

A Tale of Two Cities: The Reception of Japanese Evacuees in Kelowna and Kaslo, B.C.*

PATRICIA E. ROY

This is a tale of two British Columbia interior cities which, despite similarities in their backgrounds, had very different reactions to the arrival of Japanese evacuees in 1942.¹ Both Kelowna and Kaslo were service centres for the surrounding countryside. In both cities the population was overwhelmingly British in origin; in both, about a third of the people adhered to the United Church of Canada and about a quarter to the Church of England. Except for the Roman Catholics, who formed about 20 per cent of Kelowna's population, no other denomination claimed more than 10 per cent of the population (table 1). As the crow flies, only about 125 miles separate the cities, but the Selkirk and Monashee mountains are so formidable that no direct road or rail line links them. Indeed, more than mountains separated Kelowna and Kaslo. Kelowna and Kaslo were not the only British Columbia communities to receive Japanese evacuees, but their very different responses illustrate two extremes.

Kelowna, which had a population of 5,118 in 1941, is situated in the

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¹ This paper, which deals primarily with the white communities of Kelowna and Kaslo, follows contemporary usage in its terminology. Although many people of Japanese racial origin in Canada at the time of World War II were Canadian citizens, few white Canadians made any distinction among Japanese nationals, naturalized Canadians of Japanese birth, and the *Nisei*, the second generation, who were Canadian citizens by birth.

In recent years the term "evacuee" has come into question and some scholars now prefer such terms as "the uprooted." "Evacuee," however, was generally used at the time and unconsciously reflected the fact that a major reason for the federal government's decision to remove all people of Japanese racial origin from the coast was to protect them from attacks by unruly whites.

There is an extensive body of literature on the Japanese in Canada and especially during World War II. The best general survey is Ken Adachi, *The Enemy That Never Was* (Toronto, 1976). Specifically on the Japanese in Canada during World War II, see Ann Gomer Sunahara, *The Politics of Racism* (Toronto, 1981) and Patricia E. Roy, J. L. Granatstein, Masako Iino, and Hiroko Takamura, *Mutual Hostages* (Toronto, 1990).

TABLE 1
Ethnic Origins, 1941

<i>Ethnic Origin</i>	<i>Kaslo</i>		<i>Kelowna</i>	
	<i>Number</i>	<i>Per cent</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Per cent</i>
British	344	73.5	3561	69.6
French	7	1.5	179	3.5
German	26	5.6	383	7.5
Other Eur.	67	14.3	885	17.3
Chinese	22	4.7	71	1.4
Japanese	1	—	25	.5
Other	—	—	1	—

Religious Affiliations, 1941

<i>Denomination</i>	<i>Kaslo</i>		<i>Kelowna</i>	
	<i>Number</i>	<i>Per cent</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Per cent</i>
Baptist	9	2.0	331	6.5
C. of England	125	26.7	1468	28.7
Lutheran	24	5.1	105	2.1
Mennonite	—	—	2	—
Presbyterian	43	9.2	137	2.8
Roman Catholic	37	7.9	980	19.1
United Church	172	36.8	1662	32.5
Other or N/A	58	12.4	433	8.5
Total	468		5118	

SOURCE: Canada, *Census*, 1941.

centre of the Okanagan Valley. Although the Depression of the 1930s had checked growth, the population had doubled since 1921. Its economy depended on surrounding fruit orchards and vegetable farms, but it also had a summer tourist trade as visitors from the coast and the prairies came to enjoy its warm sandy beaches, and its agreeable climate attracted some retirees. The city supported two weekly newspapers: the prize-winning *Kelowna Courier* and a mimeographed flier, the *Kelowna Capital News*, which filled the space between advertisements with local news and occasional editorial comment.

Kaslo, on the shores of Kootenay Lake, in 1941 had a population of 468 — almost exactly half the population it had twenty years earlier. Local orchards produced cherries of unusually fine quality, but the volume was small. Indeed, Kaslo had been steadily declining since its heyday at the turn of the century, when it was in the heart of the rich Kootenay silver and lead mining district. A few small mines still operated, and there were occasional rumours of others reopening, but the economy was stagnant. The city survived as a service centre for the local region; it had a small hospital, a small high school, and a weekly newspaper, the *Kootenaiian*, which consisted mainly of “boiler plate” serial stories, national advertisements, and assorted trivia, as well as copious details on the activities of a surprising variety of local clubs and organizations.

I

For residents of Kaslo, Japan was very far away; for residents of Kelowna, the Japanese were very much at hand. Although only twenty-five Japanese resided within the city limits of Kelowna in 1941, the approximately 500 who lived in the vicinity formed the largest inland concentration of Japanese in Canada. Japanese had been in the area as construction and farm labourers since about 1907. Gradually, some evolved sharecropping arrangements with white landowners to grow crops such as tomatoes. A few bought their own land, but this was difficult because some landowners, especially local governments, refused to sell to Asians. Indeed, area residents, who had heard the propaganda surrounding the passage of California's Alien Land Laws, had long feared that, if unchecked, Japanese might eventually take over the Okanagan Valley.²

The Japanese settlers came into the city chiefly to worship at the Buddhist or United Church missions which competed for their religious loyalties or to obtain goods and services, including traditional Japanese groceries. Contact between the Japanese and white communities was pretty well limited to membership in vegetable marketing boards, attendance at local schools, and participation in special celebrations such as the Coronation of George VI in 1937, when Japanese contributed a lantern procession to the parade and dancers to the programme. Rev. Y. Yoshioka, the pastor of the United Church mission, preached at least once in a special series of

² For a brief account of this see Patricia E. Roy, “The Oriental ‘Menace’ in British Columbia,” in S. M. Trofimenkoff, ed., *The Twenties in Western Canada* (Ottawa, 1972), 243-58.

sermons organized by the city's United Church. Such contacts, however, fell far short of full integration into the community. So rarely did the Japanese receive any credit for good citizenship that the press was stunned in 1938 when Captain C. R. Bull, the Liberal MLA for South Okanagan, attacked his fellow politicians for trying to cut off all Japanese immigration and praised "the Japanese in my part of the country [who] show splendid co-operation and . . . stick to the rules and regulations."³ Yet the Japanese were not full-fledged members of the community. Like other Asians, even those who were Canadians by birth or naturalization, they were denied the franchise and related civil rights in British Columbia. In fact, whereas only 25 per cent of all the Japanese in British Columbia in 1941 were still Japanese nationals, of the 332 Japanese in the Kelowna district, 176 or 53 per cent remained Japanese nationals.⁴ The Kelowna Japanese were sensitive about their status. In August 1941, for example, the Buddhist church specifically sought city council's permission to continue raising funds for church activities by showing movies in the Buddhist Hall.⁵

Within days of the attack on Pearl Harbor, a delegation of Japanese headed by Rev. Y. Yoshioka presented Kelowna city council with a resolution signed by the heads of 130 families affirming their loyalty to Canada. In receiving this document, the acting mayor agreed that the Japanese had always been law-abiding, sympathized with their difficult position, and expressed confidence that they would receive the benefits of British justice.⁶ Similarly, both the *Courier* and the *Capital News* reminded readers that the Japanese had been hard-working and law-abiding and predicted the war would enable them to prove their loyalty to Canada.⁷ Unfortunately, on 9 December, Masakuo Fuchioka, a resident of nearby Winfield, while gesturing with his hand to imply all of Canada, had publicly said "pretty soon this will be all Japan." The authorities promptly charged him under the Defence of Canada Regulations with uttering statements likely to be prejudicial to His Majesty. He was found guilty and sentenced to two months in jail and a \$100 fine.⁸ The specific incident was soon forgotten,

³ *Vancouver Province*, 4 November 1938; *Vancouver News-Herald*, 4 and 5 November 1938; *Courier*, 17 November 1938.

