

# JAPANESE-CANADIAN INTERNMENT

## SECONDARY SOCIAL STUDIES



11255 Okanagan Centre Rd. W.  
Lake Country, BC V4V 2J7

### ACTIVITY OVERVIEW:

1. History of Japanese-Canadian internment camps in Canada during World War II
2. Students will read and analyse letters and documents from the time period to deepen their understanding of the events



**BIG IDEA:** Disparities in power alter the balance of relationships between individuals & between societies; Historical & contemporary injustices challenge the narrative/identity of Canada as an inclusive, multicultural society; The causes of social injustice are complex & have lasting impacts on society.

### COMPETENCY:

Inquiry, significance, cause & consequence, historical perspectives, ethical judgement

### CONTENT:

Discriminatory policies & injustices in Canada; social injustices in Canada and the world affecting individuals, groups, and society.

### WHAT WILL WE KNOW:

- Background of Japanese-Canadian internment camps
- How to find evidence in primary sources

### FURTHER INQUIRY:

*Field Trip Suggestions*

1. Lake Country Museum and Archives



**We respectfully acknowledge that the land on which the Lake Country Museum is situated, where this lesson was developed, is on the unceded territory of the Syilx (Okanagan) Peoples.**

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**Lake Country Heritage and Cultural Society**

**11255 Okanagan Centre Road West**

**Lake Country, BC V4V 2J7**

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## Japanese-Canadian Internment

<b>Learning Objective(s)</b>	Through a series of activities, students will learn about the internment of Japanese-Canadians during World War II, then connect how it shaped experiences within the Okanagan.
<b>Suggested Grades</b>	Secondary
<b>ACTIVITIES</b>	
<b>Materials</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• News article about Tam Nakazawa’s internment (linked below)</li> </ul>
<b>Introduction</b>	After students have received some knowledge on Japanese-Canadian internment camps, they will complete various analyses of reports and primary sources to deepen their understanding. They will begin with a news analysis that can be read independently, and then debriefed as a class, and then discussed as a class, before moving onto some primary source documents to be analysed independently.
<b>News Analysis</b>	<p>Have students read through <a href="#">the article about Tam Nakazawa’s experience</a>. Once they have finished reading, have them discuss the following questions as a class. Or, provide them the questions in advance to share with a shoulder partner, and then share as a class.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How did the wages in the labour camps compare to the daily costs of the workers?             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Pay: \$0.25/hr, meals: \$.075/day</li> </ul> </li> <li>• The Canadian government labelled Japanese-Canadians, like Tam, a security threat.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What does it mean to be a security threat?</li> <li>○ Does the experience of the Canadians Kam encountered during his internment reflect the concerns of the government?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• What were the living conditions like?             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ People were interned from 1942-1945, how do you imagine the quality of life was in the winter months?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Primary Source Analysis</b>	<p>Students will then move on to analyse primary sources independently. This can be done in various ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In stations where students read a source, answer the corresponding questions, then move on to the next</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have the sources available on Google classroom</li> <li>• Print out the sources</li> </ul> <p>Using the attached worksheet, have students answer the corresponding questions to deepen their understanding of the internment, as well as refine their primary source analysis skills.</p> <p>You may choose to debrief with the class once they have finished, going over the sources with the questions, have students share which source felt significant to them, and how they fit into the larger picture of Japanese-Canadian internment.</p> <p>Some general discussion prompts to close the lesson/activity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What was Canada’s reputation up to this point? (think to Canada’s multicultural identity) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ How does the action of interning Japanese-Canadians align with Canada’s reputation?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Was the Canadian government justified in their actions? Why or why not?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Historical Context</b></p>	<p>Japanese immigration to Canada began in 1877. Despite many Japanese-Canadians serving in World War I and earning the right to vote from it, the bombing of Pearl Harbor led to an increase in suspicion of the Japanese, new immigrants and Canadian citizens alike. In March 1942, the Canadian government established a ‘Protected Area’ along the coast of B.C., forcing over 22,000 Japanese-Canadians from their homes. Families were forced to sign their property and belongings over to the custodian for safekeeping, but later had it unknowingly sold on their behalf, often for considerably less than its actual value. People were relocated to Stanley Park in Vancouver before they would eventually be sent either to 1 of 10 internment camps across B.C., road camps, or to work on farms in the prairies. Anyone who resisted were sent to prisoner of war camps in Ontario.</p> <p>While Japanese-Canadians in the Okanagan were not removed from their homes, many were required to register with the police and prejudice against the Japanese grew across Canada. Officers would enforce a bi-weekly check-in and a nighttime curfew for Japanese-Canadians, and Japanese schools and cultural gathering were prohibited. The prejudice went as far as to the removal of Japanese-Canadians from schools, including Allan Kobayashi who was removed from the Cadet Corps at Kelowna Secondary School.</p>

