

REPORT OF THE ROYAL COMMISSION
APPOINTED PURSUANT TO ORDER-IN-COUNCIL,
P.C. # 9498, TO ENQUIRE INTO THE PROVISIONS
MADE FOR THE WELFARE AND MAINTENANCE OF
PERSONS OF THE JAPANESE RACE RESIDENT IN
SETTLEMENTS IN THE PROVINCE OF BRITISH
COLUMBIA

Pursuant to the provisions of P.C. Number 9498,
of December 14th, 1943, which reads in part as follows:-

" The Committee of the Privy Council have had before them a report, dated December 9th, 1943, from the Minister of Labour, representing with reference to Order-in-Council, P.C. 946 of February 5th, 1942, which empowers the Minister of Labour to make provision for the maintenance and welfare of the persons of the Japanese race evacuated from the protected areas of British Columbia, that it is deemed advisable that an inquiry be made into the present provision made for the maintenance and welfare of persons of the Japanese race resident in settlements in the interior of British Columbia under the administration of the Department of Labour, by the appointment of a Commission for an immediate inquiry into such matters and to report thereon to the Minister of Labour in respect thereto."

" The Minister therefore recommends that Dr. F.W. Jackson, Deputy Minister of Health and Public Welfare, Province of Manitoba, Dr. G.F. Davidson, Executive Secretary, Canadian Welfare Council, Ottawa, W. R. Bone, Administrator of Social Services, City of Vancouver, and Mrs. Mary Sutherland, Revelstoke, B.C., be appointed Commissioners under Part I of the Inquiries Act, to inquire into the provision made for the welfare and maintenance of persons of the Japanese race resident in the settlements in the Province of British Columbia under the administration of the Department of Labour and to report thereon to the Minister of Labour, together with such recommendations as to further measures to be taken with regard thereto as the Commission deems advisable and that Dr. F.W. Jackson be the Chairman of such Commission; "

Your Commissioners so appointed met in Vancouver on December 20th and extended their investigations and hearings over the period to January 12th, 1944.

At the first meeting held in the offices of the British Columbia Security Commission, 360 Homer Street, Vancouver, the organization of Your Commission's activities and the method of procedure for Your Commission's inquiry were discussed and determined.

Mr. George Collins, Commissioner, B.C. Security Commission, was invited to be present to outline the administrative policy in respect to the care of the persons of the Japanese race resident in the Interior Settlements. It was decided to proceed to Tashme immediately to obtain a picture of the general conditions, and to become acquainted with the problems likely to be encountered. A letter was sent to all Settlements inviting their Japanese Camp Committees to appear before Your Commission and make representations in writing respecting matters of complaint. It was agreed that these meetings would be informal and would be held in camera, but that the written brief and the transcript of discussion at the time of presentation should be certified and signed for the Japanese Camp Committee. These form appendices B and C, 8 to 15 inclusive.

Based on the experience gained on the visit to Tashme, the following procedure for investigation of other camps was decided upon as generally applicable:-

1. Discussion on camp management with the camp supervisor,
2. Meeting with the Japanese Camp Committee,
3. Investigation of all situations alleged by the Japanese Camp Committee to be undesirable, and visits to all parts of the Settlement accompanied by members of the Japanese Camp Committees,
4. A final discussion with the Settlement executives,

Your Commission from the beginning was aware of the difficulty of finding an adequate "yardstick" by which to appraise the welfare and maintenance of the persons of the Japanese race resident in the Interior Settlements.

It was agreed that the following criteria should be applied:-

1. The physical condition of the people; including that of the children, and a comparison with their pre-evacuation condition as recorded in obtainable health records;
2. The adequacy of maintenance rates for indigent families to be determined by comparison with their pre-evacuation standard of living and with the standard of other persons receiving public aid;
3. The adequacy of housing conditions as determined by a comparison with their pre-evacuation dwellings, by their suitability for climatic conditions, and the availability of building materials;
4. The extent of opportunity for occupation on a self-supporting basis as compared with pre-evacuation opportunities;
5. The adequacy of the educational programme and school facilities for the children in the Interior Settlements;
6. Availability and use of Japanese assets.