⁴ *Courier*, 11 December 1941. (Many Japanese, of course, had sought naturalization in order to qualify for fishing licenses.)

⁵ *Kelowna Capital News*, 13 August 1941.

⁶ *Courier*, 18 December 1941.

⁷ *Courier*, 11 December 1941; *Capital News*, 7 January 1942.

⁸ *Vernon News*, 25 December 1941.

but any good will that Kelowna residents may have had towards their Japanese neighbours was rapidly disappearing as anti-Japanese fears and propaganda from the coast spread inland.

Early in January 1942, as officials in Ottawa discussed removing the Japanese from the coast, an informal group of Okanagan Valley fruit and vegetable growers informed the federal government that they would be happy to have about 1,200 Japanese brought into the Valley to work under government supervision for the duration of the war. While farmers, who had been suffering from a labour shortage since the outbreak of the European war two years earlier, needed help, city residents did not want any more Japanese. An influx of even 400 Japanese, the *Courier* claimed, would mean that 11 per cent of the district's population would be Japanese. As soon as it heard of the growers' proposal, the Kelowna Board of Trade invited representatives of service clubs and the Canadian Legion to discuss their fears that once in the Okanagan Valley, the Japanese would remain. After a four-hour meeting, the board of trade asked the provincial government to prevent Japanese from buying or renting any more land or from entering share-cropping arrangements. More importantly, it also suggested to Ottawa that if the Japanese were removed from the coast they should be put in concentration camps to work on road construction and be let out only under "strict police supervision" to do seasonal work on orchards and farms. Harsh as this would be for the Japanese, it was a compromise reflecting the realization of city dwellers that the agricultural community, on which their prosperity rested, had to have a labour supply. Yet, a few days later, when the Japanese question was a major subject of conversation in the city, the city council unanimously passed a resolution against importing Japanese into the district.⁹

In the meantime, the federal government announced that all male enemy aliens of military age would have to leave the coast by 1 April and that it would encourage Canadian men of Japanese origin to volunteer for a civilian service corps. Despite the lack of specific details, the plan temporarily pleased coastal residents while it worried people in the Okanagan Valley. Feelings were so high that the *Courier* warned that if Ottawa ignored them, "it might create a situation which would be difficult to control."¹⁰ Exactly what kind of situation it envisioned, the *Courier* did not explain, but it was probably thinking of riots against the Japanese.

People at the coast emphasized the possibility of sabotage to justify

⁹ *Courier*, 15 January 1942.

¹⁰ *Courier*, 22 January 1942; *Courier*, 5 March 1942.

removing the Japanese from their midst. Okanagan residents insisted that any Japanese brought into the district be kept under strict military or police supervision to protect power lines, roads and railways, and the irrigation system, but their principal concern was the long-term implication of Japanese settlement. "Five thousand Japs settlers in the Okanagan will be a threat to our lives and property now, but the real menace is to our economic security after the war. That is the real danger, that is why further settlement has only one conclusion — the Japs or US." An Okanagan correspondent of the *New Canadian*, the *Nisei* newspaper, reported no new problems for established Japanese settlers but correctly assessed the general mood "that if the new settlers gain a foothold, they may eventually force out present farmers."¹¹

The Japanese were indeed coming as individuals and in small groups. These "Pearl Harbor Japanese" were independent of any government control. In early February, the *Courier* reported the arrival "of a number of large private automobiles carrying well dressed and educated young Japanese" whose "cool self-assurance . . . was obvious to the point of irritation." An alderman suggested stopping all automobiles carrying Japanese from the coast with a "stern warning" to keep out of the valley lest there be violence. "No one wants trouble," he asserted, "but the Japs are going to take up land or go into business in the district." Other aldermen agreed and proposed interning the Japanese. The board of trade wired Prime Minister Mackenzie King. "Japanese are already buying land here and causing extreme resentment against policy that permit such deals. Earnestly beseech you take immediate action to prevent Japs settling here to forestall any possible unfortunate action by resentful citizens. Please realize this is a burning topic here in Okanagan Valley."¹²

The federal Minister of Justice, Louis St. Laurent, was sympathetic. On 24 February, the day the federal cabinet responded to pressure from the coast and authorized the evacuation of all Japanese from the coast, St. Laurent had the cabinet pass an order-in-council barring Japanese from acquiring land by purchase or lease anywhere in Canada without his specific permission.¹³ This measure did not wholly satisfy the Okanagan.

¹¹ *New Canadian*, 25 February 1942.

¹² *Courier*, 12 and 19 February 1942. The Union of Okanagan Municipalities endorsed the idea and urged that restrictions against the Japanese be made retroactive to December 7, 1941 (J. Wright to Grote Stirling, 20 February 1942, National Archives of Canada [hereafter NAC], Ian Mackenzie Papers, vol. 25); E. W. Barton to W. L. M. King, 17 February 1942, NAC, W. L. M. King Papers, J1 series, vol. 321.

¹³ P.C. 1457, 24 February 1942.

Delegates at a meeting of the Okanagan Municipal Association noted the Minister of Justice could grant permission. Moreover, requiring all Japanese to leave the coast increased the likelihood of their moving into the valley, which already had "too great a percentage of Japanese" and who, Mayor MacKay of Kelowna complained, could not be assimilated.¹⁴

As tensions mounted, the *Courier* found it necessary to warn readers against creating "unfortunate incidents." Already there were threats against employers of Japanese. In an exaggerated claim, W. A. C. Bennett, the Conservative MLA for South Okanagan, said that over 2,000 Japanese had recently arrived and that people feared hundreds more would come. In association with the mayor, the president of the board of trade, and representatives of major agricultural organizations, he warned that public feeling was running high, that protests were being planned, and that "something drastic" might happen if no relief were provided.¹⁵ Specifically, they asked for the appointment of an Okanagan representative on the British Columbia Security Commission (BCSC)¹⁶ and the denial of permits to Japanese who wished to move to the Okanagan unless the Okanagan representative approved. On 5 March, after a two and a half hour meeting marked by some "boisterous" debate when a few orchardists called for the use of Japanese labour under military guard, 750 people representing "every interest" in the valley unanimously passed a resolution "deploring" the failure of the federal government to recognize the danger to the "safety" and "standard of living" of valley residents caused by the infiltration of Japanese and demanding that no more be allowed to enter and the immediate removal of those who had arrived since 7 December 1941.¹⁷

The BCSC responded by appointing R. G. Rutherford, a Kelowna chartered accountant, to its advisory board. This was a hollow victory; the advisory board did not make policy. In the meantime, representatives of

¹⁴ *Vernon News*, 26 February 1942.

