

**Pearl Harbour and Japanese Canadians**

**Comment [DW1]:** Title page should include course name

by  
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Date

After the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbour in December 1941, the Canadian government rounded up and interned all its citizens who were of Japanese origin. One reason for this was the fear that they would aid Japan against their country. Thousands of Canadian citizens had their citizenship revoked and were deported to war-torn Japan after the war. The fallout of the racism and fear towards the Japanese Canadians was inexcusable, and the government actions were all unjustifiable.

There were several reasons that the Japanese were interned. Canadians were full of speculation about sabotage and espionage by the Japanese Canadians. The sensationalist press fanned the fires of the fear of a Japanese invasion aided by the Japanese Canadians.<sup>1</sup> White Canadians wanted to feel safe, with no “threats” to Canada living in their midst. Thus the government stated a “military necessity” for incarcerating them, although senior officers in the military and RCMP assured them that was far from the truth.<sup>2</sup> Canadians were racist, even in the government. Canadian diplomat Escott Reid noted that they spoke about the Japanese Canadians “in the way that the Nazis would have spoken about Jewish Germans. When they spoke I felt in that room the physical presence of evil.”<sup>3</sup> Minister Ian Mackenzie spread lies about the Japanese Canadians, calling them “enemy aliens” and legalising the actions taken against them.<sup>4</sup> As the fear and racism grew, so did the policies and restrictions placed on them. They needed “registration cards” to work.<sup>5</sup> Their jobs and fishing boats were taken away from them, thus eliminating their sources of income.<sup>6</sup> In 1942, a 160-km inland barrier was created, in which no Japanese Canadian was allowed.<sup>7</sup> Although the reasons for restricting the Japanese Canadians were many and seemingly rational, they were all built on racist foundations.

The next step was to intern the Japanese Canadians. On March 6, 1942, the internees first went to

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**Comment [DW3]:** Correct use of citation. All quotes should be cited. Great use of a primary source.

**Comment [DW4]:** It is good to present both sides of the argument – both the reasons for restricting Japanese Canadians and the faults with it.

Hastings Park – Vancouver's Pacific National Exhibition Grounds – and were housed in the livestock barns until they were carted off in special trains to the hastily built camps, some of which were ghost towns.<sup>8</sup> There were eight internment camps in BC's interior.<sup>9</sup> Single men worked in logging operations, while men from ages 14-45 were separated from their families and taken away to work in road camps.<sup>10</sup> Later, they were given the choice of working in road camps apart from their families, who were in internment camps, or moving east to work on sugar beet farms. Most families chose to work on the farms, filling in for a shortage of hired hands.<sup>11</sup> In the prairie provinces, racism was no less than in BC. The employers often cheated the workers of their wages and ill-treated them.<sup>12</sup> The internment camps were like refugee camps.<sup>13</sup> Many camps did not have enough houses to hold all the arrivals, who then had to live in tents until appropriate housing was available. This was not much of an improvement. The cramped, multifamily houses, containing only one stove, were made of panel boards, with no insulation and rickety walls.<sup>14</sup> There was no electricity or running water.<sup>15</sup> The harsh winters caused many internees to place their lanterns under their beds for heat.<sup>16</sup> Unlike POWs, the internees had to pay for their stay in the camps.<sup>17</sup>

Adding insult to injury, the government sold all the Japanese Canadians' possessions and deported thousands “back” to Japan. The government had promised them that all their belongings would be restored to them after they were released.<sup>18</sup> But in 1943, everything that had provided them financial security was sold at auctions for way less than their fair market value.<sup>19</sup> All the money went to cover the costs of the auctions.<sup>20</sup> When they protested, King replied that the “government is of the opinion that the sales were made at a fair price.”<sup>21</sup> After he was reelected, he declared that the Japanese Canadians had to either move east of the Rockies, or sign that they would leave for Japan after the war was over.<sup>22</sup> In 1946, a ship carrying 3,964 Japanese Canadians set out on an all-expense-paid voyage to Japan.<sup>23</sup>

If anyone resisted internment, they were taken by the RCMP to a POW camp in Angler, ON.<sup>24</sup> Most Japanese Canadians did not – their culture emphasised duty and obligations as part of forbearance.<sup>25</sup> In 1988, the Japanese Canadians' efforts at gaining redress paid off when the Canadian government finally issued a long-overdue apology and financial compensation to the surviving Japanese Canadians affected by the internment.<sup>26</sup> Canadians' reactions towards the Japanese Canadians because of the bombing of Pearl Harbour were unjustifiable, and the government's actions were inexcusable.

### References

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"Japanese Internment: Banished and Beyond Tears." *The Canadian Encyclopedia*. The Canadian Encyclopedia, 2012. Web. 14 January 2013. <<http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/featured/japanese-internment-banished-and-beyond-tears>>

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Yukon Education Student Network. "Japanese Internment Camps." *Yukon Education Student Network*. Yukon Education Student Network, 2013. <<http://www.yesnet.yk.ca/schools/projects/canadianhistory/camps/internment1.html>>

**Comment [DW5]:** You can use the title "References" or "Bibliography" or "Works Cited" depending on format or professor preference. See: <http://homeworktips.about.com/b/2009/01/28/bibliography-reference-list-or-works-cited.htm>

**Comment [DW6]:** These references are listed in the correct MLA format. Well done.

You have a selection of both print & internet resources which is very good.

Only one Wikipedia article is referenced which is good. The other sources appear to be credible sources. It would be even stronger to have one primary source referenced.

**Comment [DW7]:** For Sample MLA pages go to <http://homeworktips.about.com/od/mlastyle/jg/Sample-MLA-Pages/>

- 1 Wikipedia, "Japanese Canadian Internment."
- 2 JapaneseCanadianHistory.net, "The War Years."
- 3 The Canadian Encyclopedia, "Banished and Beyond Tears."
- 4 Wikipedia, op. cit.
- 5 Abbott, *Chronicle of Canada*, 688.
- 6 JapaneseCanadianHistory.net, op. cit.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 The Canadian Encyclopedia, op. cit.

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- 9 Yukon Education Student Network, “Japanese Internment Camps.”
  - 10 Wikipedia, op. cit.
  - 11 JapaneseCanadianHistory.net, op. cit.
  - 12 The Canadian Encyclopedia, op. cit.
  - 13 Ferguson, *Canadian History for Dummies*, 332.
  - 14 Yukon, op. cit.
  - 15 The Canadian Encyclopedia, op. cit.
  - 16 Yukon, op. cit.
  - 17 JapaneseCanadianHistory.net, op. cit.
  - 18 Ibid.
  - 19 Wikipedia, op. cit.
  - 20 Yukon, op. cit.
  - 21 Wikipedia, op. cit.
  - 22 Ferguson, op. cit., 332-3
  - 23 The government gave free passage to Japan for all those willing to go. Wikipedia, op. cit.
  - 24 JapaneseCanadianHistory.net, op. cit.
  - 25 The Canadian Encyclopedia, op. cit.
  - 26 JapaneseCanadianHistory.net, op. cit.