

EXCLUSION AND NEW CONTACT ZONES:

Japanese and Doukhobor Canadians in the Grand Forks Area of British Columbia

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EXCLUSION PLAYS OUT in various ways. The verb “to exclude” is defined by *Oxford Languages* as to: “deny (someone) access to or bar (someone) from a place, group, or privilege” as well as to “remove from consideration, rule out.” Exclusion is generally seen as something negative, but Hall et al. encourage us to think of exclusion in a dramatically different way, as not necessarily negative.¹ For example, to earn a living, farmers must exclude people other than themselves or their employees from harvesting their crops. Social exclusion is the focus here, and it can take various forms and occur in a multitude of ways.² Still, Cohen and Ben-Asher demonstrate how,³ in liberal democracies, sometimes rigid and exclusive boundaries of nationality are mobilized with the intent of preventing some from gaining access to particular public goods, services, or places.

Exclusion can sometimes result in what Mary Louise Pratt famously refers to as “contact zones,” which she describes as “social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in the contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world today.”⁴

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¹ Derek Hall, Philip Hirsch, and Tania Murray Li, *Powers of Exclusion: Land Dilemmas in Southeast Asia* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i, 2011).

² Michal Krumer-Nevo, Yamit Elfassi, Shifra Sagy, and Maya Lavie-Ajayi, “Neither Seeing Nor Seen: Exclusion and Double Exclusion in the Lives of Young People Involved in the Drug Trade in Israel,” *YOUNG* 24, no. 1 (2016): 36–52.

³ Ya'aarit Bokek-Cohen and Smadar Ben-Asher, “The Double Exclusion of Bedouin War Widows,” *International Journal on Minority and Group Rights* 25 (2018): 112–31.

⁴ Mary Louise Pratt, “Arts of the Contact Zone,” *Profession* (1991): 33–40.

Pratt's emphasis is clearly on uneven power relations and how they affect contact zones, and rightly so. However, exclusionary practices can also produce contact zones that involve two or more groups of oppressed peoples interacting in various ways in the same, overlapping, or nearby spaces. This being the case, I use the concept of contact zones to demonstrate how it works when circumstances bring two oppressed groups together.

I am interested in the exclusion of Japanese Canadians from coastal British Columbia and, inland, from the city of Grand Forks – an exclusion that began in 1942 due to the unfounded fear that they might provide support to Canada's enemy, Japan. These processes had less to do with security than with racist discrimination. In addition, I consider the circumstances of another oppressed group during the Second World War, the Russian-speaking Doukhobors, pacifists and mostly farmers, and how this led to the creation of new types of contact zones. There was some affinity between the two peoples: both were labelled as problems, largely due to the perception that they could not and would not integrate into Canadian society. Ultimately, I'm primarily concerned with three groups: the Japanese Canadians, the Doukhobors, and the Anglo-Canadian town dwellers and supporters of the City Council in Grand Forks, which is located in the unceded territory of the Sinixt Indigenous People.

Although rarely noted in guides to Japanese Canadian internment sites or other self-supporting communities,⁵ over 350 Japanese Canadians settled in Grand Forks in 1942. Although the federal government had already prohibited people of Japanese descent from purchasing land anywhere in the country,⁶ this did not satisfy the City of Grand Forks, which intended to prevent Japanese Canadians from working and living there or attending its schools. However, after some negotiation, school integration came relatively quickly, and over time the ban on people of Japanese descent staying within the city limits was gradually relaxed. As well as exploring the relationships of Japanese Canadians with the city's Anglo-Canadians, I consider their dealings with Doukhobors and English-speaking farmers living outside the city limits. This reveals a dichotomy between urban and rural areas: the city sought to keep

⁵ Linda Kawamoto Reid and Beth Carter, *Karizumai: A Guide to Japanese Canadian Internment Sites*, 5th ed. (Burnaby, BC: Nikkei National Museum, 2019); BC Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure, *Japanese Canadian Highway Legacy Sign Project: Commemorating World War II Internment Sites and Road Camps, 1942–4*, 27 October 2017–28 September 2018.

⁶ Patricia E. Roy, "A Tale of Two Cities: The Reception of Japanese Evacuees in Kelowna and Kaslo, BC," *BC Studies* 87 (Autumn 1990): 28.

Japanese Canadians out, but nearby farmers, including Doukhobors, who themselves were subjected to persecution, sometimes needed their labour and generally got along well with them.

METHODS

I came to this project somewhat by accident. I have been studying Japanese Canadian history, primarily on Vancouver Island, since 2017, and recently started collaborating with both Japanese and Japanese Canadian scholars who have an interest in Japanese Canadian history. In particular, these people were conducting research on Japanese Canadian history associated with Grand Forks and, even though I was not familiar with the area and was mainly funding my own research, they wanted me to participate because of my recent work on Japanese Canadians on Vancouver Island.⁷ I was particularly encouraged to participate by Lisa Domae, a Japanese Canadian whose father's family lived in Nanaimo, BC, before the Second World War. She is a geographer and the president of North Island College on Vancouver Island. I contacted Chuck Tasaka, a Japanese Canadian from Greenwood, near Grand Forks, who provided me with information regarding how Japanese Canadians were excluded from living and working in the City of Grand Forks, something for which the Boundary Community Archives in Grand Forks provided additional evidence.

Later, I met some Japanese Canadians living in Grand Forks or with connections to Grand Forks, through other Japanese Canadians I knew from my Vancouver Island research. I am a white geography professor whose relatives fished with Japanese Canadians out of Nanaimo, both before and after the Second World War.⁸ I am primarily a scholar of Southeast Asian studies. My partner is Asian and my two sons are growing up as Asian Canadians/Americans. I met some of the Japanese

⁷ Ian G. Baird, "An Anti-Racism Methodology: The Native Sons and Daughters and Racism against Asians in Nanaimo, British Columbia, Canada," *Canadian Geographer* 62, no. 3 (2018): 300–13; Ian G. Baird, "Developing an Anti-Racism Methodology: Considering Japanese and White Canadian Fishermen Relations in Nanaimo, BC, Canada," *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 51, no. 2 (2019): 107–30; Ian G. Baird, "The Politics of Honorific Names: Alan Webster Neill and Anti-Japanese Canadian Racism in Port Alberni, British Columbia, Canada," in *Landscapes of Injustice: A New Perspective on the Internment and Dispossession of Japanese Canadians*, ed. Jordan Stanger-Ross (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2020): 418–34; Ian G. Baird, "The Commemorative Landscape as a Space of Anti-Racist Activism: Confronting the Legacies of Anti-Japanese Canadian Racism on Vancouver Island," *ACME: An International Journal for Critical Geographers* 21, no. 5 (2022): 585–602.

⁸ I was born in Penticton, BC, brought up in Victoria, BC, and currently live in Madison, Wisconsin.

Canadians in person and spoke with others on the phone. I conducted semi-structured interviews with a dozen Japanese Canadians who were children during the Second World War. They were key informants. I visited Grand Forks twice in 2022. In addition, I spoke with a few Doukhobors living in the Grand Forks area, both in person and on the telephone. My informants helped provide crucial information that complemented archival and newspaper sources. I conducted all the interviews in English in 2022 and 2023.⁹

This project traces the history of Japanese Canadians in the Grand Forks area and their interactions with (1) city residents, who were mainly of British origin; (2) Doukhobors, Russian-speaking pacifists who were subjected to legalized discrimination and persecution; and (3) other farmers who lived outside the city limits. This history reveals a dichotomy between urban and rural areas: as previously stated, the city sought to keep Japanese Canadians out, but nearby farmers (including the Doukhobors), who needed their labour, generally got along well with them. In time, as people became more familiar with one another, that good feeling extended to the city.

FROM COASTAL BRITISH COLUMBIA TO GRAND FORKS

Despite legislation and customs, inspired by economic jealousy and racial prejudice that limited their employment opportunities, civil rights, and immigration, by 1941 approximately twenty-two thousand Japanese Canadians lived in British Columbia, mostly on the coast.¹⁰ On 7 December 1941, Japan attacked Pearl Harbor and Canada declared war on Japan. Long-standing tension and hostility mounted at the coast and, on 25 February 1942, the federal cabinet passed Order-in-Council (PC 1486), which required all people of Japanese ancestry, including Canadian-born and naturalized citizens, to leave the security

⁹ This project was approved through the University of Wisconsin Institutional Review Board ethics board under the title “Japanese Canadians: Before, during, and after World War II” (2022). Oral consent was provided from interviewees.