¹⁵ *Courier*, 26 February 1942; W. A. C. Bennett to Ian Mackenzie, 2 March 1942, NAC, Department of Labour Records, [hereafter Labour], vol. 174; *Capital News*, 25 February 1942.

¹⁶ The BCSC was created in late February 1942 and dissolved a year later when the newly created Japanese Division of the federal Department of Labour took over its duties. Although the BCSC legally ceased to exist, the Japanese division of the Department of Labour continued to use BCSC stationery and both government officials and their Japanese clients referred to the BCSC. For sake of convenience, this paper will follow popular rather than legal usage.

¹⁷ W. A. C. Bennett et al to A. C. Taylor, 28 February 1942, Mackenzie Papers, vol. 25; *Courier*, 12 March 1942; E. W. Barton to King, 5 March 1942, King Papers, J2 series, vol. 295.

municipal councils, boards of trade and agricultural organizations formed their own Okanagan Security Commission to deal with the Japanese and enemy aliens and to suggest "measures" if the authorities did not halt the influx which some residents feared might "result in a gradual elimination of the white man from the Okanagan." Rutherford, who was no doubt aware of talk in Kelowna about possible Ku Klux Klan type activities, warned that unless the Japanese infiltration of the valley was halted and the new arrivals removed, a possible "explosion" might harm long-established Japanese settlers. The Kelowna Junior Board of Trade was planning a mass indignation meeting and plastering the area with such signs as "Coast Japs, You Are Not Wanted. Keep Out," "Save Gas. Our Japanese Guests Must Have It," and "Hong Kong — Pearl Harbor — Okanagan???" The last slogan was especially timely, for British authorities had just revealed some details of the atrocities inflicted by Japanese forces at Hong Kong, where two Canadian regiments were part of the garrison. The news from Hong Kong, the *Capital News* observed, "has completely wiped out any sympathy that was felt for Japanese nationals here." Kelowna City Council decided to deny electrical and water services to persons of Japanese origin and, if possible, to deny their children access to city schools. The *Courier*, which had been counselling against vigilante action, now described every one of the "brown boches" as "a menace to our security" and attacked Austin Taylor, the chairman of the Vancouver-based BCSC, for not taking firmer action to protect the Okanagan Valley.¹⁸

In fact, the situation was easing. After rejecting the demand that all Japanese who entered the valley after 7 December 1941 should be placed under armed guard, the BCSC agreed not to evacuate Japanese to the valley or allow them to go as self-supporting settlers without the permission of the local security commission. It also promised that education of Japanese children would not be a burden on local ratepayers, that Japanese nationals would not be permitted to leave the camps to which they had been temporarily assigned, and that it would consider removing all "Pearl Harbor Japanese" who were not engaged in agricultural labour. While the compromise did not completely satisfy Kelowna residents, public opinion "quietened down." The junior board of trade, for example, indefinitely

¹⁸ R. G. Rutherford to B.C. Security Commission, 11 March 1942, NAC, B.C. Security Commission Records, [hereafter BCSC], vol. 4, file 100; *Courier*, 19 March 1942; *Capital News*, 11 March 1942. The editor of the *Courier* promptly apologized to Taylor for the angry editorial which an inexperienced member of his staff had written while he was out of town. (R. P. MacLean to A. Taylor, 26 March 1942, BCSC, vol. 4, file 263).

postponed its indignation meeting and the senior boards of trade of the region replaced a resolution calling for the internment of all Japanese with a simple request that all Japanese be strictly supervised. In fact, so calm did the public appear that some fruit and vegetable growers in the northern part of the valley began talking about using Japanese labour during the coming season.¹⁹

The growers' suggestion set off a bitter debate within the Okanagan Security Commission, but the growers' need for help to thin and harvest the 1942 crop won out. The Okanagan Security Commission agreed to ask the BCSC to transfer some Japanese men from the road camps to work in the fields under military or police supervision. The BCSC, which wanted long-term family placements, refused unless the growers accepted family groups, provided accommodation, paid a living wage, and agreed to retain the families for the duration of the war. In any case, the chairman of the BCSC angrily advised growers that most available labourers were Canadian citizens who could neither be interned nor separated from their families simply to gratify Okanagan farmers, who had no reason to expect special privileges or to be considered "as the Heaven sent chosen few who are entitled to same."²⁰

Okanagan residents, who truly believed they lived in a promised land, feared the Japanese would "get such a liking for these surroundings that by one means and another they will obtain occupancy or possession of property and then it will be very difficult to shift them" especially since the coast was unlikely to accept them back after the war. The *Courier* warned that the presence of families would create "a regrettable situation" and that "no permanent settlement will be countenanced." The arrival of four women and three children, the families of "Pearl Harbor Japanese," caused consternation before they moved to an outlying area. Japanese who sought to join family members were reminded that family life had not seemed important to the first immigrants and that the lives of many Canadian families had been disrupted by the war.²¹

¹⁹ Thomas Wilkinson to Taylor, 16 March 1942, Copy in British Columbia Archives and Records Service (hereafter BCARS), R. L. Maitland Papers, file "re Attorney-General"; Grote Stirling to A. MacNamara, 1 May 1942, Labour, vol. 175; *Courier*, 16 April and 17 May 1942.

²⁰ Taylor to MacNamara, 20 May 1942, Labour, vol. 175; *Courier*, 28 May 1942; Taylor to A. G. DesBrisay, 30 May 1942 and MacNamara to DesBrisay, 13 July 1942, Labour, vol. 175 and H. Mitchell to DesBrisay, 1 June 1942, BCSC, vol. 9, file 203.

²¹ *Courier*, 7 and 21 May, 11 and 25 June 1942; *Vernon News*, 2 May 1942; *Capital News*, 26 August 1942; Stirling to MacNamara, 2 June 1942, Labour, vol. 175.

Over the summer, opposition to any further influx of Japanese mounted. In August, T. F. McWilliams, a lawyer, wrote an editorial, "The New Japanese Menace," for the *Courier* in which he stressed the possibility of sabotage and called for the removal of all Japanese from the interior or at least from proximity to communication lines and other dangerous areas and their placement under "humane but effective restraints." A few days later, the *Courier*, in reporting an apparent influx of *Nisei*, repeated old arguments about Japanese "swamping" us and undermining the economy. It specifically referred to McWilliams' essay as it observed that the *Nisei* "are Japs, they are just as much a potential danger as their fathers or uncles who were born in Japan, and to pretend that they are harmless and allow them to go and come as they will, is folly."²²

In the districts north of Kelowna, where the need for harvest help was greater than any fear of sabotage, local growers' associations withdrew from the Okanagan Security Commission and concluded an agreement directly with the BCSC whereby growers who were willing to provide room and board, medical care, and the going wage could bring in Japanese. Although the matter had nothing to do with the city, the Kelowna City Council unanimously reaffirmed that no Japanese should be allowed to take up residence within the city. To supply local labour needs, Kelowna merchants closed their shops two days a week to allow clerks and shoppers to work in the orchards. For the longer term, the council easily convinced the Union of British Columbia Municipalities to urge the federal government to place the Japanese under military control, to move them east of the Rockies or intern them, to ensure that they not take "economic root", and to send them back to Japan or disperse them across Canada after the war.²³

The Okanagan Security Commission discussed labour problems late in November at a "long and stormy" meeting. Growers in Kelowna and southern areas did not want Japanese workers, but northern growers wanted long-term arrangements for this very satisfactory labour force. Lumber manufacturers sought Japanese to help them increase the supply of apple boxes; vegetable growers were so keen to have Japanese that they fired Rutherford as the auditor for their association because he opposed them.²⁴

With the arrival of spring, the fruit and vegetable growers again worried

²² *Courier*, 6 and 20 August 1942.

