過去の世代

A Century of Community

Lake Country Museum and Archives
11255 Okanagan Centre Road West
Lake Country, BC V4V 2J7

過去の世代

kakonosedai, generations past

A Century of Community

A Century of Community commemorates the 25th Anniversary of the Japanese Canadian Redress Agreement and was made possible through the generous funding of The Leon and Thea Koerner Foundation.

Prior to WWII, 22,000 Japanese Canadians lived in British Columbia; three quarters of them were naturalized citizens or second or third generation Canadians. During the war, more than 21,000 of them living within 100 miles of the British Columbia coast were forcibly removed from their homes and sent to internment camps. After the war, 3,964 were deported to Japan. One third of them were Canadian citizens.

On September 22, 1988, the Japanese Canadian Redress Agreement was signed in the House of Commons. Prime Minister Brian Mulroney acknowledged the government's wrongful actions during WWII and pledged to ensure that the events would never recur. He officially recognized the loyalty of the Japanese Canadians to Canada and, as a symbolic redress for injustices, the government offered individual and community compensation to the Japanese Canadians. In 1997, on behalf of Japanese Canadians, the Canadian government created the Canadian Race Relations Foundation, a national organization designed to foster racial harmony and help to eliminate racism.

This book is dedicated to the Japanese Canadian pioneers of Lake Country and their descendants. The complete book is available for purchase at the Lake Country Museum and Archives. The history may also be viewed online at the Virtual Museum of Canada at: ***www.museevirtuel-virtualmuseum.ca***

Shannon Jorgenson
Lake Country Museum and Archives

The Leon and Thea Koerner Foundation
established in 1955

LAKE COUNTRY
Life. The Okanagan Way.

Lake Country Museum and Archives

VMC virtualmuseum.ca

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A CENTURY OF COMMUNITY

This is a story about courage in the lives of the Japanese Canadian pioneers who were some of the first settlers in the District of Lake Country, British Columbia (BC). The following history portrays their arrival, experiences, hardships and, above all, the quiet dignity and perseverance with which they met the challenges of a new land. Their stories are told by their children and grandchildren, and supplemented by the collections of the Lake Country Museum and Archives.

The Japanese Canadian community in Lake Country was established in the early 1900s, as workers came to the Okanagan to plant new orchards. These pioneers arriving in the Okanagan, often from other areas of British Columbia, were young single men intending to work in Canada for a few years and then return to Japan. They brought with them many skills and a strong work ethic, and they contributed a great deal to the success of the early orchards. Their experiences in the Okanagan along with the beauty of the Lake Country region convinced many to stay and to build a life here.

Sakuji and Sachiyo (Kobayashi) Koyama collection

The Japanese Canadian community of Lake Country, BC, 1940

Once established, many of these young men returned to Japan to marry and to bring their new wives back to the Okanagan. The story of these early settlers, and their courage in meeting the daily challenges of life in a new land is an important part of our history.

The District of Lake Country is located in the Okanagan Valley, extending between Vernon and Kelowna, with an area of 122 square kilometres and a population of approximately 12,000. The District of Lake Country is made up of four community wards: Oyama, Winfield, Carr's Landing, and Okanagan Centre, and was incorporated as a municipality in 1995. Inhabited by the Syilx people for thousands of years, settlers from other parts of the world began to arrive in the late 1800s, with a large influx in the early 1900s with the development of the orcharding industry. The District has a significant Japanese Canadian population of long-time residents, whose parents or grandparents arrived in the period 1907 to 1930.

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European and Japanese Canadian crews at the Rainbow Ranche, circa 1915

THE JAPANESE BACKGROUND: EARLY IMMIGRATION TO BRITISH COLUMBIA

Michael Jervis and Zach Kornell

At the turn of the twentieth century, a large number of new immigrants arrived in Canada. In 1907 alone, Canada welcomed 272,000 new settlers, 11,529 of them from Japan. While most of the Japanese newcomers moved to coastal areas or joined the established community in Vancouver, a few moved to the southern interior of British Columbia and began their new life, working at the Coldstream Ranch and eventually moving to the District of Lake Country. Many of these early pioneers stayed, building a life in the community. Others returned to Japan.

