm new residences east of the Rockies—sign repatriation forms. Nearly half later apply to rescind their signatures.

Orders-in-Council P.C. 7335, 7356 and 7357 empower the government to assess the loyalty of Japanese Canadians, order their deportation and strip them of citizenship.

**1945 - January-May:** 150 Japanese Canadians volunteer for service with the Canadian army in the Far East.

**1945 - April 13:** Beginning of an intimidation campaign towards Japanese Canadians living in British Columbia to move to Eastern Canada or be deported to Japan.

**1945 - September 2:** Japan surrenders after atomic bombs are dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. All internment camps except New Denver (closed in 1957) are ordered closed and settlement shacks are bulldozed.

*The New Canadian* moves to Winnipeg, in line with its own editorial policy advocating Eastern relocation. Editor Tom Shoyama volunteers for the Canadian Army and Kasey Oyama takes over the editorship. The Kaslo era ends, after just two and a half years.

**1946 - January 1:** On expiry of the measures under the War Measures Act, the National Emergency Transitional Powers Act is used to keep measures against Japanese Canadians in place.

**May 31:** “Repatriation” begins; 3,964 go to Japan—many of whom are Canadian citizens.

**December:** The Privy Council upholds a Supreme Court decision that deportation orders are legal; by this time, more than 4,000 people have been deported to Japan.

**1947 - January 24:** The Federal cabinet order-in-council on deportation of Japanese Canadians is repealed after protests by churches, academics, journalists and politicians.

**April:** The Citizenship Act extends the franchise to Canadians of Chinese and South Asian origin, but excludes Japanese Canadians and Aboriginal peoples.

**July 18:** A commission is set up under Justice Henry Bird to examine losses (through sale and theft) sustained by Japanese Canadians, who receive compensation cheques in 1950 totaling \$1.2 million—a small fraction of the value of their property.

**September:** The National Japanese Canadian Citizens Association is established at a conference in Toronto.

**1948 - June 15:** Bill 198 amends the Dominion Elections Act to remove the clause denying the franchise to Japanese Canadians. *The New Canadian* moves to its final home in Toronto; Kasey Oyama is succeeded as editor by Toyo Takata.

## The Post-World War II Years

**1949 - March 31:** Restrictions imposed under the War Measures Act are lifted; Japanese Canadians gain full rights of citizenship and are free to move anywhere in Canada.

**1950 -** Order-in-Council P.C. 4364 revokes an order prohibiting immigration of “enemy aliens” and provides for some of those deported to re-immigrate to Canada. About one quarter will return.

**1952 -** The Vancouver Japanese Language School—the only building to be returned to the community following the war—re-opens on Alexander Street.

**1954 -** The Japanese Canadian Citizens Association (formed September 2, 1947) is created to work towards the improvement of the political, social, moral and economic welfare of Canadians with Japanese ancestry. Its first constitution was drawn up February 20, 1954; the society was formally incorporated on December 18, 1955.

**1958 - April:** The first issue of *The Bulletin*, a bilingual publication serving Japanese Canadians who have returned to the West Coast, is published by the Japanese Canadian Citizens Association in Vancouver.

**1964 -** The Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre opens in Toronto.

**1967-** The Canadian government announces new immigration regulations—a point system for selection. Race is no longer used as a means of exclusion.

Nikka Yuko (Japan-Canada Friendship) Garden is established in the city of Lethbridge to celebrate the Canadian Centennial.

**1969** - David Suzuki receives the Steacie Memorial Fellowship for the most promising Canadian scientist. The Japanese Canadian geneticist, who spent his early life in a World War II detention camp, was awarded his PhD in 1961 by the University of British Columbia. Despite restrictions on Japanese Canadians that prevented them from entering the professions and civil service until 1967, Suzuki has become Canada's most highly regarded scientific educator.

**David Suzuki and his sisters  
in an internment camp**



**1973 - June 19:**

Genzo Kitagawa is appointed to the Order of Canada for his leadership of Saskatchewan's Japanese Canadian community and for his many contributions to the welfare of others.

**1974 - November:** A needs study for senior citizens housing and community facilities submitted to the Greater Vancouver JCCA.

**1975 - September:** The Japanese Canadian Society of Greater Vancouver for Senior Citizens Housing is incorporated.

**1976 - July:** Sakura-So Residence (emergency aid) opens on Powell Street.

**August:** Kelowna Japanese Canadian Community Senior Citizens Association is incorporated.

**December 15:** Geneticist David Suzuki, who has succeeded in making science understandable and exciting to laypeople by means of his lectures and media programs, is appointed to the Order of Canada.

**December 15:** Masajiro Miyazaki, is appointed to the Order of Canada. The retired osteopath gave unselfish service to the residents of Lillooet, B.C. (particularly those of Japanese and First Nations backgrounds) over a period of 35 years even when his own health was failing.

Ken Adachi's *The Enemy That Never Was: A History of the Japanese Canadians*, the first book to document the Japanese Canadian experience, is published by McClelland & Stewart. The author and literary critic—interned with his family in Slocan during World War II—, was associated with the *Toronto Star* from 1976 until his death in 1989.



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