²³ *Courier*, 27 August and 17 September 1942.

²⁴ *Vernon News*, 3 December 1942; Okanagan Federated Shippers' Association to Mitchell, 6 November 1942, *Labour*, vol. 655; *Courier*, 7 January 1943.

about labour for the coming season. The B.C. Fruit Growers' Association worked out a compromise at its convention early in 1943 approving the use of Japanese labour, but only in those districts which requested it. To satisfy the needs of growers who wanted Japanese workers, the BCFGAs sent one of its members and his long-time Japanese employee to recruit young men in the interior settlements. They promised that accommodation would be provided and that workers could expect to earn about \$300 in five months, but they admitted that the townspeople were hostile.²⁵

There was certainly plenty of evidence of hostility. Even the established Japanese community suffered. The city council proposed to cut light and water connections to the Buddhist Hall at the end of 1942 and allowed the pre-war residents to hold a Christmas party only under police supervision. The chamber of commerce and the junior board of trade insisted that any Japanese brought into the district be removed at the end of the season. Then, in mid-April, twenty-three Japanese in family groups moved to farms at Westbank, just a short ferry ride across the lake. Some had been hired by Japanese farmers; others were joining family members. All had permission from the BCSC to remain for the duration of the war. The anger of Kelowna residents increased when Mr. and Mrs. Higuchi and their two children arrived with a permit authorizing them to work for Masui Taneda, a long-time resident of Westbank. Because they had come a few days early and their accommodation was not ready, they took temporary shelter in the Japanese Mission in Kelowna. When the city council, the Canadian Legion and the junior board of trade learned of the family's presence, they assumed the BCSC had sent them to take up residence in Kelowna. Acting as a vigilante committee, they immediately told the Higuchi family to leave within twelve hours or be put out. Before the Royal Canadian Mounted Police arrived to tell the "vigilantes" not to take the law into their own hands, the family left. When the BCSC explained the Higuchi family had not realized that Kelowna was a "closed town," the excitement faded.²⁶

Subsequently, the BCSC announced it would not send any more people to the area until Kelowna residents "got their house in order." After the Japanese arrived at Westbank, the Kelowna City Council drew up a four-point plan demanding the removal of all Japanese who entered the area after Pearl Harbor, the exclusion of all Japanese except males over the age

²⁵ *Courier*, 4 February 1943; *New Canadian*, 21 April 1943.

²⁶ *Courier*, 17 and 24 December 1942 and 8 and 15 April 1943; W. A. Eastwood to G. Collins, 13 May 1943, BCSC, vol. 7, file 178; Collins to MacNamara, 19 April 1943, BCSC, vol. 7, file 178.

of 16 who were brought in for seasonal labour, the appointment of a committee representing fruit growers, vegetable growers, and the city to handle all matters concerning the Japanese, and the organization of city people for harvest work. When a senior BCSC officer met representatives of the growers and city council, he promised that no Japanese would be allowed to settle in the city and agreed to recommend the removal of the "Pearl Harbor Japanese." After the mayor warned of disorder, the BCSC announced plans for the immediate removal of 112 "Pearl Harbor Japanese" — men, women, and children. But in an apparent attempt to bluff Kelowna, the government insisted that they leave immediately or not at all. At that time of year, vegetable farmers were harvesting early crops of tomatoes and onions. However, the government backed down and agreed the Japanese could stay until the season's end. Nevertheless, "the fight to keep the Central Okanagan white, . . . has apparently been successful," boasted the *Courier*.²⁷

The *Courier's* celebration was premature. The Japanese, who were pawns in the battle, knew nearby growers would welcome them for the duration. They refused to work and announced they would leave immediately. The Kelowna committee, which could authorize the Japanese to stay, appeared to offer a compromise; the Japanese returned to work. However, it was soon evident that the committee had made no guarantees about the duration of their stay and would not allow family reunions. The growers so feared losing their labour supply that they demanded the resignation of Alderman G. W. Sutherland, the chairman of the local committee. The newspapers do not reveal exactly what happened, but the committee was reorganized under the chairmanship of W. A. C. Bennett, MLA. The city conceded that men whose labour was indispensable could be joined by their families; the growers agreed to use Japanese only if no other labour was available and to recognize that permits would be issued on an individual basis only and might be cancelled. Over the next three months the committee, composed of a representative of each of the vegetable growers, the fruit growers and the city council, approved most requests for permission to stay over the winter. This allowed 169 of what the *Courier* described as "Coast Nips" to stay. Most who were denied permits or had not sought them left voluntarily; in a few cases the RCMP removed them.²⁸

²⁷ *Province*, 11 May 1943; *New Canadian*, 1 May 1943; G. A. McKay to King, 28 May 1943, Labour, vol. 65; *Courier*, 13 May and 3, 10 and 17 June 1943.

²⁸ *Courier*, 24 June, 1, 22 and 29 July, 12 August and 18 November 1943; *Capital News*, 21 July 1943.

Alas, sentiment in Kelowna had not changed. Moreover, civilian repatriates from Japanese-controlled areas in Asia were now speaking publicly about the hardships they endured and of the traitorous activities of Japanese settlers in the Dutch East Indies, and the press was reporting Japanese atrocities in the Philippines. Anti-Japanese sentiment in Kelowna so increased that the police advised Japanese to stay off the streets and to come to town only on Monday, the day that Japanese nationals had to report to the police. The *Courier* did not soothe feelings by describing the presence of the Japanese in Canada as “an insult and a stench in our nostrils” and declaring that “no technical, legal or economic considerations should be allowed to stand in the way of the complete expulsion of the Japanese from Canada.” Yet, when Alderman Sutherland proposed cancelling all permits at the end of the 1944 crop season, he found little sympathy.²⁹

In fact, a few people in Kelowna were demanding fair treatment for the Japanese. Frank Snowsell, a former resident who was serving in the air force, wrote to the *Capital News* that persecuting innocent Japanese in Kelowna for Japan’s atrocities in Asia was Nazi-like and contrary to the ideals for which other Canadians were fighting overseas. The editor of the *Capital News* agreed and observed that Japanese nationals in Kelowna had conducted themselves very favourably despite the insults “heaped upon them.” Similarly, Captain C. R. Bull, an old friend of the local Japanese, said the idea of repatriating all Japanese was Nazi-like, and he told delegates to a Liberal meeting how Japanese children in Kelowna had won prizes for selling war stamps and writing essays on patriotic topics.³⁰

By mid-1944 the Japanese situation in the Okanagan seemed relatively static, and it was clear that the Allies would eventually win the war against Japan. In August 1944, Prime Minister King outlined Canada’s post-war policy towards the evacuees. Essentially, the prime minister announced that those Japanese who wished to be “repatriated” to Japan would be given free passage; those who wished to remain in Canada must prove their loyalty and settle east of the Rocky Mountains. Although Kelowna residents doubted the possibility of keeping Japanese permanently out of British Columbia, they generally approved the plan.³¹ T. F. McWilliams, however,

²⁹ *Courier*, 16 December 1943 and 3, 10 and 17 February and 25 May 1944; *Penticton Herald*, 23 December 1943.