The complaints most frequently encountered in Your Commission's investigation of the Settlements were:-

1. That the maintenance rates for indigent Japanese are insufficient to buy adequate food at prevailing prices;
2. That houses are overcrowded, unsafe during winter weather, and unsuited to severe climatic conditions;
3. That the supply of fuel is inefficiently distributed and of inferior quality;
4. That there is unreasonable delay in supplying needed clothing and shoes to families on maintenance;
5. That the health of the people is adversely affected by inadequate housing and insufficient food and that this has resulted in increased illness and malnutrition of children;
6. That there is a lack of facilities for indoor recreation during winter months, especially for children.

A D M I N I S T R A T I O N

Your Commission, as instructed, has made an extensive and thorough investigation of the welfare and maintenance of the people of the Japanese race in Interior Settlements. It records its admiration for the splendid piece of work executed by the original B.C. Security Commission in its task of evacuating twenty-three thousand persons from the Defence Area to temporary residence elsewhere. There was no precedent to follow. The construction problem alone, during the peak of war stringency of materials was a gigantic achievement. The evacuation of these people with, so far as Your Commission can find, a minimum of hardship is a matter for congratulation.

Your Commission is impressed with the generally adequate administration of the program in the Settlements by the Department of Labour of the Dominion Government through its instrument, the B.C. Security Commission. The B.C. Security Commission functions on the whole efficiently and would appear to be adequate for the carrying out of the policy established by the Government. The co-ordination of the various local administrative units is good. The office quarters from which the B.C. Security Commission operates, although originally sufficient are, at present, overcrowded. No provision is made for a rest room for the female staff.

The local administrations at the various Interior Settlements are located in suitable quarters and the administrative work, generally speaking, is efficient. A large percentage of the staffs at each local administration office is recruited from the residents of the Settlements.

In the following pages Your Commission has set forth its findings and recommendations in categorical fashion. In stating its findings, Your Commission draws attention to this fact, that the Interior Settlement projects are a temporary

the Department of Labour to be, "A step in the evacuation process and a training ground for employment.... in the Prairies and the East." (1) It has never been the policy so far as Your Commission can learn, to develop the Settlements with any contemplation of permanency. With this your Commission is in entire accord. Consequently, in evaluating the welfare and maintenance of the people in the Interior Settlements, the temporary aspect of the provisions should be borne in mind at all times.

The appendices contain the details of the representations made to Your Commission and other supporting data.

M A I N T E N A N C E

F I N D I N G S

All indigents except certain groups of older persons in the Interior Settlements receive their maintenance in cash and purchase their food at Commission or local stores. Your Commission received no complaints in respect to food obtainable. Foods inspected in the stores were of average or better quality. There was a fair range of cheaper cuts of meat and fish, as well as of the more expensive varieties. In all the Settlements Japanese were encouraged to, and did, use all available land for garden purposes.

Every representation made by Japanese camp committees requested an increase in the present food maintenance rates, despite the fact that the rates of food maintenance of the B.C. Security Commission are slightly higher than the provincial social assistance rate, that of the City of Vancouver for Orientals and that given by the Department of Pensions and National Health for war pensioners requiring supplemental assistance.

In support of their argument some of the Japanese camp committees contended that the Occidental in receipt of food

Source: Nikkei National Museum, 2018-46-1-37-1-5
www.nikkeimuseum.org

allowance with money earned at casual labour than the Japanese. With this Your Commission does not agree having in mind that only unemployable Occidentals are on public assistance at the present time.

Your Commission has made no attempt to ascertain whether any of the food rates above-mentioned are adequate, but the evidence of the Health Examinations of school children together with the general improvement in health shows that the food obtained by the Japanese in the Interior Settlements is sufficient to maintain health, proper growth and development. (1)

Representations were also made in respect to clothing and fuel. In regard to clothing there was no complaint regarding quality. It was generally alleged that the interval between the issuance of the requisition and the delivery of the clothing was too long. The supply and quality of the wood was generally found satisfactory.

R E C O M M E N D A T I O N

Your Commission recommends that there be no increase in the present food maintenance rates for employable persons and their dependents. It believes it to be in the best interests of both the Japanese themselves and the public that the employable persons should accept preferred work instead of maintenance at public expense. Your Commission further recommends an increase of not more than 10% in the food maintenance rates in the case of the aged, infirm and unemployable persons and their dependents, to be granted at the discretion of the Welfare department. It is recognized that in the case of this entire group its food maintenance rates cannot be augmented by casual labour to cover necessities other than foodstuffs.