	<p>Younger men who were living in the internment camps eventually had the option of applying for a labour permit, which would allow them to move out of the internment camp to go work at a road camp or on a farm in the Okanagan. Okanagan produce was in high demand for the war effort and interned Japanese-Canadians played a crucial role in harvesting food and working in the packinghouses.</p> <p>The ‘Protected Area’ along the coast remained after the end of the World War II until 1949, along with the prohibition on selling land to Japanese people. No interned Japanese-Canadian was ever found guilty of any crime. No apology was issued to Japanese-Canadians until 1988. Under Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, the Canadian government admitted to the miscarriage in justice, that the actions were motivated by racial discrimination, and implemented a \$300 million compensation package to reimburse Japanese-Canadians for their losses during the internment.</p>
<p><b>Further Inquiry</b></p>	<p><u><i>Additional Resources:</i></u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Japanese-Canadian Internment Notice Board</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Toshiko by Michael Kluckner</a> (graphic novel about the internment) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <a href="#">Teaching Guide</a></li> </ul> </li> <li>• <a href="#">Tashme Historical Project</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Japanese-Canadian Internment Video</a> Narration, Legion Magazine</li> </ul> <p><u><i>Field Trip Suggestions:</i></u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Lake Country Museum &amp; Archives</a> has many different displays that help to shape the narrative of the stories and history of the Okanagan. The museum’s website also has many great resources and more stories that can help lend to many lessons.</li> </ul>

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

### JAPANESE-CANADIAN LETTER ANALYSIS

TIPS! For each letter, look at the **date** (before, during, after the war), **who is writing the letter** (Adult? Child? Homeowner?), indications of **location**, and the **purpose** of the letter.

1. Which letter are you analyzing? (circle) A B C D
2. Who is writing the letter? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. What is the purpose of the letter? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. How does the letter inform us about this point in history?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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3. What is the purpose of the letter? \_\_\_\_\_

4. How does the letter inform us about this point in history?

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**A) Sept. 24, 1943**

*Dearest Joan,*

*Just a sheet with a few lines to say hello and how are you.*

*It's been quite a long time since I heard from you last and I hope you are all well as we are also.*

*I imagine you're going to school every day and enjoying your everyday life. That's swell!!!*

*Life is very dull out here. No school. No play.*

*Guess what??? It's beet topping season now. Think of us in the field pulling and topping beets while you're doing your geometry, social studies, et cetera. Will you Joan? And I'll think of you having a wonderful time while I work. ...*

*But I have so many things to tell you about the beets and everything out here, I don't think I could write everything I want to in the letter.*

*Well, I'm just wishing for the day you and me telling and hearing each other's stories for hours and hours of what we've missed. I only wish it would be soon, don't you think so Joan?*

*I'll write again, a longer letter, and I'll be waiting for yours every day.*

*Your friend as ever,*

*Sumi*

**B) March 5, 1949.**

*Dear Mrs. R. Carruthers,*

*I hope this letter will find you are all well. I am keeping all right, doing household matters & very small garden works although the living at present is still harder.*

*Will you kindly forgive me for my negligence to write sooner. Since I have received your kind letter dated Nov. 3, I am still reading at times.*

*I have forwarded your card to Mrs. Yoshida right away, and she delighted and appreciated so much for your thoughtfulness. You seemed you were so busy during the summer season for fixing & constructing your home. I believe it should be so nice. Also you have had busiest time for knitting & sewing.*