³⁰ *Capital News*, 16 February, 1944. The *New Canadian* noted this favourable comment (4 March 1944); *Herald*, 10 August 1944.

³¹ *Capital News*, 9 August 1944; *Courier*, 10 August 1944.

proposed deporting all Japanese nationals, their children under the age of 16 and all Japanese who wished to go to Japan. For those who wished to remain, he suggested setting a quota of Japanese for each province and requiring those who wished to remain in Canada to forswear any allegiance to the Emperor of Japan and to agree to stay in the province to which they had been assigned for at least ten years. In return, they would be enfranchised and given all other citizenship rights after five years. His idea got a mixed reception. The *Courier* welcomed it as the first "logical and feasible" solution. The board of trade decided, however, that because the BCSC had not fulfilled promises to remove Japanese without permits, there was no guarantee that Japanese would not "congregate" in the interior after the war. In demanding the "repatriation of all peoples of Japanese origin after the war to Japan," the board repeated hoary old claims about the inassimilability of the Japanese and the dual allegiance of even the Canadian-born. The board circulated the petition to municipalities throughout British Columbia and found considerable support. Forty-eight councils supported it; eleven filed it, and seven, including Kelowna, opposed it.³²

The decision of Kelowna City Council may have reflected the mellowing of local opinion. The *Capital News* suggested the Japanese were loyal to Canada and that Canadians should be proud that Japanese wanted to remain. A reader agreed that since the war was being fought for "peace and the universal good of all," there was no place for "old race-baiting." This change of attitude also demonstrated the success of the BCSC in mending its fences. Responding to complaints that the commission had not honoured promises to remove certain "Pearl Harbor Japanese" at the end of the crop season, T. B. Pickersgill, the Commissioner of Japanese Placement, visited Kelowna in mid-February. He feared if the approximately fifty Japanese in question would not move voluntarily, his office would have to break its promise to allow them to remain in the area for the duration or repudiate its agreement with Kelowna's Security Committee. He left the impression that the Japanese would be moved soon. Within a few weeks, the local committee was deciding which Japanese could remain and

³² *Courier*, 23 November and 16 December 1944 and 11 January 1945. N. A. Robertson of the Department of External Affairs regarded the plan as "one of the most constructive commentaries" made in British Columbia and suggested the prime minister consider it since it was "not dissimilar" from his own plans. (Robertson to King, 12 January 1945, King Papers, #C249572-3); A copy of the petition may be found in Mackenzie Papers, vol. 24; E. W. Barton to Mitchell, 22 January 1945, Labour, vol. 655; *Courier*, 29 March 1945. Kelowna also rejected a similar resolution that had originated with the Victoria City Council. (*Courier*, 1 and 8 March 1945).

which must leave. It investigated 103 individuals and allowed about half to stay at least for the crop year.³³

By the end of the 1945 crop year, the war had been over for almost three months, but controversy continued. The previous spring, the Canadian government had required all evacuees to sign for "repatriation" or to cooperate with a dispersal programme by moving east of the Rockies. Of the 167 "Pearl Harbor Japanese" who had settled in the Kelowna area, ninety-four signed for repatriation; seventy-three desired to stay in Canada.³⁴ In October, the latter group was told that if they wanted to remain in Canada, they must leave for the east by 15 November; those who chose repatriation could stay put until transportation was available.

Throughout Canada as a whole, over ten thousand Japanese, or slightly less than half the population, signed for repatriation before Japan's surrender. Some signed because their primary loyalty was to Japan or because they saw a better future there. Many signed under severe stress or in the mistaken belief that signing for repatriation would allow them to remain in British Columbia indefinitely and that they could later withdraw their requests. The Canadian government had no intention of letting people change their minds even though *Nisei*, in co-operation with church and civil liberties groups, lobbied in Ottawa, dispatched petitions and letters, and, by stressing humanitarian and civil liberties arguments, pressed Ottawa to allow at least Canadian nationals to change their minds and remain in Canada. Most petitioners resided in eastern Canada, but some white British Columbians joined the crusade. One Kelowna woman, for example, told the prime minister:

After the loss of life during the recent war years, it is ironic indeed to find that here in Canada, the very freedom for which so many fought and died is being so blatantly desecrated.

I am a citizen of Kelowna where there are a great many citizens of Japanese parentage and I have yet to see any sign of disloyalty to Canada and have found them to be as fine members of a community as any other race.

Don't let the persecution of a minority group put a black mark on the face of this grand country of ours.³⁵

Similarly, the fruit growers, who still feared a labour shortage, had little objection to the Japanese remaining. The Kelowna Board of Trade, how-

³³ *Capital News*, 14 March 1945; Pickersgill to MacNamara, 17 February 1945, BCSC, vol. 2, file 40; *Courier*, 22 February and 1 and 8 March 1945.

³⁴ *Courier*, 18 October 1945.

³⁵ Mrs. M. R. Purdy to King, 16 January 1946, King Papers, #372378-9.

ever, had not changed its mind. At the end of 1946, when it learned Japanese might soon have freedom of movement in Canada, it complained that there were "already too many Japanese in the area" and recommended measures to ensure that the Japanese could never again congregate in British Columbia. That, however, was the last significant outburst of anti-Japanese feeling in Kelowna. T. Kobayashi, whose family had lived in the area for many years, told the founding convention of the Japanese Canadian Citizens Association in September 1947 that the people in Kelowna had been very anti-Japanese but the situation was "gradually improving." Nevertheless, complaints from the coast led the federal government to delay removing all restrictions on the Japanese until 1 April 1949. When the restrictions were finally lifted, the *Courier* reported that most Japanese in the area had been absorbed into the economic and social life of the community and planned to remain. Editorially, it reviewed "one of the most distressing episodes in the life of the community," hoped it could be forgotten, and admitted that the Japanese "have their place in the community and on the whole will make good Canadians. With little or no prospect of any further influx, it would seem that 'finis' might well be written to the Japanese problem in the Okanagan and our efforts turned to living in peace and harmony." Many had already graduated from citizenship classes and, like those Japanese who were Canadian citizens by birth, were able to vote for the first time in the provincial and federal elections of June 1949. At long last, the Japanese were full-fledged citizens of Canada and were accepted as full members of the Okanagan community. Yet they did not lose their Japanese identity and, as a group, contributed to the multicultural programmes which the Canadian government has been promoting since the 1970s.³⁶

II

When the Canadian government decided in February 1942 that all Japanese must leave the coast, it was well aware of the opposition to them in communities such as Kelowna. Thus, the BCSC began looking at old mining and lumbering towns in the interior. While few of these places were actually "ghost towns," their populations were small and had been declining for years. Their abandoned houses, hotels, and commercial buildings

³⁶ D. M. Disney to King, 14 December 1946, King Papers, J1 series, vol. 402; *Courier*, 16 January 1947; Japanese Canadian Citizens Association, Founding Convention, September 1947, NAC, JCCA Papers, JCCD newsletter; *Courier*, 4 and 11 April 1949; e.g. *Nippon No Kokoro: Images of Japan* (Kelowna, c. 1980), [leaflet].

could be quickly and economically rehabilitated to provide accommodation for evacuees. Kaslo was one of those centres.