Japanese immigration to Canada is a twentieth century phenomenon due to Japan`s previous relations with the outside world. In the early 1600s under the Tokugawa Shogunate, Japan had become a united country after years of internal division. In order to avert any foreign influence that could threaten its rule, the Tokugawa regime established a policy of seclusion that was strictly enforced. With few exceptions, Japanese citizens were not allowed to have any contact with the outside world; violating this was punishable by death. This isolationist policy ended with the arrival of US Naval Commander Matthew Perry and his black ships in 1853. Perry was fully prepared to use force to open Japan's borders to trade with the outside world. Seeing no other option, Japan reluctantly signed the Treaty of Kanagawa in 1854. After two and a half centuries of isolation, Japan opened its borders to the world. With this, the nation went through a tumultuous period of internal division. This came to an end in 1867 when Emperor Meiji came to power and Japan proceeded on a path of rapid modernization.[1]

The Meiji Restoration brought about many changes, but a restrictive emigration policy remained in place. Initially, the new government issued passports only to businessmen and students to travel abroad in order to acquire knowledge of the western world. However, Japan was struggling with the combined effects of a growing population and low standard of living; people

were already emigrating. In 1884, Japan signed a convention with Hawaiian sugar plantation owners allowing 28,000 Japanese workers to work on the islands under contract. Eventually emigration was extended to other classes as well. As the laws were relaxed, emigration increased. The vast majority of those first emigrants were men, recruited by emigration companies that advertised job opportunities abroad. Between 1885 and 1907, over a half million Japanese migrated to places such as Russia, United States, China, South America, Australia and Canada.

The first Japanese person to settle in British Columbia, a man named Manzo Nagano, arrived in 1877. However, Japanese emigration to BC did not begin in earnest until the 1890s. By 1896, approximately one thousand Japanese resided in BC. Four years later, this number had grown to forty-five hundred, a population constituting ninety percent of all Japanese living in Canada. This was just the start. Between 1897 and 1901, fif-

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teen thousand Japanese came to Canada, although a substantial number of these continued on to the United States. Between 1906 and 1907, a second wave of ten thousand Japanese arrived in Canada and settled in BC. These first generation Japanese immigrants, or *Issei*, initially came as sojourners, or *dekaseginin*, living frugally, saving as much as they could and planning to return home. The majority of these first Japanese immigrants came from the lower classes of the prefectures of Wakayama, Hiroshima, Shiga, Kagoshima, and Nagano from the southern part of Japan.[2]

The Japanese arrived in BC during a time of rapid economic growth and an expanding population. British Columbia's economy during the late nineteenth century was anchored by resource extraction industries, industries that required cheap man-

ual labour. The people who came to fill these jobs were primarily itinerant adult males. As part of this labour force, the Japanese Canadians proved themselves to be hard working, resilient employees, although they had many challenges to face. Settling in a strange country with an unfamiliar culture and a foreign language was difficult enough, but the biggest obstacle of all was discrimination. In a province where race intersected with class more predominantly than the rest of Canada, the Japanese Canadians, together with East Indians and the Chinese, were labelled as the 'oriental menace' or 'yellow peril', terms conjured up by people who feared the province would be overrun by immigrants from Asia. Part of this fear was based on the belief that the newcomers were incapable of assimilation into Canadian society. Through the early part of the twentieth century, the Japanese Canadians were subjected to many forms of discrimination, both cultural and legal. In both the mining and lumber industries, Japanese Canadians were paid on average approximately half that of 'white' workers for the same job. As such, they were viewed as a source of cheap labour by employers and as a threat by other 'domestic' workers. The result of this discrimination was to force the Japanese into low-paying, labour-based industries. The Japanese Canadians were largely concentrated in fishing, lumbering, agriculture and, for a period, railroading.[3]

Legal attempts by the BC government to restrict employment and limit immigration from Japan were hampered by international affairs. Britain and Japan had signed the Treaty of Commerce and Navigation in 1894, a precursor to the Anglo-Japanese Alliance formed in 1902, which was renewed in 1905 and 1911. Britain refused to allow any colonial legislation that would harm its relationship with Japan. Legislation purposely devised to discriminate against the Japanese Canadians (i.e. the Alien Labour Act, which barred Japanese or Chinese from working in public employment, and the Natal Act which required a language test for people entering the province) was routinely struck down by Ottawa.[4]