¹⁰ Good overviews of the early history of the Japanese in Canada are Ken Adachi, *The Enemy That Never Was* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1976); Ann Gomer Sunahara, *The Politics of Racism: The Uprooting of Japanese Canadians during the Second World War* (Toronto: James Lorimer, 1981); Patricia E. Roy, *A White Man's Province: British Columbia Politicians and Chinese and Japanese Immigrants, 1858–1914* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1989); and Masako Fukawa and Stan Fukawa, *Spirit of the Nikkei Fleet: BC's Japanese Canadian Fishermen* (Madeira Park, BC: Harbour, 2009).

zone, an area within one hundred miles (161 kilometres) of the coast.¹¹ By then about 75 percent of the Japanese living in Canada were Canadian citizens.¹²

The federal government created an agency, the British Columbia Security Commission (BCSC), to organize this relocation. It established what it called the interior settlements, now commonly known as internment camps, in the old mining towns of Kaslo, Sandon, New Denver, and Slocan in the West Kootenay and at Greenwood, thirty-five kilometres west of Grand Forks.¹³ The BCSC believed abandoned hotels and other structures in these “ghost towns” could be easily rehabilitated to house women, children, and older or infirm men. Able-bodied men were sent to road camps to work on highway construction or railway maintenance. To keep families together, some Japanese Canadians accepted placements on sugar beet farms in Alberta and Manitoba.

The BCSC, however, did permit some individuals and their families to stay together by moving to “self-supporting communities” in British Columbia’s interior if they confirmed that they could support themselves through employment or savings and had arranged accommodation.¹⁴ They were expected to cover all costs, including the education of their children. A few residents of these communities were relatively wealthy, but most were not.¹⁵ By going to self-supporting communities families could stay together. This was possible because, initially, able-bodied men whose families were sent to internment camps had to go to government-managed camps to work on road construction or railway maintenance.

Grand Forks was an anomaly. The BCSC did not consider it to be a self-supporting community but, rather, a place where people could obtain “individual placements under a permit system.”¹⁶ The city was relatively well established. Located eight kilometres from a US border crossing, Grand Forks was incorporated in 1897, during a copper-mining boom.¹⁷

¹¹ There is an extensive and sometimes controversial historiography on this. The reasons for this decision are examined in many sources other than Adachi, including Sunahara, *Politics of Racism*; Patricia E. Roy, *The Triumph of Citizenship: The Japanese and Chinese in Canada, 1941–67* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007); Kirsten Emiko McAllister, *Terrain of Memory: A Japanese Canadian Memorial Project* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010); and Mona Oikawa, *Geographies of Violence: Japanese Canadian Women, Memory, and the Subjects of the Internment* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012).

¹² Roy, “Tale of Two Cities,” 26.

¹³ In some places, the Security Commission supplemented existing accommodation with purpose-built cabins. It also created a new settlement, Tashme, in the Sunshine Valley near Hope, BC.

¹⁴ “Go to Self-Supporting Projects,” *New Canadian*, 16 May 1942, 1.

¹⁵ Chuck Tasaka, pers. comm., Greenwood, BC, August 2022.

¹⁶ Bram Skand, pers. comm., Greenwood, BC, August 2022.

¹⁷ Chuck Tasaka, pers. comm., message from Greenwood, BC, September 2022.

As the nearby mines ceased to be profitable, they and their associated smelters closed. In 1941, Grand Forks had a population of 1,259. It was served by both the Canadian Pacific Railway and the Great Northern Railway and was the service centre for the 5,822 residents of the surrounding agricultural areas in the Kettle River valley.¹⁸ In the city proper, 60 percent of the population was of British descent. With the exception of one Russian (who may not have been a Doukhobor) and three Chinese, the remainder of the population had a variety of European origins.¹⁹ In the organized districts around Grand Forks, however, only 27 percent of the people were of British origin. The majority of the approximately four thousand Doukhobors in the area lived outside the City of Grand Forks.

The most important political figure in the Grand Forks area was Thomas Love. The owner and editor of the *Grand Forks Gazette* until January 1943,²⁰ Love was mayor between 1925 and 1929, and again from 1932 to 1940. Elected as a Conservative to the provincial legislature in the October 1941 general election, he became part of the Liberal-Conservative Coalition that governed British Columbia until 1952.²¹ Early in March 1942, Love told the Grand Forks Board of Trade that action to remove the Japanese from the coast came “none too soon as the menace at the coast was more serious than many had supposed.” He believed a baseless rumour that all the Japanese Canadians would be going to Greenwood.²² After a debate in which one member noted the need for farm labour, the Board unanimously resolved that the Japanese must not be allowed to “move unhindered ... from Coastal sections to the Interior” and that their movement must be “under strict military control, both as to location and occupation.”²³ Later, the *Vancouver Province* newspaper claimed that Love was “one of the most aggressive and outspoken member of the bloc opposing Japanese ‘infiltration.’”²⁴ He was quoted as saying, “We don’t want the Japanese in Grand Forks,

¹⁸ *Census of Canada*, 1941, 2:143.

¹⁹ *Census of Canada*, 1941, 3:500.

²⁰ Effective with this issue, Love turned the paper over to Stanley Orris, a newcomer to Grand Forks. Love then concentrated on his work as an MLA. See Jim Glanville and Alice Glanville, *The Life and Times of Grand Forks: Where the Kettle River Flows – A Centennial History* (Kelowna, BC: Blue Moose Publications, 1997), 129; *Grand Forks Gazette*, 4 February 1943, 1.

²¹ “A Newspaperman with a Slogan, Thomas A. Love, 1925–1929, 1932–1940,” in *Mayors of Grand Forks* (Grand Forks, BC: Boundary Museum Society, 1998), 39–40.

²² *Grand Forks Gazette*, 12 March 1942, 1.

²³ H.C. Clark, Secretary, Grand Forks Board of Trade, to W.L.M. King, 14 March 1942, vol. 655, Department of Labour Records, Library and Archives Canada (hereafter LAC).

²⁴ Don Tyerman, “Grand Forks Wants No Japs: Doukhobor Problem Enough,” *Province*, 17 July 1942, 5.

and we won't let them in – even if we have to fight.” He also evoked the Doukhobors to justify the exclusion of Japanese Canadians, saying: “We have had a major problem in the Doukhobors for over 30 years ... Now they want us to accept a further burden in the Japanese.” Like Love, Mayor Frank Miller thought the Japanese Canadians should only be admitted if they were registered and put under guard. Love favoured sending them to the Prairies, where the existence of so much land would eliminate the threat of their taking over economically.

The *Gazette*, however, reported that some local ranchers would accept Japanese Canadian workers if they were under military guard because they thought, despite the lack of any evidence, that they were more efficient workers than the Doukhobors.²⁵ Many farmers desperately needed farm labour.²⁶ Many Japanese Canadians found work on both Doukhobor and non-Doukhobor farms outside of Grand Forks.

Two Japanese Canadian families lived in the Grand Forks area before the attack on Pearl Harbor. Yashushi Sugimoto operated a vegetable farm with his father and younger brother on Carson Road, outside of town,²⁷ at Fruitova Village, which the small local Doukhobor community referred to as *Yaponika* (or Japan Village, in Russian) because they worked closely with the Japanese Canadians.²⁸ Three Sugimoto children were listed in the June 1941 school promotion lists.²⁹

The second family was that of Esumatsu Nakatani, a native of Wakayama Prefecture and a United Church lay-pastor. He immigrated to Canada in 1918 and settled in Steveston, from where he fished northern waters. After his wife arrived from Japan, she encouraged him to move near her relatives in Kelowna in order to get away from the gambling in Steveston. In Kelowna, he was converted to and fully embraced Christianity. In 1939, after having a hard time making a living in Kelowna, he moved to Grand Forks to work as an agricultural labourer. Given his connections in Steveston, in 1942 many people desperate for a place to re-establish their families sought his assistance in getting permission to move to Grand Forks.³⁰ Nakatani initially planned to assist twenty-five

²⁵ *Grand Forks Gazette*, 26 March 1942, 1. Two weeks earlier, the *Gazette* observed what looked like “simply a switch of Douks for Japs” as it reported that a number of Doukhobors were going to the Fraser Valley to replace the Japanese Canadians (12 March 1942), 1.