Before the war, Kaslo residents paid little attention to Japan or to the one Japanese recorded in the 1941 census. The exception was the decision of the Women's Institute in 1940 to protest Japan's action in China by boycotting Japanese products, especially oranges. Pearl Harbor "brought the war to Kaslo's very door"; by early February, the *Kootenaiian* was promoting Victory Bonds by repeating coastal propaganda about Japanese fishermen acting as spies who would help invaders from Japan.³⁷

Like most communities in British Columbia, Kaslo was keen to have its roads improved. In early March 1942 the board of trade and city council advised the authorities of their willingness and ability to house a work party of up to 400 Japanese who could work on nearby roads and build a fish hatchery. The board of trade, however, did not want families and believed the men should be under the control of the Veterans' Guard. Other residents were unsure of the wisdom of accepting Japanese under any circumstances. To test opinion, the mayor called a public meeting where the city clerk noted that the Japanese at the coast had not created any disturbances and that Kaslo would benefit from the rehabilitation of its buildings; the local druggist spoke of the extra business the Japanese would generate; and the pastor of the United Church stressed the "obvious duty" of Kaslo residents to help the government solve its problem. The two residents who opposed the Japanese got little support; about 95 per cent of those present at the overflow meeting favoured admitting Japanese work parties.³⁸

The BCSC, however, needed placements for families. In mid-April, one of its officials informed Kaslo residents of plans to send Japanese women, children, and elderly men there. He appealed to their patriotism while explaining that the BCSC would provide schooling, hospitalization, other services, and a subsistence allowance for the Japanese. Moreover, the Japanese would be under severe restrictions including a curfew and bans on hunting, fishing, driving a car, owning a radio, or going outside the city limits without police permission. Extra police would patrol the city. And, as the *Kootenaiian* noted, "best of all," the Japanese would be removed after the war.³⁹

³⁷ *Kootenaiian*, 31 October 1940; 11 December 1941 and 12 February 1942.

³⁸ C. R. Fahrni to R. W. Bruhn, 4 March 1942, BCARS, Department of Highways Records, GR1585, file 554-3; H. T. Hartin to BCSC, 13 March 1942, BCSC, vol. 7, file 137; *Kootenaiian*, 19 March 1942.

³⁹ *Kootenaiian*, 23 April 1942.

Despite the popular support for work parties, opposition to receiving Japanese families persisted. Howard Green, the Conservative MP for Vancouver South, whose parents lived in Kaslo, told Ian Mackenzie, the British Columbia representative in the federal cabinet, that half the people of Kaslo opposed the coming of the Japanese. In fact, only about 115 people had signed a petition attacking the city council for agreeing to accept Japanese and complaining that given the town's past struggles to survive and the absence of many men in the armed forces, the coming of the Japanese would be "the most sickening of all blows to fall on its helpless residents." Members of the Canadian Legion followed a similar line in objecting to the BCSC's order to surrender the drill hall so the Japanese would have a recreation hall. The city council and board of trade, however, advised the BCSC to ignore any protest. The political and economic leaders of Kaslo agreed with C. Roy Fahrni, the editor of the *Kootenaiian*, that the Japanese should be given the benefit of the doubt and sympathy for their plight which had been caused by the war party in Japan. "Let us be grown-up enough to refrain from any demonstration of our feelings, for or against the will of the government," Fahrni cautioned as a few Japanese came to prepare accommodations for those who would follow.⁴⁰

Unlike the first evacuees to arrive in Kelowna, these precursors were perceived as having "a kind, friendly and helpful spirit." Indeed, among the Japanese at the coast who were awaiting evacuation, Kaslo had already acquired a reputation as "the best of the ghost towns" because of the availability of stores, medical services, and schooling. Within a month, about 600 Japanese had arrived in Kaslo. Although the *Kootenaiian* complained that the BCSC was not yet enforcing strict regulations or providing additional police, it seemed more concerned about the safety of Japanese children playing on the streets than about the security of the community. Indeed, at the end of May, the *Kootenaiian* boasted that the Japanese were happy in what had become "the livest 'ghost town' in the west." By the end of October 1942, Kaslo had a population of 978 Japanese, of whom approximately 210 were Japanese nationals.⁴¹ Although there was always some

⁴⁰ R. E. Green to R. L. Maitland, 29 April 1942, BCARS, Premiers' Papers, GR1222, vol. 163, file 5; F. McGibbon to W. K. Esling, 20 June 1942, King Papers, J1 series, vol. 323; Ian Mackenzie to W. L. M. King, 29 April 1942, Ian Mackenzie Papers, vol. 24; Minutes of the Meeting of the Advisory Board of the British Columbia Security Commission, 23 April 1942, BCSC, vol. 7, file 163; *Kootenaiian*, 30 April 1942.

⁴¹ Muriel Kitagawa, *This Is My Own: Letters to Wes & Other Writings on Japanese Canadians, 1941-1948* (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1985), 134; *Kootenaiian*, 7, 21 and 28 May 1942: "Japanese Movement — Pacific Coast (Period ending October 31, 1942), BCSC Records, vol. 1, file 17.

movement in and out, that number declined only slowly until the dispersal programme began in earnest early in 1945.

The presence in Kaslo of several leaders of the *Nisei* community such as Dr. Edward Banno, a dentist, and Thomas Shoyama, the editor of the *New Canadian* which he moved from Vancouver to Kaslo, as well as prominent *Issei* such as Rev. K. Shimizu and Dr. Kozo Shimotakahara, a physician, and their ability to deal with the leaders of the white community on a professional basis undoubtedly contributed to the friendly relationships between the two communities in Kaslo. And, of course, the coming of new customers pleased the businessmen. A United Church worker who visited in 1943 noticed that the presence of the Japanese meant "real money to a decaying community." In September 1942, for example, the BCSC spent \$15,649.59 on wages and relief in Kaslo.⁴²

Long-time residents were favourably impressed by the willingness of the Japanese to work in nearby orchards or for themselves. Almost as soon as they arrived, the Japanese planted vegetable gardens. In succeeding years, they added flowers to their gardens and welcomed all residents to their chrysanthemum show. The enterprising Japanese secured permission to salvage and salt fish after the hatchery removed the spawn; they took jobs as woodcutters as soon as the federal government overrode provincial restrictions against the employment of Asians in the forests; and they opened a small shop to produce wooden handicrafts for sale at the coast and to train young people in woodworking skills. Although some residents of Kaslo depended on maintenance payments or welfare, the BCSC reported that Kaslo, "the most satisfactory" of the settlements, produced the fewest maintenance requests.⁴³

The Japanese worked hard to make themselves welcome. They provided a children's dance group and a vocalist to assist with the entertainment at the annual community flower show; the Japan Social Club organized an entertainment for Kaslo pioneers and presented them with small gifts; and Japanese laid wreaths at the annual Remembrance Day ceremonies. Such gestures helped convince even some opponents that the Japanese were a "patient, industrious [and] cleanly people" who deserved respect.⁴⁴

On the playing fields, young people generally mixed easily. Within weeks of arriving, Japanese children were winning their share of prizes in the foot

⁴² "Memo re Japanese in the Interior" [1943], United Church of Canada Archives, Toronto, PamFC105J3J1; *Kootenaian*, 22 October 1942.

