

Life in Internment Camps in Canada (VI)

Name: _____

When the Second World War began in 1939, Canada joined the fight alongside Britain. People across the country worked hard to support the war: they planted gardens, collected scrap metal, and sent soldiers overseas. But not everyone was treated fairly. During this time, the Canadian government created **internment camps**. These were special places where people were forced to live, even though they had not committed a crime.

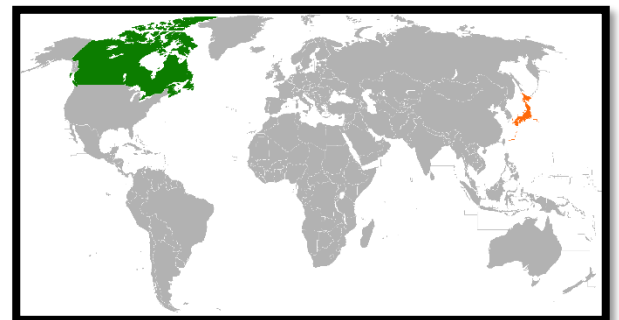
The main group affected were **Japanese Canadians**. When Japan attacked Pearl Harbor (in the United States) in 1941, Canada saw people of Japanese background as a possible threat, even though most of them were loyal citizens. The government forced over 22,000 Japanese Canadians to leave their homes on the West Coast. Families were separated, businesses were taken away, and people were sent to live in camps far from the ocean.



The camps were in remote areas like the interior of British Columbia. Families often had to share tiny shacks with no running water or electricity. Winters were very cold, and summers were hot. Children sometimes had to walk long distances to get to school, and the education was minimal. Adults were often sent to work on farms, in lumber camps, or building roads. Life was hard, and many people felt scared and unwanted. The food quality was terrible, and the medical services were limited. The Canadian government also created camps for other groups. People of German and Italian background were sometimes forced into camps, as were those who were thought to disagree with the war.

When the war ended in 1945, things did not immediately get better. Japanese Canadians were not allowed to return to the coast right away. Many had lost their homes, farms, and businesses forever, as the government simply took them away. Some families were even forced to move to Japan, a country that many of them had never seen before.

Today, people look back at this history and see it as unfair and unjust. The government made decisions based on fear, not on proof that Japanese Canadians had done anything wrong. Decades later, the Canadian government apologized for what happened and gave money to families who had suffered.



Learning about internment camps helps us understand that even in Canada, which many think of as a free and fair country, people's rights were not always protected. It reminds us to be careful about how fear can lead to unfair treatment of innocent people.

Comprehension questions:

Why do you think the government was afraid of Japanese Canadians, even though most were loyal citizens?

Why do you think the government made people live in camps far away from the ocean?

Do you think the government believed it was protecting Canada, or was it being unfair? Explain.

Life in Internment Camps in Canada (V2)

Name: _____

During the Second World War, Canada fought against Germany, Italy, and Japan. At home, many Canadians grew gardens to help grow more food, rationed food, and worked in factories. But while many came together, some groups faced harsh discrimination. One of the most striking examples was the creation of **internment camps**.

Internment camps were government-run facilities where people were forced to live under guard, even though they had not committed crimes. The largest group affected were **Japanese Canadians**. When Japan attacked Pearl Harbor (in the United States) in 1941, fear spread across North America. The Canadian government worried that Japanese Canadians might secretly support Japan. As a result, more than 22,000 Japanese Canadians were ordered to leave their homes along the West Coast.

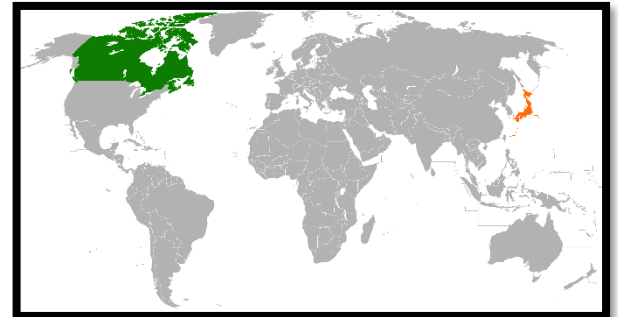
Families were uprooted and forced inland to small towns and camps. Men, women, and children were separated. Their homes, fishing boats, and businesses were sold by the government without permission. Most never got them back.