²⁶ Tyerman, “Grand Forks Wants No Japs.”

²⁷ Rev. Edward S. Yoshida, “Evacuation to Grand Forks, BC,” in *Honouring Our People: Breaking the Silence*, ed. Randy Endomoto (Vancouver: Japanese Canadian Citizens’ Association, 2016), 162.

²⁸ Larry Jmaiff, pers. comm., Grand Forks, BC, July 2022.

²⁹ *Grand Forks Gazette*, 26 June 1941, 1.

³⁰ Ruth Coles, pers. comm., telephone to Vancouver, BC, August 2022 and October 2022.

families to come to Grand Forks.³¹ On 12 March 1942, the *Grand Forks Gazette* reported that six Japanese Canadian arrivals were “probably encouraged [to come] by the few that came here two years ago to help grow tomatoes.”³²

Between March and May 1942, Nakatani contacted many local farmers who agreed to hire Japanese Canadians and to provide them with accommodation. In the end, 364 Japanese Canadians relocated to Grand Forks.³³ Yuukichi Niwayama, a Japanese scholar, accurately reported that many Japanese Canadians relocated to Grand Forks to keep their families together; he did not mention that they could not live in the city but could only go there to conduct necessary business.³⁴

Among the Japanese Canadians who came to Grand Forks was Reverend Yutaka Ogura, who was sent by the United Church to minister to the Japanese Canadians there, in Greenwood, and in several other centres in the Kettle Valley. He held religious services every Sunday. Mary Nakatani and Yuki Arai helped Reverend Ogura and his wife teach forty-two children who attended Sunday school in the garage of his manse. Among the lay leaders in the church were Esumatsu Nakatani, Hanji Yamasaki, Kozo Morino, and Ikutaro Konishi.³⁵

EXCLUSION FROM THE CITY LIMITS OF GRAND FORKS

The prospect of the arrival of the Japanese Canadians caused concern in Grand Forks. The *Grand Forks Sun* declared, “no one wants the Asiatics for next-door neighbors.”³⁶ Echoing that sentiment, in early 1942 the City Council passed an ordinance prohibiting people of Japanese descent from working or living inside the city limits.³⁷ Sometimes, the denial of entry was carried to an extreme. For example, when the Kondo family arrived from Steveston, instead of disembarking at the downtown railway

³¹ Glanville and Glanville, *Life and Times of Grand Forks*, 126.

³² *Grand Forks Gazette*, 12 March 1942, 1.

³³ Ruth Coles, pers. comm., telephone to Vancouver, BC, August 2022; Yuukichi Niwayama, “A Man in Grand Forks Who Saved Japanese Canadians during World War II,” *Journal of Human and Cultural Sciences* 52 nos. 1–2 (2021): 77–99; Gallery 2, *G2 Folio: A Call for Justice – Fighting for Japanese Canadian Redress [1977–88]*, (Grand Forks, BC: 2016), 5.

³⁴ See Niwayama, “Man in Grand Forks.”

³⁵ Roland M. Kawano and the Japanese Canadian Christian Churches Historical Project, *A History of the Japanese Congregation of the United Church of Canada* (Scarborough, ON: The Japanese Canadian Christian Churches Historical Project, 1998), 66–67.

³⁶ *Grand Forks Sun*, 10 April 1942, 1.

³⁷ *Grand Forks Gazette*, Reports of the executive meeting of the BC Fruit Growers Association, 18 May 1944, 1. A record of the original resolution could not be located at the Boundary Community Archives in Grand Forks.

station, they were required to go back and get off at West Grand Forks.³⁸ While looking for accommodation, they stayed with the Nakatani family at their large house outside the city limits, while he helped them find their own accommodation. At that time the city limits of Grand Forks were much smaller than is presently the case. Ruth Coles (née Nakatani), then a young child, recalled an exciting time with people always coming and going.³⁹ This particular point of interaction, like others, had its own geographies of interaction.

The story of Unosuke Nishi, a farmer and retired fisherman from Steveston, illustrates the Council's early determination to enforce exclusion. On 13 April 1942, Mr. Nishi sought permission to move his eight-member family to the city. Before approving the move, the BCSC required him to secure the permission of the Council and the Board of Trade. The matter was urgent. If he did not receive an immediate favourable response, the family would have to go to a sugar beet farm in Alberta or Manitoba on 20 or 22 April, a move that could have resulted in the family's dispersal.⁴⁰ The city clerk informed him that the Council had no authority "over the entry of Japanese to points outside the municipal limits" but would not permit "the entry of any person of Japanese origin into the Grand Forks district and would respectfully suggest that those living in the district be removed."⁴¹ However, the Council advised the BCSC that it had "no objection to Japanese from without the limits of the City of Grand Forks coming into Grand Forks to trade and transact their necessary business."⁴²

The Nishi family arrived on 20 May 1942 and settled about five kilometres outside the city at Almond Gardens on the farm of C.H. Clark.⁴³ Unosuke's youngest son, Fred, who had graduated from the University of

³⁸ Yoko Nishi, pers. comm., Parksville, BC, August 2022.

³⁹ Ruth Coles, pers. comm., telephone to Burnaby, BC, August 2022.

⁴⁰ Unosuke Nishi to City Council of Grand Forks, 13 April 1942, 15-A-1: 1–10, City Clerk's Correspondence and Subject Files, Boundary Community Archives, Grand Forks, BC (hereafter City Clerk's Correspondence).

⁴¹ John Hutton became the city clerk of Grand Forks in 1913 and held the position for thirty-eight years. He was also treasurer of the Grand Forks School District for forty-eight years. For thirty-three years he received no remunerations from the School District (Glanville and Glanville, *Life and Times of Grand Forks*, 92); The Corporation of the City of Grand Forks, City Council Minutes, 15 April 1942; John A. Hutton to Unosuke Nishi, 17 April 1942, City Clerk's Correspondence.

⁴² John A. Hutton to E.L. Boulton, 29 April 1942, City Clerk's Correspondence; *Grand Forks Gazette*, 17 April 1942, 1.

⁴³ Ronald Nishi, pers. comm., telephone to North York, Ontario, September 2022; Ruth Coles, Kaz Nakamoto, and Yoko Nishi, *Grand Forks Reunion: Honouring and Bridging the Past* (self-published, 2018); personnel file for Unosuke Nishi, Office of the Custodian of the Enemy Agent, file 4853.

British Columbia with a degree in economics in 1940, soon wrote a letter to the *Grand Forks Gazette* titled “Why I Came to Grand Forks Valley ... and My Impressions.”⁴⁴ After explaining his overall position, Fred Nishi bemoaned the considerable resistance from inland areas of British Columbia and the eastern provinces to the resettlement of Japanese Canadians. He did not blame non-Japanese Canadians for ordering them from the coast, but he asserted: “Japan’s declaration of war is no fault of those Japanese who have been living here, though being of the same racial origin, they must suffer the guilt of their ancestral country.” He accused “cheap politicians” of exploiting the situation to score political points at the expense of Japanese Canadians. After the attack on Pearl Harbor, he emphasized that the situation along the coast had been very tense and that a curfew prevented them from going anywhere in the evening. At Grand Forks, he was pleased to have regained his freedom to come and go as he pleased day or night. He was also impressed with the hospitality extended by some people and felt that he and his family were gradually making themselves at home.⁴⁵ Yet he regretted that: “here, too, far from the defense area, there are some anti-Japanese people.” And he spoke of his surprise upon learning that: “[Japanese Canadians are] not allowed to live in the city nor are we allowed to carry on our business as we did out at the coast. Even in Vancouver, [the] most strategic city in BC, we are able to carry on our business in the midst of the city and among fellow Canadians.” Stressing the loyalty of Japanese Canadians to Canada, he emphasized that he could not understand why they could not live and/or work in the city. Before thanking most of the people of Grand Forks for their “sympathetic ears,” he declared that Japanese Canadians would prove to be an asset to Grand Forks and expressed his hope that they would soon be able to live and work in the city.⁴⁶

That did not stop the City Council’s exclusionary approach. For example, Hajime Suzuki, a Vancouver-based optometrist and a former president of the Japanese Canadian Citizens League (which advocated for the enfranchisement of the Canadian-born Japanese),⁴⁷ wrote to the mayor explaining that he was born in Canada and hoped to relocate to Grand Forks. He understood the city was thriving but did not have an optometrist. He asked if he could practise in the city, or, if that were not

⁴⁴ *Grand Forks Gazette*, 25 June 1942, 1; Unosuke Nishi to City of Grand Forks, 13 April 1942.