⁴³ "Japanese Movement — Pacific Coast (Period ended November 30th, 1942)," BCSC Records, vol. 34, file 2201; "Japanese Movement — Pacific Coast. (Period ended December 31st, 1942)," BCSC Records, vol. 34, file 2201.

⁴⁴ *Kootenaian*, 15 October 1942 and *passim*.

races at the annual community sports day, and kimono-clad girls provided an escort for the May Queen. Later, fifteen *Nisei* girls joined the local Girl Guide Company.⁴⁵ The adults quickly organized ball teams. They introduced soccer to local boys, but softball and baseball were the popular sports. All-Japanese teams competed against town teams or Japanese teams from other interior settlements, but by the end of the summer of 1942 a mixed Japanese and Caucasian team was upholding Kaslo's pride against teams from nearby communities. Business and professional men played at the local golf club and participated in its tournaments.

The acceptance of the Japanese into the community was also eased by the United Church. In responding to the request of several denominations that it try to keep adherents of a particular faith together, the BCSC designated Kaslo as a United Church settlement, and most of the 978 Japanese sent there belonged to that denomination. Indeed, the United Church Sunday School enrolled 240 students; the BCSC elementary school, 212. The United Church assigned Rev. K. Shimizu, who had formerly served in Vancouver, and two Caucasian lay workers to Kaslo. The existing United Church congregation invited the evacuees to its regular services but, to relieve overcrowding, Rev. Mr. Shimizu held Japanese-language services on Sunday afternoon. Although some younger people attended the regular English-language service, the two congregations co-operated but acted independently. The caucasian and Japanese Women's Auxiliaries, for example, entertained each other at tea but normally met separately.⁴⁶

This mixed pattern of segregation and integration also appeared in the schools. Because the provincial Department of Education refused to educate evacuee children, the BCSC was forced to set up its own elementary schools. With the exception of a part time educational officer in the BCSC Vancouver office, some occasional part-time inspectors hired by the commission, and instructors from the Vancouver Normal School who operated a summer school for teachers, this educational system was an all-Japanese affair under the supervision of Hideko Hyodo, the only Japanese Canadian with Canadian teacher training and experience teaching in a Canadian public school. The teachers, who were recruited from the university and high school students in the settlements, used correspondence lessons as teaching guides.

⁴⁵ *New Canadian*, 9 January 1943.

⁴⁶ "Memo re Japanese in the Interior" [1943]; "Japanese Movement — Pacific Coast (Period ending October 31, 1942); *Kootenaiian*, 26 November 1942 and 5 June 1943.

The Kaslo school opened in September 1942 with ten teachers and 212 children in grades 1 to 8. The Kaslo School Board loaned some desks and its teachers coached the neophyte teachers in pedagogy. The BCSC took no responsibility for high school education, but in Kaslo the local school board admitted Japanese students on a space-available basis as long as they paid tuition of \$4 per month.⁴⁷ Initially, only about forty students took advantage of this opportunity, but by 1944, eighty-two of the hundred students in Kaslo high school were Japanese. They took a major part in such activities as the student council, the Christmas concert and publication of the annual. Yet, they were not entirely happy. One high school student complained that while Kaslo was good for sports it was no good "in an Educational and Economical way."⁴⁸

Indeed, the school children of Kaslo present a paradox. For reasons which are not clear, they were less proficient in English and scored less well in standardized achievement tests than their peers in other centres. Teachers tried to promote the use of English on the playground as well as in the classroom and even issued detentions to children who spoke Japanese around the school. The principal of the high school was especially concerned. On several occasions he told parents that while their children were hard-working, independent, neat and orderly, they had great difficulty in expressing themselves in English and often laughed at their classmates' oral work. He asked parents to encourage their children to read English magazines and books as practice.⁴⁹

The principal blamed this weakness in English for the failure of the Japanese to mix with Occidental students. One student had a different explanation. He wrote to his brother in the east:

When we took the subject "Japan" in Social St.[udies] the white guys gave us a dirty look because our knowledge of Japan was far greater than theirs.

In the town the Japanese never get along with the English. Always a quarrel or fight. We the Japanese have the majority of kids (dead end kids) and always chase them away from our place with slingshots. That's the only weapon we got. Those clumsy bunkheads (dumb in school) don't even know how to make a slingshot. However, the mountie gave us hell and we had to throw our slingshots away. Although these may be the bad points there is also

⁴⁷ When an intake of new Grade 9 students caused a space problem, university graduates in the Japanese community briefly taught the class which met in other quarters. The principal of the Kaslo High School soon rearranged classes and made room for the Grade 9 students. For a time the university graduates also privately coached students who could not pay high school tuition fees.

⁴⁸ Letter, 25 January 1945, University of British Columbia, Library, Special Collections, Japanese Canadian Collection, box 16.

⁴⁹ *New Canadian*, 4 March 1944.

many good points about this 'Race Hatred.' Everybody seems to be a crackshot at this business of slingshots.⁵⁰

Adult Occidentals, however, continued to appreciate the presence of the Japanese. After the Canadian government announced that evacuees would be required to choose between "repatriation" or relocation east of the Rockies, rumours circulated that the BCSC would transfer the Japanese from Kaslo, where employment opportunities were limited and the cost of living high, to other centres pending "repatriation" or relocation. The rumours gathered strength as thirty men were laid off a wood-cutting project and advised to move to Greenwood, where jobs were available. Seven families left for Greenwood.⁵¹

Kaslo's white residents were concerned. If the BCSC withdrew, they would lose the income from renting surplus buildings and over half their customers. After a public meeting sponsored by the board of trade, they asked the prime minister to leave the

Kaslo Japanese . . . here until permanent homes are found for them in the east. These people have shown themselves to be good living people, causing no trouble and are content to remain here for the duration. They have contributed very substantially to the war effort by buying Victory Bonds and the Japanese ladies have materially assisted in Red Cross work. It is quite possible to find employment for the men in lumbering and in needed road work for the Government right in this district.

Frank Abey, a member of the city council and a druggist who later protested the removal of the Japanese because it would mean the loss of an efficient clerk and many customers, privately wrote to the prime minister questioning whether the government's treatment of Canadian-born Japanese reflected the democratic ideals for which Canadian soldiers were fighting overseas. The city council as a whole complained that government policy was being set in response to pressure from the "Jap-haters" at the coast.⁵² The protests bore some fruit; the BCSC delayed closing Kaslo by designating it as a segregation centre where residents of other settlements which were being closed could await placement in eastern Canada.

⁵⁰ Letter, 10 April 1944, Labour, vol. 1527.

⁵¹ *New Canadian*, 21 October and 4 November 1944.