Life in the camps was difficult. People lived in shacks with thin walls, no insulation, and no running water. Winters were freezing, and summers were uncomfortable. Adults were required to work on farms, in lumber camps, or building roads for very low wages. Children had to attend poorly funded schools or sometimes go without school altogether. Food quality was terrible, and the medical services were limited.



The Canadian government also interned other groups. People from German and Italian communities, and even some who simply spoke out against the war, were confined to camps.

After the war ended in 1945, Japanese Canadians were not allowed to return to the coast for several years. Many families had lost everything. Some were even forced to leave Canada for Japan, despite having lived in Canada their whole lives.



Decades later, the Canadian government admitted that internment was unjust. In 1988, the Prime Minister formally apologized and offered financial compensation to survivors and their families. This apology recognized the suffering caused and admitted that the internment was based on fear and prejudice, not on real evidence of wrongdoing.

Studying this history shows how quickly rights can be taken away when fear takes over. It challenges us to think about how we treat minorities during times of crisis, and how important it is to protect fairness and justice for all.

Comprehension questions:

Why do you think the Canadian government chose to sell people's homes and businesses instead of keeping them safe until after the war?

Why do you think many Canadians at the time accepted or supported internment?

How do you think the experience of internment might still affect later generations of Japanese Canadians?

Life in Internment Camps in Canada (V3)

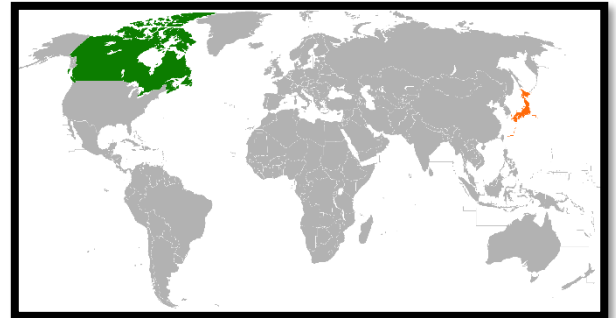
Name: _____

The outbreak of the Second World War in 1939 brought enormous changes to Canada. While thousands of Canadians served overseas, those at home contributed to the war effort by rationing, working in factories, and supporting soldiers. Yet beneath the spirit of unity, Canada also carried out policies that deeply harmed certain communities. One of the darkest chapters was the internment of civilians, especially Japanese Canadians.

Internment camps were facilities where individuals were confined, often far from their homes, despite having committed no crimes. The largest group affected were Japanese Canadians. After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941, fear and prejudice swept across North America. Although the majority of Japanese Canadians had lived peacefully in Canada for decades, the government portrayed them as potential threats.



Over 22,000 Japanese Canadians were forcibly removed from the Pacific Coast. Families were separated, and their property – fishing boats, homes, businesses – was confiscated and sold by the government. They were transported inland to remote camps in British Columbia and other provinces.



Conditions were harsh. Families lived in shacks with little insulation, often without plumbing or electricity. Winters were brutally cold, and food was limited. The food quality was terrible, and the medical support was severely lacking. Adults were made to work for low wages on farms, in lumber camps, or on road-building crews. Children's schooling was disrupted, with limited access to proper education. Many grew up feeling like outsiders in their own country.

Internment extended beyond the Japanese Canadian community. Germans, Italians, and political activists who opposed the war were also placed in camps, though in smaller numbers. In each case, civil liberties were suspended: people were punished not for crimes they had committed, but for who they were or what others feared they might do.

Even after the war ended in 1945, Japanese Canadians were not allowed to return to the West Coast for several years. Many never regained their homes or businesses. Some were deported to Japan, a country unfamiliar to many Canadian-born citizens.

The injustice was finally recognized decades later. In 1988, Prime Minister Brian Mulroney formally apologized on behalf of the Canadian government. Survivors received financial compensation, but the deeper damage – loss of trust, culture, and opportunity – could never be fully repaired.

The internment of Japanese Canadians during WWII raises important questions about democracy and human rights. It shows how quickly fear and prejudice can strip away freedoms. Studying this history reminds us that even in a democratic society, civil liberties are not guaranteed unless people actively defend them.

Comprehension questions:

Why do you think so many Canadians went along with the government's decision to intern Japanese Canadians instead of protesting it?

What reasons do you think the government had for selling property rather than protecting it until the war was over?

In what ways might the internment of Japanese Canadians during WWII continue to impact their children and grandchildren today?