⁴⁵ Fred Nishi, “Why I Came to Grand Forks Valley ... and My Impressions,” *Grand Forks Gazette*, 25 June 1942, 3.

⁴⁶ Unosuke Nishi to City of Grand Forks, 13 April 1942.

⁴⁷ Landscapes of Injustice, “Appendix 5 and 10 of Suspicious Japanese Report,” https://loi.uvic.ca/archive/suspicious_japanese_report.html.

possible, to live in nearby Greenwood and commute to Grand Forks.⁴⁸ Even though he could provide a useful service, the Council would “not grant permission for any person of Japanese origin to enter Grand Forks, to reside or practice in business.”⁴⁹ Suzuki relocated to Montreal.⁵⁰

Although the BCSC agreed to Grand Forks’s request for strict supervision of the Japanese Canadians,⁵¹ the Council remained concerned about their presence. Early in 1944, it asked the Canadian Pacific Railway to explain the employment of some Japanese Canadians on track maintenance. The Nelson-based superintendent claimed that he did not know of the city’s arrangement with the BCSC prohibiting Japanese Canadians from working within the city limits without the Council’s approval. He supplied the names of the nine Japanese Canadians working on the B&B gang (bridge and building department workers).⁵² They were apparently not forced to leave as they were only there temporarily.

The Council could be strict in enforcing its policy. It rejected the request of Oscar Pennoyer, a well-known English-speaking farmer, that his employee S. Namura, a Japanese Canadian, be permitted to live at the Grand Forks Hotel for a few months. Pennoyer described Namura, a bachelor, as being very reliable and as someone who, for twenty years, had worked for the late Judge Hunter in Vancouver. Namura needed accommodation because the Japanese Canadian dressmaker from whom he had sublet a room had given him notice to move. Pennoyer planned to build a small house for him on his farm but could only do so after the harvest. In the meantime, the only available quarters within reasonable distance of the farm was “a room at the old Grand Forks Hotel Annex now known as the Hopper House,” but it was within the city limits. The City Council rejected the application.⁵³

In the fall of 1944, a controversy arose regarding a young Japanese Canadian, Yasushi Sugimoto. In 1943, Sugimoto was denied permission to buy a house just outside the city limits in West Grand Forks but

⁴⁸ Hajime Suzuki, Grand Forks, to Frank J. Miller, Grand Forks, 4 June 1942, City Clerk’s Correspondence.

⁴⁹ E.W. Euerby to Hajime Suzuki, 5 June 1942, City Clerk’s Correspondence.

⁵⁰ Personnel file for Hajime Suzuki, Office of the Custodian of the Enemy Agent, file 10924.

⁵¹ Grand Forks City Council, minutes, 9 June 1942, City Clerk’s Correspondence.

⁵² Canadian Pacific Railway Company, Superintendent, Nelson, to John Hutton, City Clerk, Grand Forks, 24 January 1944, City Clerk’s Correspondence. The men were: K. Atagi, G. Sakiyama, J. Miyashita, K. Murakami, M. Shuto, T. Hamada, H. Tabata, T. Murao, and S. Kuramoto.

⁵³ Oscar Pennoyer, Grand Forks, to the Mayor and City Council, Grand Forks, 11 September 1944, City Clerk’s Correspondence; John Hutton, Grand Forks, to Oscar Pennoyer, Grand Forks, 19 September 1944, City Clerk’s Correspondence; City Council Minutes, 11 September 1944, City Clerk’s Correspondence.

was able to lease it with an option to buy. Sugimoto hired a lawyer to challenge the city's refusal to provide him with water and electricity. Council's lawyer, Harold W. McInnes of Penticton, frankly advised: "he is a tenant in that house, and such being the case you would have no right to discriminate against him in supplying service. There are as you know numerous authorities in our courts who have decided against Municipalities passing or trying to enforce discriminatory bylaws, and the same principles apply to supplying of services such as light and water." Probably to the dismay of the Council, McInnes concluded: "you are not justified in refusing these services and they should be supplied. I can only suggest that you take up with the Security Commission, the question of the right of this Japanese Canadian to be within your boundaries as a result of any arrangement or understanding you may have with the Security Commission."⁵⁴

City Council, however, chose to withhold services to Sugimoto. At a special council meeting on 2 October 1944, Mayor Francis Miller and all the aldermen – Huffman, Liddicoat, McDonald, and Woodhouse – heard C.F. MacLean, Yashushi Sugimoto's solicitor, explain "that Sugimoto had borne a good reputation, was different to the average Japanese having been born and educated in British Columbia." MacLean argued that allowing Sugimoto to live in town would not establish a precedent. Sugimoto was also willing to destroy the old lease and make a new one for no longer than twelve months at a lower rate of payment. Mr. B. Mactavish of the BCSC, who was present, informed the Council that the Commission had hoped that it and Sugimoto could settle the issue. It was a delicate matter for the BCSC because Sugimoto, who had resided in the Grand Forks district before the war, was not under its jurisdiction. However, if no compromise was possible, the Commission would support the Council in its decision.⁵⁵

Sugimoto's lawyer asked for an early decision. After Mactavish left the meeting, there was lengthy discussion. Eventually Alderman Liddicoat, who had a strong business background, proposed that the application be approved, but he got no seconder. Then Alderman Woodhouse proposed, and Alderman McDonald seconded, with Liddicoat dissenting, that "C.F. MacLean be advised that no permission will be granted to Y. Sugimoto to move into town at the present time."⁵⁶ Council ignored legal advice and continued to exclude Japanese Canadians from the city,

⁵⁴ Harold W. McInnes, Penticton, to John Hutton, City Clerk, Grand Forks, 7 September 1944, City Clerk's Correspondence.

⁵⁵ City Council Minutes, 2 October 1944.

⁵⁶ City Council Minutes, 2 October 1944.

but it was no longer unanimous in this decision. A month later, it turned on the water and light for Sugimoto, likely the result of the threat of further legal action.⁵⁷ Ironically, Sugimoto eventually became Grand Forks's longest-serving mayor, holding office from 1977 to 1996.⁵⁸

The restriction on permanent residence did not, however, apply to the dead. On 23 August 1943, Council agreed to sell a plot in Evergreen Cemetery so that a recently deceased woman, Setsue Kondo, could be interned there,⁵⁹ as the nearest crematorium was in Spokane, Washington.⁶⁰

For Japanese Canadians, the situation was beginning to improve. In December 1943, the *Grand Forks Gazette* expected Council to consider allowing them to work as domestic servants and as cleaners and graders of potatoes within the city.⁶¹ This helps to explain why Alderman Liddicoat, a businessman, was one of the first to propose rescinding the ban: Japanese Canadian labour was needed. After a resident asked about domestic labour, Council agreed to grant temporary permits for Japanese Canadians and, in some cases, for farm labourers working on their employers' produce.⁶² By this time, Japanese Canadian farm labourers had organized an association. The secretary told the *Gazette* that, in 1943, Japanese Canadians in the district spent about \$70,000 in Grand Forks businesses annually. The association may also have assisted in raising the wages of farm workers. Local farmers had been accustomed to paying Doukhobor women and teen-aged Doukhobor boys, \$1.00 to \$1.50 for a nine-to-ten-hour day. The Japanese Canadians demanded \$2.50 for women and \$3.50 for men. That also gave the Doukhobors a pay raise.⁶³ The association set the wages of girls employed as domestics at fifty cents an hour if paid on an hourly basis. Those who lived-in had to negotiate their salaries with their employers.⁶⁴

On 8 and 15 June 1944, the *Gazette*, which acquired a new editor in 1943, carried a two-part editorial – “Our Minority Problem” – on the Japanese and Doukhobor Canadians. Although problematic in many ways, its tone showed some sympathy towards the Japanese Canadians, not so much towards the Doukhobors.⁶⁵ The editor dismissed proposals

⁵⁷ City Council Minutes, 13 November 1944.