S H E L T E R

F I N D I N G S

Your Commission after an extensive investigation of all housing in the Settlements saw no evidence to substantiate

the complaint that the new housing erected by the B.C. Security Commission was of unsafe construction. Although this housing is only of a temporary nature many houses have been winterized through the initiative of the occupants and with the assistance of the B.C. Security Commission in supplying materials.

Due to the urgency of the evacuation problem a number of unsuitable, unsafe vacant buildings in some Interior Settlements were made into multiple dwellings and are still being used for this purpose.

Your Commission inspected the former Japanese housing on Powell Street in Vancouver, at Steveston and several cannery settlements on the lower Fraser. The new housing as erected by the B.C. Security Commission is superior to that which Your Commission visited. The buildings in the Interior Settlements which are divided into apartments while in most cases unsafe and undesirable are, Your Commission believes, equal to the quarters previously occupied by those Japanese who formerly resided in the Powell Street area.

In respect to the complaint of overcrowding Your Commission finds that especially in remodelled buildings this applies. This, however, must be viewed in the light of pre-evacuation living standards of the Japanese of Canada and of existing conditions in many Occidental communities during war-time. This situation is being alleviated as the Japanese families cooperate with the B.C. Security Commission in moving to outside employment and rearranging the family groupings within the settlement. Much more can be done in this connection when the B.C. Security Commission has more co-operation from the Japanese.

R E C O M M E N D A T I O N

Your Commission recommends that the B.C. Security Commission continue the policy of winterizing houses for those unable to do the work themselves and of making available the necessary materials for the others. Your Commission further

recommends the continuation and expansion of the present programme of outside placement and the rearrangement of the families in the existing accommodation believing that the solution to the problem lies in this direction rather than in providing extra housing. In this connection particular attention should be given to the transfer of families from old remodelled buildings to Commission erected housing as space becomes available.

EMPLOYMENT

FINDINGS

Your Commission has examined the productive work and special industries provided by the B.C. Security Commission for the residents of the Settlements. These have been developed to a commendable degree of efficiency. It is the opinion of Your Commission that except in occasional circumstances not a great deal more can be done. This view is arrived at having due consideration to available raw materials, the location of the Settlements and the skill of the residents. Your Commission is impressed with the fact that those in remunerative occupation in the camps are the better-educated and trained, the more efficient and generally more personable individuals. It is the opinion of Your Commission that persons so occupied are those that could most readily fit into outside employment. Your Commission approves the policy of the Department of Labour in considering the Interior Settlements as Clearing-stations, and Training centres. (1) The policy of dispersing the Japanese across Canada in productive, self-supporting employment singly, in small groups or family units where they have the opportunity of being assimilated into local community life, Your Commission

(1) APPENDIX 2 PAGE 3 PARAGRAPH 2

believes to be in the best interests of Canada and of the persons of the Japanese race themselves. Respecting the complaint of unfairness in withholding maintenance from single employable persons 18 years of age and over with Canadian citizenship who refuse to accept suitable remunerative employment offered, Your Commission accepts this policy as fair and sound and a necessary step in the re-establishment of the individual in self-supporting employment. Your Commission is of the opinion that this policy should also apply to Japanese Nationals. From all information available, Your Commission is assured that there is ample opportunity for employment outside the Settlements for all employable Japanese.

Representations were made by all Japanese camp committees requesting an increase in the scale of wages paid by the B.C. Security Commission. Your Commission found that the representations did not take into account the perquisites such as shelter, fuel, light and medical care supplied in addition to the wages received from the Commission for which only a token deduction is made.

R E C O M M E N D A T I O N

Your Commission recommends:

(a) That the policy of placement in self-supporting employment be accelerated by directing those persons at present employed by the B.C. Security Commission to such positions.

(b) That persons presently unemployed be placed in the positions thus vacated, even if this involves some loss in operating efficiency, in order that they be trained to be self-supporting outside.

(c) That the co-operative relationship of the B.C. Security Commission and the National Selective Service to this end be continued and extended.

(d) That Welfare Departments at the Settlements be strengthened so that more emphasis will be placed on interpreting the advantages to be derived from outside employment for those who are eligible.

(e) That consideration be given in those Settlements where it may be practicable, to an increased wage scale and that reasonable deductions be made for any services which may be supplied by the B.C. Security Commission.