*If I were there I should do my best to help anything for you, but I am sorry that not only I could not do it but rather I made you trouble all time by asking many things.*

*Will you please let me know which is the baby, girl or boy? Please accept my congratulations.*

*I heartily thank you for your kindness for that you took care of my boxes.*

*Please excuse me for asking you here again, and very glad if you send me the following things if you can get in Nanaimo. (1) Rain coat (cream colour, size 14). (2) Rubber boot (size 6, it is all right even use for men). (3) Woollen yarn (1 lb, red colour).*

*I like try my best to take formal steps to return to your beloved country permanently, so please give your possible assistance in case of necessity.*

*Wishing all of you are in best health & happiness.*

*Most sincerely yours,*

*Taka Koyama*

C) 562 Dougall Ave.,  
Windsor, Ont.,  
March 27th 1944.

Col. Pope,  
c/o Mr. George Alexander,  
3436 Whittier Ave.,  
Victoria, B. C.

Dear Sir:

*I have received word from Mr. Alexander stating that our belongings are to be taken away from our home and are to be later sold at auction.*

*Surely there must be a terrible mistake somewhere! I can't even imagine any possible reason for our property being confiscated.*

*It would be different if my father happened to be a Japanese National (an enemy alien) but, if you will take the trouble to look up the records, you will find that he is a naturalized Canadian citizen – having taken his papers out in or around 1913. Doesn't his naturalization papers mean anything?*

*You will find that the citizenship status of the whole family is good too. Neither my father nor mother has ever sent money out of this country. Plenty of good people will vouch for us as for character references.*

*Aged as they are (my father is 64 this year and my mother is 62 years old) – sooner than go to one of the so-called “ghost towns” to “live on the Government” – they volunteered, with the four girls and son-in-law, to go to Alberta to try to make a go of it on a sugar beet farm for the duration. And that wasn't an easy decision for them to make either. But then, they figured they would be co-operating with the authorities if they did – please don't say that they were too much so.*

*We had every faith that it was for our protection when we handed everything to the Custodian for safe keeping. Otherwise we would have sold some of the things on our own as many were doing.*

*I haven't had the heart to tell the folks about this latest development. Rather than send in for a lot of the things they need for everyday use they've either bought a few new articles or done without, because they were all looking forward to going back home as soon as the war*

*is over. Surely they aren't to be deprived of spending the last few years of their lives living in their own home!*

*Please drop me a line as soon as possible as I'm in a quandary as to what to tell the folks.*

*Thanking you in advance.*

*Yours truly,*

*Macer Okamoto*

*P. S. I'm sending this c/o Mr. Alexander because I've misplaced the address of the Custodian's office in Victoria and have no time to look for it now.*

**D)**

*For Mr. Shears*

*62 Hastings Avenue,  
Toronto, Ontario,  
Sept. 17th, 1947*

*Department of the Secretary of State  
Office of the Custodian  
506 Royal Bank Building  
Hastings and Granville  
Vancouver, B.C.*

*Dear Sirs:-*

*This is to acknowledge receipt of your registered letter of July 25th, in which you enclosed a cheque amounting to \$3,871.56, the said amount constituting the net proceeds of sale of my property at 402 Robson Street, Vancouver, B.C.*

*Please acknowledge receipt of the said cheque which I am returning to you enclosed herewith, as I cannot accept it as the full receipt of the sale of property which was sold without my consent, for \$4020.00, which is below my valuation.*

*My estimation is \$10,000. This is a rather conservative figure considering the position of the property in the downtown section of a growing, ever-expanding city.*

*I have never given my consent to the sale of my property. I still retain the title to it. I am a naturalized citizen of Canada and my son Sadao is an honorably discharged serviceman from the Canadian Army. It has always been my wish and intention that my son take over my property for his own use. After forty years of hardship that property is my only visible asset.*

*My lawyer will contact you later regarding the sale of my property since I find your handling of the affair very unsatisfactory.*

*Yours truly,*

*Yoshi Nikaido*