⁵⁸ Gallery 2, *GT Folio*, 5.

⁵⁹ City Council Minutes, 23 August 1943.

⁶⁰ Yoko Nishi, pers. comm., message from Parksville, BC, September 2022.

⁶¹ *Grand Forks Gazette*, 9 December 1943, 1.

⁶² *Grand Forks Gazette*, 13 January 1944, 1.

⁶³ “Doukhobor” to editor, *Grand Forks Gazette*, 15 July 1943, 5.

⁶⁴ *Grand Forks Gazette*, 27 January 1944, 1.

⁶⁵ “Our Minority Problems: The Doukhobors and Japs,” *Grand Forks Gazette*, 8 June 1944, 1.

to ship the Japanese Canadians to Japan and the Doukhobors to Russia as being neither realistic nor appropriate. He alleged that the problem resulted from the failure of the Japanese Canadians and the Doukhobors to accept their responsibility to integrate into Canadian society, as had many European immigrants.⁶⁶ At no point did he even hint that this perceived lack of assimilation might result from white racism; instead, he suggested that the Canadian government must make it clear to Japanese Canadians that they had a responsibility to assimilate and must disperse across the country.⁶⁷

By November 1944, the *Gazette* had softened its position on Japanese Canadians residing and working within the city and accused those raising “the Japanese Question” of engaging in “cheap politics.”⁶⁸ The arrival of some Japanese Canadian nurses’ aides from Greenwood and from the Sandon hospital,⁶⁹ which was being closed, relieved a staffing problem at the Grand Forks hospital even though the Sandon nurses brought some patients with them.⁷⁰ They were reportedly welcomed, and there was no apparent controversy associated with their presence. Their arrival seems to have effectively broken the ice for others. When, on 27 November 1944, L. Gaddes applied to hire two Japanese Canadian men as lumber handlers, Council, including Aldermen Woodhouse and McDonald, who had previously rejected such requests, approved.⁷¹ The tide was turning. By January 1945, Japanese Canadians still had to apply for permits to live within the city, but Council was more liberal in granting them.⁷²

EXCLUSION AND SCHOOLING

Apart from being unable to work or live within the city limits, one of the most serious challenges for Japanese Canadians was educating their children. In August 1942, the minister of education advised the BCSC that the province “cannot undertake the education of the Japanese children, nor contribute to the cost of their education.” In short, the

⁶⁶ “Our Minority Problems,” 8 June 1944, 1.

⁶⁷ “Our Minority Problems: The Doukhobors and Japs,” 15 June 1944, 2.

⁶⁸ “By the Way,” *Grand Forks Gazette*, 30 November 1944, 1.

⁶⁹ Chuck Tasaka, pers. comm., Greenwood, BC, July 2022.

⁷⁰ “Our Minority Problems,” *Grand Forks Gazette*, 8 and 15 June 1944, 1 and 2; “A ‘Mountain Goat’ with a Busy Career, Francis J. Miller, 1941–1944,” in *Mayors of Grand Forks* (Grand Forks, BC: Boundary Museum Society, 1998), 43–44.

⁷¹ City Council Minutes, 27 November 1944.

⁷² “Jap Policy Discussed,” *Grand Forks Gazette*, 11 January 1945, 1.

province told the federal government: “Japanese are your responsibility.”⁷³ In turn, in September 1942, the BCSC advised the Grand Forks School Board: “These people are classified as a self-evacuated group having been given permission by the Commission to join and work for Japanese families already located within the Grand Forks area. At the time these permits were granted, it was clearly stated to the Japanese that the Commission assumed no liability for the education of their children.” Thus, the BCSC explained, “any arrangement re the cost of education will have to be made between the Japanese and the schools in question.”⁷⁴

Subsequently, the School Board and the BCSC reached an agreement whereby the BCSC would pay half the cost, and Japanese Canadians, who were not ratepayers, would pay the other half and the BCSC also agreed to pay the full cost of any students who could not pay their share.⁷⁵ Thus, in February 1943, when a delegation of “parents and taxpayers” asked the School Board about the cost of educating the children, the Board was able to ease their concerns.⁷⁶ Later, a go-between, probably Fred Nishi, connected the school system and the Japanese Canadian community.⁷⁷

Under the arrangement, the children began attending an all-Japanese Canadian class of forty-two students from grades 1 to 8 with a single teacher, Mrs. Stevenson.⁷⁸ By May 1943, Mrs. C.V. Booth, who, from Vancouver, oversaw the BCSC schools in the internment camps, reported: “Progress in all grades in Grand Forks is excellent, except in English ... The Japanese Canadian children have been grouped together in special classes, but next year they will be distributed through the regular classes.” She added that opposition to including them in the schools had “practically disappeared.”⁷⁹ That opposition was initially justified by claims that the children should be segregated to prevent the introduction of tuberculosis.⁸⁰ To appease worried white parents, the School Board had the children examined by a physician, who found no problems.⁸¹ The Royal Canadian Mounted Police officer in charge at Grand Forks agreed that tuberculosis was a concern, but segregation was

⁷³ H.G.T. Perry to J.A. Tyrwhitt, 15 and 28 August 1942, file 503, vol. 13, RG 36/27, British Columbia Security Commission Records (hereafter BCSCR), LAC.

⁷⁴ Tyrwhitt to John A. Hutton, 23 September 1942, file 500, vol. 12, BCSCR, LAC.

⁷⁵ Chieko Tasaka (née Tanaka).

⁷⁶ “Delegation Waits on School Board re Japanese Pupils,” *Grand Forks Gazette*, 18 February 1943, 1.

⁷⁷ Chuck Tasaka, pers. comm., Greenwood, BC, August 2022.

⁷⁸ Yoshida “Evacuation to Grand Forks,” 160; *Grand Forks Gazette*, 4 March 1943, 1.

⁷⁹ C.V. Booth, Monthly Education Report, May 1943, file 513, vol. 13, BCSCR, LAC.

⁸⁰ Chuck Tasaka, pers. comm., Greenwood, BC, July 2022.

⁸¹ *Grand Forks Gazette*, 18 February 1943, 1.

for pedagogical reasons as the students had missed at least half a year of schooling.⁸² Beginning in September 1943, the students joined the regular public school classes appropriate to their grade.⁸³ Since they lived outside the city, they shared the school bus ride with other students.⁸⁴

There was no question about separate classes in the high school: without the Japanese Canadian students, the provincial per capita grant would fall and it would be necessary to lay off one teacher. Because the BCSC only provided education to the end of grade 8, high school students had to pay tuition fees. At least one father, Mr. Takasaki, who held older Japanese values, did not think that girls needed high school education and so refused to pay for his two daughters but willingly paid for his eldest son.⁸⁵

The requirement that parents contribute to the cost of their children's education continued for a time after the war. It is likely that Shoichi Nishi collected from all the families, provided them with receipts (see Figure 1), and paid the School Board a lump sum. Showing the concern of some parents for the education of their children, this sum of fifteen dollars, five dollars for each of his three children, was a tremendous financial burden, 30 percent of his income, for he only earned fifty dollars a month at the sawmill.⁸⁶

Many students excelled in academics and athletics.⁸⁷ On 8 March 1943, the *New Canadian* reported that three girls were excelling on the high school basketball team, while a boy was one of the best players on the hockey team.⁸⁸ Unfortunately, when the basketball team went to nearby Curlew, Washington, for a game, it had to leave some of the best players at home because Japanese Canadians could not enter the United States.⁸⁹ At the end of the 1943 school year, eight Japanese Canadian students graduated from the Grand Forks High School.⁹⁰

⁸² J.E. Murton, constable in charge Grand Forks, Report, 3 March 1943, file 129, vol. 4, RG36/2, BCSCR, LAC.