E D U C A T I O N

F I N D I N G S

Your Commission finds that although education is and always has been a provincial right and obligation, the Department of Education of the Province of British Columbia has refused to take any responsibility for the education of the Japanese children in the Interior Settlements although before these same children were evacuated from the Defence area this responsibility was recognized and assumed. (1) The B.C. Security Commission is providing education for Japanese children in the Interior Settlements by making available instruction up to Grade VIII through teachers secured from the higher-educated Japanese personnel of the camp. In the case of individuals, High School education is given by means of correspondence courses supplied by the Department of Education of the Provincial Government, payment at cost being made direct by the students to the Department of Education. No kindergarten or high school education is being provided by the B.C. Security Commission but in some of the Settlements qualified teaching missionaries are giving instruction. Premises are arranged for by their respective churches. Natural lighting in improvised classrooms is inadequate although this in some instances is being rectified by the installation of artificial lighting. There is considerable overcrowding in some of the classrooms.

R E C O M M E N D A T I O N

Your Commission recommends that negotiations be re-opened with the Department of Education of the Province of British Columbia to the end that it reassume its obligation in respect to the education of the children of the Japanese race.

M E D I C A L C A R E

F I N D I N G S

At all Interior Settlements Your Commission found an excellent programme of medical care including hospitalization, medical and dental services. (1) Sufficient hospital beds are provided by the B.C. Security Commission or arranged for through local hospital facilities. Well-staffed medical clinics are established at each centre. Your Commission is gratified to note that the emphasis on the medical programme is on the prevention of disease. Accepted immunization procedures are carried out at each of the Settlements and practically all children have been protected against smallpox, diphtheria, scarlet fever, typhoid fever and whooping-cough. Pre-natal and baby Clinics are available at all Settlements and are well patronized by the Japanese people. School medical services are also provided. Both Occidental and Japanese Doctors are employed on a full-time basis, in centres where there are no local Doctors available or are used to augment the local Physicians.

The B.C. Security Commission's hospitals are well constructed and adequately staffed. Registered nurses are in charge at all points and are assisted by Japanese girls who have been trained at the hospitals as Nursing Aides.

Tuberculosis has always been a serious problem amongst the Japanese people. To combat this the B.C. Security Commission has established a Sanatorium at New Denver. The potential bed capacity of this Institution is, Your Commission

believes, adequate for the needs of the Japanese for the treatment of Tuberculosis. Your Commission finds the Japanese people exceptionally healthy. To evaluate the health of the Japanese people, Your Commission conducted a health survey. The examination of 1,319 Japanese children in the Interior Settlements proved them to be above the average in height and weight as compared to the Japanese children in the same age group in the pre-evacuation period as shown by the records of the Greater Vancouver Metropolitan Health Committee. (1) No epidemic disease of any consequence has been prevalent in any of the Settlements during the past year. In the opinion of Your Commission the medical care provided at the Interior Settlements for Japanese people exceeds that received by the average Canadian.

R E C O M M E N D A T I O N

Your Commission recommends that the Tuberculosis Case-finding programme be extended to all Settlements. Your Commission further recommends that the Japanese Nurse on the B.C. Security Commission staff at Kaslo, who has been specially trained in Public Health, be used to assist in the programme by carrying out health education amongst the Japanese throughout all the Settlements.

R E C R E A T I O N

F I N D I N G S

All Japanese camp committees drew attention to an alleged lack of recreation facilities for children and adults, especially during the winter season. Your Commission during its inspection of the Settlements visited premises which were used for recreational purposes. These consisted of accommodation set aside in most of the centres for the Japanese camp committees. At least one or more school rooms in all Settlements were available

for meetings, concerts and other entertainments after school hours. In many instances class room partitions were removable for this purpose. Picture-shows were available at nearly all Settlements, skating, skiing and sleighing were also part of the recreational facilities at all Settlements.

During the summer months tennis, basket-ball, baseball and swimming are available. Having in mind the temporary nature of the Settlements and the generally element weather of the Interior of British Columbia Your Commission is of the opinion that a minimum of inconvenience and hardship exists under the present set-up.

R E C O M M E N D A T I O N

Your Commission recommends that no further capital expenditures be made for Recreational facilities.

J A P A N E S E

A S S E T S

F I N D I N G S

Your Commission received no complaint in respect to the policy of the B.C. Security Commission in retaining liquid assets of Japanese to the extent of \$250.00 for each adult and \$50.00 for each child as a rehabilitation fund.