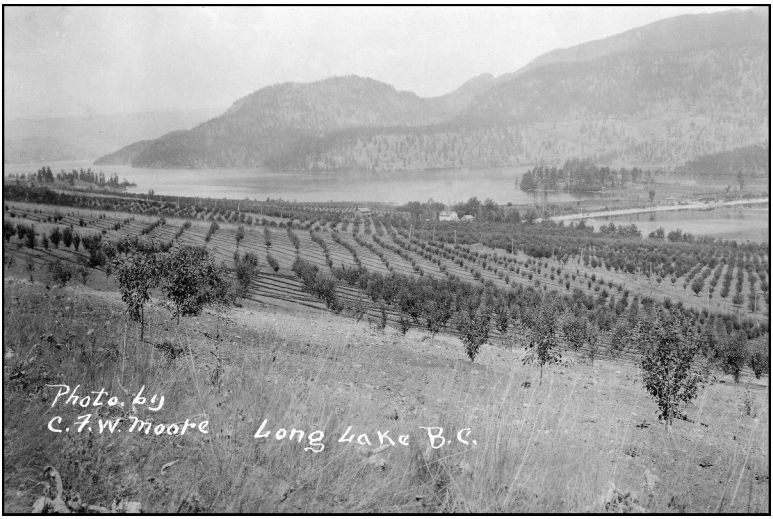
Anti-Japanese legislation was routinely revoked in part due to the efforts of the Japanese consuls. The first Japanese Consulate was established in Vancouver in 1889. The consuls acted as representatives for the Japanese in Canada and worked diligently to protect the interests of Japanese Canadian immigrants. They were the official representatives of the Emperor and were held in very high esteem within the community. When anti-Japanese legislation was brought to their attention they were quick to protest to Ottawa or to the British Foreign Office. Part of the consul's effort was focused on changing Canadian attitudes towards the Japanese Canadians by portraying them in a positive light.

Regardless of these checks, discriminatory acts against the Japanese Canadians in BC occurred and Japan chose to restrict emigration to BC in 1902. In 1904, Japan declared war on Russia and to the amazement of many, defeated Britain's age-old foe. Residents in the fledgling community at the north end of Wood Lake, in a gesture of imperial solidarity, named their post office Oyama, after Field Marshall Iwao Oyama, who had led Japanese forces in successive victories over Britain`s Russian foe. While many in Canada rejoiced over Japan's victory, others were suspicious of Japan as an emerging expansionist power. When Japan relaxed emigration restrictions after the Russo-Japanese War, Japanese immigration to BC sharply increased, reaching a peak of 8,000 in 1907. This ignited tensions once again, culminating in the 1907 Vancouver Riot when a mob of a thousand people went on the rampage, attacking Chinese and Japanese neighbourhoods. This dark moment in BC history led to the Gentlemen's Agreement between Canada and Japan in 1908, whereby Japan again agreed to voluntarily limit Japanese immigration to Canada.[5]

The purpose of the Gentlemen's Agreement was to limit the Japanese population in BC yet, in an ironic twist, the agreement created circumstances by which the Japanese Canadian community was able to expand. The agreement placed a limit on the number of Japanese men who could enter Canada each year but

placed no restrictions on the number of 'wives' who could immigrate. Marriages were sometimes arranged between women in Japan and men in Canada through the exchange of photographs. If both approved, the wedding took place in Japan by proxy. By this method, over 6,000 'picture brides' arrived in Canada by 1924. By the mid-1920s, the Japanese Canadians were having children, or *Nissei,* at twice the provincial rate.[6]

Over the years, more Japanese Canadians came to the valley to work at the Coldstream and other fruit farming ventures. By 1910, some of these workers moved to the Winfield area where they worked at fruit growing operations owned by the Okanagan Valley Land Company and the Rainbow Ranche, owned and managed by James Goldie. Many Japanese Canadians lived and worked on these fruit farms for years. Others were able to purchase land and develop their own acreages. The first decade of the twentieth century is when the story of the Japanese Canadian pioneers of Lake Country begins.



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Early orchards in Lake Country, circa 1910

The complete book tells the history of the Japanese Canadian pioneer families; their arrival, experiences, hardships and, above all, the quiet dignity and perseverance with which they met the challenges of a new land.

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