⁸³ Edward Yoshida, pers. comm., telephone to Toronto, August 2022; Ronald Nishi, pers. comm., telephone to North York, September 2022. Miss Stevenson was likely the "elderly teacher" who came from Rossland to teach this class. See J.E. Murton, constable in charge Grand Forks, Report, 31 January 1943, file 129, vol. 4, RG36/2, BCSCR, LAC.

⁸⁴ Ruth Coles, pers. comm., telephone to Burnaby, BC, August 2022.

⁸⁵ Randy Enomoto, ed., *Honouring Our People Breaking the Silence* (Vancouver: Greater Vancouver Japanese Canadian Citizens' Association, 2016), 160.

⁸⁶ Seiji Mathsuo, pers. comm., Grand Forks, BC, July 2022.

⁸⁷ Yoshida, "Evacuation to Grand Forks," 161.

⁸⁸ "Grand Forks High Students," *New Canadian*, 8 March 1943, 9.

⁸⁹ *Grand Forks Gazette*, 17 February 1944, 1.

⁹⁰ "Grand Forks Graduates," *New Canadian*, 10 July 1943, 9.

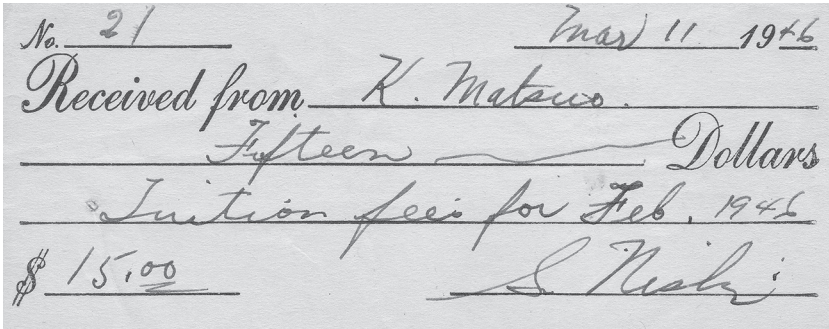


Figure 1. CAN\$15 receipt for school fees in Grand Forks from S. Nishi to K. Matsuo, 11 March 1946, complements of Seiji Matsuo, copy made by Ian Baird with permission.

The integration of Doukhobors and Japanese Canadian students continued. Both groups, for example, were involved in preparing the 1948–49 issue of the *Periscope*, a publication of the Journalism Club of the Grand Forks High School. Ronald Nishi mainly got to know Doukhobors at school;⁹¹ by the time Edward Yoshida graduated from high school in 1952, about half the students in his graduating class were Doukhobors.⁹² Unfortunately, a Doukhobor informant recalled, teachers discriminated against both Doukhobors and Japanese Canadians and abused them mentally. “There was,” he remembered, “a lot of evil in the Anglo-Saxons at the time.”⁹³ Such shared experiences created a certain type of contact zone of two persecuted groups of people.

THE DOUKHOBORES AND THE JAPANESE CANADIANS

When the coastal Japanese Canadians arrived, they soon met some of the approximately four thousand Doukhobors who lived in the Grand Forks area,⁹⁴ about half the population.⁹⁵ In 1899, the Doukhobors, who were pacifists, emigrated from Russia to what became Saskatchewan. The Canadian government promised that they and their descendants would be exempt from compulsory military service and that the original

⁹¹ Ronald Nishi, pers. comm., telephone to North York, ON, September 2022.

⁹² Edward Yoshida, pers. comm., telephone to Toronto, 28 October 2022. In 1952, Edward Yoshida’s family moved to Richmond, BC, on the coast. Therefore, he graduated from high school in Richmond rather than in Grand Forks.

⁹³ Peter Rezansoff, pers. comm., telephone to Grand Forks, August 2022.

⁹⁴ Harry Hawthorn, ed., *The Doukhobors of British Columbia* (Vancouver and Toronto: J.M. Dent, 1955), 253.

⁹⁵ Gregory J. Cran, *Negotiating Buck Naked: Doukhobors, Public Policy and Conflict Resolution* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2006), 93.

arrivals would receive land for virtually nothing save the hard work of bringing it into production. Gaining title to the land under the *Homestead Act*, however, required swearing allegiance to the Crown and accepting the land in individual plots. Since many Doukhobors would only swear allegiance to God and wanted to follow a communal lifestyle, their leader, Peter the Lordly Verigin, formed a corporation, the Christian Community of Universal Brotherhood (CCUB), to manage the economic activities of the community. On behalf of himself and about a thousand others who were unwilling to follow the obligations of the *Homestead Act*, in the name of the CCUB, Verigin bought land in British Columbia, including, as of 1912, 4,182 acres (1,692 hectares) just outside the Grand Forks city limits. Some of it was already producing fruit. The new settlers at Grand Forks added to the existing orchards, planted grapevines, and built a sawmill and brickworks.⁹⁶ Because they lived communally, they tended to deal with wholesalers rather than local retailers when they needed goods they could not produce themselves. This caused resentment in Grand Forks. In addition, a breakaway sect, the Sons of Freedom, a minority who wanted freedom from government control, refused to send their children to public schools or to register vital statistics and used nude parades and arson as a form of protest. However, the majority of the Doukhobors were peaceful and sent their children to public schools.

After Verigin's death in a mysterious explosion in 1924 at Grand Forks, the Doukhobor community suffered serious problems with its leadership. The CCUB's financial situation deteriorated. At the same time factionalism within the community increased, as did arson, bombings, and nude parades by the dissidents. Since public nudity had recently been made an offence under the *Criminal Code*, in 1932 almost six hundred Sons of Freedom were jailed for up to three years each. Although most were not from the Grand Forks area, many wanted to settle near there after their release, but the CCUB, which controlled the land, would not let them. According to T.A. Love, the editor of the *Grand Forks Gazette*, they "were parking themselves within the city limits." He warned that Grand Forks must not become "a dumping ground for several hundred fanatic Doukhobors."⁹⁷ Love did not report on their departure from the city, but the *Gazette* reported increased depredations. Love blamed the senior governments for not making "the Doukhobors obey the laws of the land."⁹⁸ He used this argument as the Conservative candidate in the

⁹⁶ William Blakemore, *Report of Royal Commission on Matters Relating to the Sect of Doukhobors in the Province of British Columbia* (Victoria, BC: King's Printer, 1913), T31-T33.

⁹⁷ *Grand Forks Gazette*, 21 February 1935, 1.

⁹⁸ *Grand Forks Gazette*, 6 May 1937, 1.

1937 provincial election. It did not help him then, but four years later, in a campaign that he won by five votes over the Liberal incumbent, he attacked the provincial government for spending \$200,000 of public money to purchase land for the Doukhobors and permitting them to “live on tax-free land” and to “perpetuate” their community life.⁹⁹

When the creditors – banks and insurance companies – foreclosed on the CCUB, the provincial government bought the land in what it called a “humane gesture,” namely, not forcing the people, many of whom were peaceful and law abiding, off the land.¹⁰⁰ Love did not have to worry about the Doukhobor vote as, in 1931, the province had disfranchised them and their descendants. In the debate on disfranchisement, Dr. H.C. Kingston, the Conservative MLA for Grand Forks-Greenwood, referred to them as a “kindly people” but claimed that the “great majority” were “not yet fitted” for the right to vote.¹⁰¹ The provincial action also meant they could not vote in federal elections.¹⁰² As the Second World War approached, the Doukhobors, due to their refusal to become involved in violent conflict, also denied to register for military conscription, due to their refusal to become involved in violent conflict.¹⁰³ As a result, they were discriminated against, and twice, in 1917 and again between 1934 and 1955, they asked for and were refused the right to vote.¹⁰⁴ They were allowed to live in the city limits of Grand Forks, unlike the Japanese Canadians later, but could not vote. Because their pacifist convictions were interpreted as being disloyal to Canada, they were surveilled and discriminated against.

Unlike Lemon Creek, where the BCSC erected a fence ostensibly to protect residents from arson by the Sons of Freedom¹⁰⁵ (Japanese Canadians thought it was built to deny them the opportunity to buy relatively cheap fresh produce¹⁰⁶), in Grand Forks, Japanese Canadians and Doukhobors interacted in contact zones, overlapping spaces – including farms outside the city limits and schools.¹⁰⁷ According to Peter Rezansoff,

⁹⁹ *Grand Forks Gazette*, 11 and 18 September 1941, 1 and 1.