Inquiries were made of the Japanese camp committees at several Settlements in reference to this policy, and the principle was approved although they did not care to state definitely that the amount being retained was sufficient for their re-establishment.

Your Commission discussed with the Custodian, Japanese Section, Department of the Secretary of State, and the Commissioner of the Japanese Placement, the question of the disposal of Japanese liquid assets. It was found that the procedure presently followed is to release such assets to the

Japanese when requested to do so, if in the opinion of the Custodian and the Commissioner of Japanese Placement such action is deemed desirable, the distribution being made in such manner and in such amounts as may be mutually arranged.

R E C O M M E N D A T I O N

Your Commission recommends:

- (a) That when any Japanese person with his dependents becomes established outside of the Interior Settlements, that all his liquid assets be released to him on request.
- (b) That the present policy of retaining liquid assets as a rehabilitation fund in the amounts already established for those persons who are resident in the Interior Settlements be continued.
- (c) That where a Japanese resident in the Interior Settlements has liquid assets that these be distributed to the owner as and when the Commissioner of Japanese Placement may decide.

S U M M A R Y

YOUR COMMISSION IS OF THE UNANIMOUS OPINION THAT THE PROVISIONS MADE BY THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA THROUGH THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOUR FOR THE WELFARE OF THE JAPANESE IN THE INTERIOR SETTLEMENTS IN BRITISH COLUMBIA ARE, AS A WAR-TIME MEASURE, REASONABLY FAIR AND ADEQUATE.

G E N E R A L O B S E R V A T I O N S

UNOFFICIAL PRESENTATIONS

Besides the representations made by the Japanese camp committees, Your Commission received many comments both written and oral in respect to the operation of the Interior Settlements. The majority of these were of a nature favourable to the present Government policy as related to the welfare and maintenance of the Japanese people.

An example of this is a quotation from a letter presented to Your Commission by a group of naturalized Japanese whose opinion the Japanese camp committee did not represent:-

" We representing the Naturalized Canadians here respectfully express to you that we are quite satisfied with food and housing here. We must realize that we are under the conditions of wartime restrictive regulations and transportation. If we want to buy certain food materials at the stores here, we can get them all right. Sometimes they could not get them as much as we expect under the present wartime conditions, no one should be blamed. Regarding the housing, we have the Japanese Carpenter paid by the Supervisor. If there is anything wrong about the house, the Supervisor will instruct the Carpenter to fix it immediately.

The Japanese Doctor here looks after the Sanitation and the Ventilation of houses, we presume he will report to the Supervisor who will attend to it immediately. The officials here who look after us are very kind-hearted and considerate. We must co-operate with the officials. "

J A P A N E S E W A R V E T E R A N S

In two of the Settlements visited representations were made on behalf of Japanese Veterans of the Canadian Army, 1914-18, pointing out that no distinction is being made between ex-service men, despite their military service to Canada, and other Japanese. Your Commission is sympathetic to their request that they be given preferred treatment if this is possible.

P O L I C I N G

At all settlements visited, law enforcement was

In conclusion, Your Commission wishes to express its appreciation for the co-operation and assistance of the Advisory Committee, to the B.C. Security Commission and the Custodian who have given valuable information and advice. It thanks the Provincial Department of Health and the Greater Vancouver Health Committee for making available public health nurses and equipment for the health study. The co-operative manner in which the Japanese camp committees presented their briefs expedited Your Commission's investigations.

Both in the briefs presented by the camp committees and in the discussions following presentations, a number of minor matters of administrative detail were brought to the attention of Your Commission. These Your Commission has taken the liberty of referring directly to the B.C. Security Commission for its consideration.

D E T A I L
A D M I N I S T R A T I V E

Canadian Mounted Police being responsible for all movement and discipline of the Japanese in the Interior Settlements. Your Commission found that the Japanese appreciate the fair manner in which the Royal Canadian Mounted Police carries out its duties.

..... The Royal Canadian Mounted Police provided efficient motor transportation. The co-operation of Mr. Collins and his staff both at the central office and at the Interior Settlements materially assisted Your Commission in its study.

We have the honour to be,

sir,

Your obedient servants,

(Sgd) F.W. JACKSON,
Chairman.

(Sgd) W.R. BONE,
Commissioner.

(Sgd) MARY SUTHERLAND,
Commissioner.

(Sgd) GEORGE F. DAVIDSON,
Commissioner.

January 18th, 1944.