⁵² C. R. Fahrni to King, 10 November 1944, King Papers, #311597; F. T. Abey to King, 10 October 1944, King Papers, #307406-7; R. D. Gardner to Mitchell, 3 October 1944, Labour, vol. 655. Curiously, the following spring the Kaslo City Council endorsed the Kelowna Board of Trade calling for the repatriation of all Japanese. After the board of trade complained, the council rescinded the motion and told the BCSC it would have no objection if any Japanese wished to remain in Kaslo as independent settlers. (*Kootenaiian*, 15 March, 19 April and 21 June 1945).

Although some Japanese were willing to remain in what the *New Canadian* described as “assuredly one of the finest spots in the country,” they knew employment opportunities were limited. Certainly the young adults recognized this; in December 1944 their association sponsored a “Wind-Up Concert” to mark the end of their sojourn in Kaslo. By spring, the days of Kaslo as a Japanese settlement were numbered. Though some families were moving in to await relocation, more were moving out either to eastern Canada or to one of the “repatriation” centres. By June 1945, only 379 Japanese remained in Kaslo; the school had only seventy-two students and four teachers. Finally, in March 1946, the BCSC announced that it would withdraw at the end of the month and that the remaining Japanese would have to leave. The city council and board of trade immediately protested this “expensive, inhuman, and unnecessary” disruption of families in the middle of the school term but to no avail. With the exception of a handful of families who could support themselves, the Japanese had little choice. A 1953 community history, after briefly passing over the war years, recorded that only eight Japanese families continued to live in the town.⁵³

III

This examination of the reception given the Japanese in Kelowna and Kaslo indicates that local circumstances were more important than any ethnic or class consciousness in determining the very different responses of the two cities. The similarity of the ethnic and religious composition of pre-war Kelowna and Kaslo suggests that neither was an influential factor. The local business and professional élites, however, responded in very different ways. In Kelowna, the urban business and professional community, especially as represented by the board of trade, led the opposition to the influx of Japanese; in Kaslo, business and professional men quickly decided that the Japanese could benefit the community and should be welcomed. Similarly, landowners outside greeted the prospect of a good labour supply.

Why did the two cities have such different responses? Why was Kelowna, where the Japanese were a relatively small minority, so hostile and Kaslo, where the Japanese formed about two-thirds of the population, so friendly?

⁵³ *New Canadian*, 25 November and 2 December 1944; Ayako Atagi to C. V. Booth, 7 July 1945, BCSC, vol. 13, file 513; E. L. Maag, Delegate of the International Red Cross, Report of Inspection Tour of Japanese Settlements, 16-28 June 1945, NAC, Department of External Affairs Records, Acc 83-4/259, Box 201, file 3464-AN-40C; *Kootenaiian*, 7 March 1946; The Historical Committee, *History of Kaslo* (Kaslo, 1954), 59-60; at least one family, that of Dr. Shimotakahara returned later. After briefly doing post-graduate studies in Montreal, he returned to Kaslo and set up a “thriving practice” among Caucasians. (Gordon G. Nakayama, *Issei: Stories of Japanese Canadian Pioneers* (Toronto: NC Press, 1984), 66.)

The answers lie in significant differences in local traditions, in the circumstances of the coming of the Japanese and the initial perceptions of them, and in the economies of the two cities.

The Kelowna area already had a significant Japanese population which had never been permitted to participate fully in community life. The existence of a separate United Church mission for Japanese is a good example of this *de facto* segregation. Moreover, Kelowna residents feared that if evacuees had free access to the Okanagan Valley they would stay permanently and confirm the long-held fear that successful Japanese farmers could eventually push white men off the land. Thus, the political and economic leaders of Kelowna steadfastly opposed the admission of any additional Japanese and only reluctantly acceded to the needs of nearby fruit and vegetable growers by accepting Japanese labour under strict supervision as a temporary, indeed, a seasonal expedient.

Kaslo residents, on the other hand, had little experience with the Japanese. While some of them exhibited the same fears and prejudices expressed in Kelowna, local leaders could look at the matter objectively and give the Japanese the benefit of the doubt. Moreover, they knew that while their city had an even more beautiful setting than Kelowna, neither it nor the surrounding countryside offered the kind of economic opportunities that would encourage the Japanese to stay permanently even if the BCSC reneged on its promise to remove the Japanese after the war. The Japanese outnumbered the white residents of Kaslo by almost two to one, but it was clear they were only war-time inhabitants.

Secondly, one must consider the circumstances under which the Japanese moved to Kelowna and to Kaslo. Until late February 1942 no one in Canada, including the government itself, knew what would happen to the Japanese at the coast and what would be done to answer demands that they be moved inland. The uncertainty was unsettling. Since they had freedom of movement for almost three months after Pearl Harbor, some Japanese went to the Okanagan Valley, where family and friends could provide shelter, employment and, presumably, some security. Some of the early arrivals, however, were perceived as being arrogant. Whether the perception was correct or not is impossible to ascertain; what is important is that it became part of local conventional wisdom. Because of the hostility of city residents and the nature of their work on farms and orchards, the Japanese had limited contact with townspeople and could do little to overcome initial impressions. Moreover, even after the creation of the BCSC, the Japanese experienced almost no supervision of their activities as long as they remained in the Okanagan Valley. To Kelowna residents, the

BCSC was a Vancouver-based agency which did not always honour its promises.

In Kaslo, however, civic leaders invited the Japanese after the government announced the evacuation policy and formed the BCSC and, together with the local newspaper, welcomed the Japanese. Though the promised extra police protection never seems to have materialized, it was not needed. The Kaslo Japanese were definitely the wards or employees of the BCSC, which had a very visible presence in Kaslo. And, even if geography had not hindered their movement, government regulations required them to secure permission to leave the town. The city was small and residents lived side by side. The Japanese, however, worked hard to merit their welcome to Kaslo. They were industrious and public-spirited. They quickly persuaded their enemies that they could be good citizens, as can be seen by comparing two statements by W. K. Esling, the Conservative Member of Parliament for the area. On 30 April 1942, before the Japanese arrived, he reported vigorous opposition in Kaslo to their coming. Three months later, he boasted to Parliament that "there is full cooperation from the Japanese community in Kaslo and that the relations with the rest of the community are of the best." Two years later, in what was almost a valedictory, the *New Canadian* remarked that the experience in Kaslo was a "graphic illustration of how the artificial barriers of race will crumble under the influence of good-neighborliness."⁵⁴

Finally, economic factors must be considered. Kelowna in 1942 was reasonably prosperous and was already attracting residents of the "right kind" such as wives and children of Canadians serving overseas who went inland for security and in the false hope of finding better and more economical accommodation. An influx of Japanese promised no advantage to the city. Eventually, of course, an economic problem, the desperate need of fruit and vegetable growers for labour, persuaded Kelowna's civic and business leaders to lift, albeit slightly, their opposition to the entry of additional Japanese. In Kaslo, however, civic and business leaders quickly recognized that an influx of Japanese could, temporarily at least, prevent their city from becoming a true "ghost town." For Kelowna, the Japanese were undesirable intruders; for Kaslo, they were welcome paying guests.

⁵⁴ Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 30 April 1942, 2004 and 29 July 1942, 4954; *New Canadian*, 25 November 1944.