¹⁰⁰ *Grand Forks Gazette*, 16 October 1941, 1.

¹⁰¹ *Grand Forks Gazette*, 31 March 1931, 1.

¹⁰² Unless otherwise noted, this paragraph draws mainly on George Woodcock and Ivan Avakumovic, *The Doukhobors* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968); Harry B. Hawthorn, *Doukhobors of British Columbia* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1955), chap. 3 and 209–13.

¹⁰³ Koozma J. Tarasoff, *Plakun Trava: The Doukhobors* (Grand Forks, BC: Mir Publication Society, 1982).

¹⁰⁴ Tarasoff, *Plakun Trava*, 1982.

¹⁰⁵ Sunahara, *Politics of Racism*, 96.

¹⁰⁶ Sunahara, 91. Later, some young Japanese Canadians tore down the fence (Chuck Tasaka, pers. comm., Greenwood, BC, July 2022).

¹⁰⁷ Pratt, “Arts of the Contact Zone.”

who grew up living close to Japanese Canadians and went to school with them, the Doukhobors believed in welcoming and so accepted Japanese Canadians despite serious linguistic, culinary, and belief differences.¹⁰⁸

One Japanese Canadian interviewee, who was a child during the Second World War, did not personally sense a lot of discrimination but felt aligned with the Doukhobors because they, too, felt unwanted. Some of her best friends were Doukhobors. She even learned to sing some Russian songs and to make borscht, a staple of the Doukhobor diet.¹⁰⁹ Several other Japanese Canadians who were children at the time remembered having had good Doukhobor friends.¹¹⁰

Most Doukhobor families lived on farms outside the city limits. Some had surplus housing which they rented to Japanese Canadian families. Although few Doukhobors engaged in large-scale agriculture, most had small gardens and kept chickens. As vegetarians, they were happy to sell roosters at twenty-five cents each.¹¹¹ Many Japanese Canadians at Grand Forks also had small gardens, thus, unlike the residents of the Lemon Creek Internment Centre, they did not need the Doukhobors' fresh produce.

Agriculture was a major industry, but there was also some lumbering. Under a long-standing provincial law, Chinese and Japanese were forbidden to work on Crown timber lands or on the lands that many logging companies leased from the provincial government. Because of the need for lumber and a shortage of labour during the war, the federal government, under the *War Measures Act*, overrode the provincial legislation. Earlier, however, Japanese Canadians did work on privately owned land and in sawmills. When the federal regulations were about to expire after the war, the provincial government proposed to reinstate its prohibition on their employment. Among those who protested this was the Grand Forks local of the BC Teachers' Federation.¹¹²

The Japanese Canadians appreciated the assistance of the Doukhobors. The *New Canadian*, a weekly newspaper published in Kaslo (in both English and Japanese) to keep Japanese Canadians informed of government policies and of the doings of their scattered friends and relations, often praised the Doukhobors for their assistance.¹¹³ It also

¹⁰⁸ Peter Rezanoff, pers. comm., telephone to Grand Forks, BC, August 2022.

¹⁰⁹ Yoko Nishi, pers. comm., Parksville, BC, August 2022.

¹¹⁰ Ronald Nishi, pers. comm., telephone to North York, ON, September 2022; Chuck Tasaka, pers. comm., Greenwood, BC, August 2022.

¹¹¹ Yoshida, "Evacuation to Grand Forks"; Edward Yoshida, pers. comm., telephone to Toronto, ON, August 2022.

¹¹² *Grand Forks Gazette*, 9 February 1948, 1.

¹¹³ Peter Rezanoff, pers. comm., telephone to Grand Forks, BC, August 2022.

explained their history to its readers. For example, on 4 March 1944, it wisely noted: "One may readily note a lack of unbiased, scientific material on the Doukhobors since their arrival in Canada even more striking than the same lack of respect for Oriental minorities. And while the story of burning schools and nude parades seems to be common knowledge, little is heard of the ostracism and discrimination in many avenues of life which has required the Doukhobor community to rely upon itself, its stern religious doctrine and its own frugality and industry for adequate survival."¹¹⁴

When John (Ivan) W. Sherbinin, who had come to Canada in 1899, died in 1946, a delegation from the Japanese Canadian community attended his funeral in Grand Forks. One of them spoke of how he had been "a great help" in "their rehabilitation." In a published sympathy letter to Sherbinin's family, Y. Maeda wrote: "he was a big hearted and generous man, and we as Japanese loved him very much." Sherbinin owned a large sawmill at Midway, fifty-five kilometres west of Grand Forks, and associated logging operations, and he employed many Japanese Canadians.¹¹⁵

Meanwhile, on the coast, where it was strongest, the International Woodworkers of America (IWA) had been organizing Asian workers for several years.¹¹⁶ In 1946, after a major strike, it was seeking to expand its membership in the interior. It hired a Canadian-born Japanese Canadian and a Doukhobor to explain to potential union members its new agreement with interior sawmills. Harold Pritchett, the president of the IWA and a communist, said: "As long as private operators hire Japanese and Doukhobors, we have to organize them or they are a threat to the standards of other Canadian workers. In any case, our union does not discriminate on the ground of race, creed, or color."¹¹⁷ Not until 1953, however, did the IWA have much success in organizing the Doukhobors, and by then many of the Japanese Canadians had left the area.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁴ "A familiar pattern," *New Canadian*, 4 March 1944, 9.

¹¹⁵ *Grand Forks Gazette*, 28 March 1946, 1.

¹¹⁶ Gordon Hak, *Capital and Labour: In the British Columbia Forest Industry, 1934–1974* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007), 82.

¹¹⁷ "IWA Appoints Jap, Douk Interpreters," *Grand Forks Gazette*, 15 August 1946, 7.

¹¹⁸ Hawthorn, *Doukhobors*, 86–87.

GOING TO JAPAN

In August 1944, Prime Minister Mackenzie King announced that any “disloyal” Japanese Canadians would be deported but that those who were “loyal” could remain in Canada, provided they left British Columbia and dispersed across the country. Although no process was established to determine “loyalty,” in the spring of 1945, Japanese Canadians were required to inform the government whether they would go to Japan after the war or settle east of the Rocky Mountains. At least eight people from the Grand Forks area chose to go to Japan.¹¹⁹ By then, there was strong opposition in Canada, even in the *Grand Forks Gazette*, to the “repatriation” (deportation) of Canadian citizens of Japanese ancestry.¹²⁰ These changes indicated a softening of opposition to Japanese Canadians and increasing sympathy for their cause.¹²¹ After the war, and especially after 31 March 1949, when all restrictions on their movement were lifted, many Japanese Canadians left the Grand Forks area for the coast or for other parts of Canada. The *War Measures Act* prevented them from returning to the coast until then. Thus, the contact zone between the Japanese and Doukhobor Canadians was temporarily limited due to Canadian government policy up until 1949.

THOMAS LOVE AND THE VOTE

Over the course of the war years, the attitudes of Anglo-Canadians in Grand Forks towards Japanese Canadians and the Doukhobors changed dramatically. When Grand Forks celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of its incorporation as a city, a historical pageant included vignettes by both young Doukhobors and Japanese Canadians.¹²² The best example of this change, however, was seen in Thomas Love (Coalition, Grand Forks-Greenwood), who had opposed the coming of the Japanese Canadians in 1942.

In 1947, the provincial legislature enfranchised Chinese and “East Indians” who were otherwise qualified to vote, but it continued to deny the franchise to Japanese Canadians. In 1948, however, the federal government enfranchised them. Provincially, on 7 March 1949, Love told an assembly organized by the National Japanese Canadian Citizen’s Association (NJCCA) that, in his constituency, Japanese Canadians were

¹¹⁹ “Local Japanese Return to Japan This Week,” *Grand Forks Gazette*, 30 May 1946, 1.

¹²⁰ “Protest against Jap Policy Growing,” *Grand Forks Gazette*, 8 November 1945, 2; “Should the Canadian Japanese Be Repatriated?,” *Grand Forks Gazette*, 17 January 1946, 4.

¹²¹ Sunahara, *Politics of Racism*, 131–32.

¹²² *Grand Forks Gazette*, 10 July 1947, 1.

“readily accepted into society.” He stated: “these Canadians should be given the vote and they should be given it promptly.”¹²³ Momentum was building, and, soon after, George Tanaka, on behalf of the BC Japanese Canadian Citizens Association (BCJCCA),¹²⁴ released a petition calling for the right to vote and went to Victoria to lobby the provincial government. A week after Tanaka met Premier Byron Ingemar “Boss” Johnson, the latter introduced an amendment to the British Columbia *Elections Act* to enfranchise Japanese Canadians and “native Indians” but not Doukhobors. The amendment passed with little difficulty.¹²⁵ Love, who in 1942 had strongly opposed them, commented that Japanese Canadians “were becoming accepted citizens in the interior” and had “earned and won their way into positions that represent education and ability and find themselves accepted in society.”¹²⁶

Before the June 1949 provincial elections, Love advertised in the *New Canadian*: “The BC Coalition Government which gave the Japanese-Canadians the Vote. In Greenwood-Grand Forks, vote for Tom Love.” He declared that people in his area “have come to trust the Japanese as friends and neighbors, while on their side the Japanese wish to continue a happy residence there.”¹²⁷ The Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) also advertised in the *New Canadian*. The local Coalition organizer claimed that Japanese Canadian leaders had told him that the 370 Japanese Canadians in the riding would vote for Love. The organizer claimed that the Japanese Canadians voted solidly against the Coalition,¹²⁸ Love lost to the CCF candidate by forty-nine votes. Since the ballot was secret, it is not possible to verify this claim, but, given the CCF’s long-standing support for Japanese Canadian enfranchisement, it is quite plausible.¹²⁹ It is unclear whether Love’s position regarding Japanese Canadians benefited or hurt his campaign with other voters.

¹²³ Gallery 2, *GT Folio*, 6.

¹²⁴ Gallery 2.

¹²⁵ Roy, *Triumph of Citizenship*, 230–31; Gallery 2, *GT Folio*, 6.

¹²⁶ Quoted in Roy, *Triumph of Citizenship*, 230.

¹²⁷ *Vancouver Sun*, “Japanese entitled to vote,” 11 March 1949.

¹²⁸ The Coalition, of course, denied the franchise to Japanese Canadians when the matter came up in 1947 although not all Coalition members of the Elections Committee agreed with that.

¹²⁹ Roy, *Triumph of Citizenship*, 231.

COMPARISONS AND CONCLUSIONS

In 1942, Grand Forks was not the only interior BC community to refuse to accept Japanese Canadians.¹³⁰ For example, the self-supporting Japanese Canadians in East Lillooet were interned across the river from the main townsite and needed a special police permit to cross a bridge to enter town. At Silverton, six kilometres from New Denver, road signs made it clear that Japanese Canadians were not wanted.¹³¹ Kelowna City Council also prohibited Japanese Canadians from living within its city limits.¹³² Initially, the City of Toronto prohibited Japanese Canadians from settling and working there.

Greenwood, thirty-five kilometres to the west of Grand Forks, had also prospered during the mining boom, but responded quite differently. By 1941, although still an incorporated city, it was little more than a ghost town with a population of 363. About twelve hundred Japanese Canadians settled there. Although technically an internment camp, it had some attributes of a self-supporting settlement. Roman Catholic missionary priests who had worked with the Japanese Canadians in Vancouver came with an order of nuns who established a school. Catholics were prominent but not dominant in Greenwood. In any event, after a brief period of trepidation, the established population largely accepted the newcomers.¹³³ In March 1942, Mayor W.E. McArthur, who was also the president of the Greenwood Board of Trade, told the Southern Interior Board of Trade that, because they could not be fully assimilated, all people of Japanese descent should be sent to Japan after the Second World War.¹³⁴ By 1946, he was arguing that they should not be forced to leave Greenwood,¹³⁵ demonstrating how some individuals' ideas changed in these new contact zones.

Twenty-seven kilometres east of Grand Forks, about one hundred Japanese Canadians took over the Alpine Inn, a resort hotel, and established a self-supporting community at Christina Lake, yet another contact zone between Japanese Canadians and Anglo-Canadians. Many Japanese Canadian men found employment in a nearby sawmill, and

¹³⁰ Roy, *Triumph of Citizenship*, 67.

¹³¹ Greg Nesteroff, pers. comm., telephone to Nelson, BC, September 2022.

¹³² Roy, "Tale of Two Cities," 33.

¹³³ Chuck Tasaka, *My Hometown, My Furusato: Family History of Greenwood-Midway* (Vancouver: self-published, 2014). Another centre in which religion eased the reception of the Japanese was Kaslo. See Roy, "Tale of Two Cities," which compares Kelowna and Kaslo, BC.

¹³⁴ *Penticton Herald*, 19 March 1942, 1.

¹³⁵ Chuck Tasaka, pers. comm., Greenwood, BC, August 2022.

relations with English-speaking inhabitants of the area were generally good.

While focusing on Japanese Canadians and the evolution of their experiences in the Grand Forks area, this article also looks at the contact zone between them and the Doukhobors. Despite linguistic and cultural differences – and there were times of tension at least on an individual level – the Doukhobors were generally sympathetic to the Japanese Canadians, partially because their belief system encouraged them to accept everyone but also because both faced considerable state-based discrimination. This connection was strengthened because Japanese Canadians often lived, worked, and went to school with Doukhobors, thus bringing the two groups together despite their differences.

Following the Second World War, the relationship between Japanese Canadians and Anglo-Canadian settlers gradually improved. While most Japanese Canadians eventually moved away from the Grand Forks area, most Doukhobors stayed. In addition, while Japanese Canadians gained the right to vote in 1949, it took six more years for Doukhobors to receive the same right.

What all this points to is a broad landscape of contact zones, places where different groups interacted, including those with more power and those with less, but also spaces where different oppressed groups, like the Japanese Canadians and the Doukhobors, significantly interacted. Moreover, these contact zones were not stagnant; rather, they shifted over time, depending on broader political circumstances as well as on growing familiarity among the various groups that came into contact with one another. We need to see contact zones as existing in many shapes and sizes and as always being in flux. Ultimately, the idea of contact zones offers us a useful analytic framework. In this case, it demonstrates how, over time, three groups experienced changing power relations and alliances.

EPILOGUE

Indicative of how appreciative some Japanese Canadians were, of the Doukhobors, and the endurance of contact zone connections was a ceremony in the summer of 2016, at which Pastor Dr. George Takeshima and the Nikkei Cultural Society of Lethbridge awarded a plaque to the Doukhobors to thank them for their assistance during the war. According to the *Rossland Telegraph*, “The Doukhobors provided produce to help

with preparation for the first winter the internees had to face.”¹³⁶ At the ceremony, J.J. Verigin, a direct descendant of the Doukhobor leader during the Second World War, and a representative of the Doukhobors, explained that his people sympathized with the Japanese Canadians because, for generations, they had also had their own challenges with various governments. He presented Pastor Takashima with a hand-carved Doukhobor soup ladle, a symbol of peace and friendship.

A few months later, on 8 November 2016, Japan’s consul general in Canada visited the Doukhobors in Castlegar. The embassy website declared: “When Japanese Canadians were uprooted from the west coast and sent to Internment camps in West Kootenay in 1942, the Doukhobors helped to settle the Japanese-Canadians. Thanks to the kind and warm support of the Doukhobors, the interned Japanese-Canadians were able to prepare and overcome the first winter they had to face.”¹³⁷ Although the Japanese Canadians at Grand Forks were not in camps, the generalization about the assistance of the Doukhobors applies to them. It also indicates how contact zones created long-term memories that affected people’s understandings.

¹³⁶ “Japanese Visitors Honour Doukhobor Community for Past Kindness,” *Rossland Telegraph*, 14 September 2016, 1.

¹³⁷ Japan Embassy, “Consul General Okai Visits Doukhobor Discovery Centre,” 18 November 2016, https://www.vancouver.ca.emb-japan.go.jp/itpr_en/00_000407.html.