



THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Centre for Migration Studies

CMS WORKING PAPER 2022/2

Lucy Warrington & Benjamin Bryce

**Citizenship Denied: The Incarceration of
Japanese Canadians in the Schreiber-
Jackfish Road Camps in Ontario during
the Second World War**

July 2022

Editors:

Antje Ellermann, Alessandra Santos, Matthew Wright and

Gaoheng Zhang

The **CMS Working Paper Series** is published electronically by the Centre for Migration Studies (CMS) at the University of British Columbia (UBC).

© Copyright is held by the author or authors of each Working Paper. CMS Working Papers cannot be republished, reprinted, or reproduced in any format without the permission of the paper's author or authors.

Note: The views expressed in each paper are those of the author(s) of the paper. They do not necessarily represent or reflect the views of the Centre for Migration Studies, its Editors, or of the University of British Columbia.

Citations of this electronic publication should be made in the following manner: Author, "Title," UBC CMS Working Paper, No., Date, <https://migration.ubc.ca/research/working-paper-series/>.

CMS Working Paper Series Editors

Antje Ellermann

Alessandra Santos

Matthew Wright

Gaoheng Zhang

Editorial Assistant: Tori Yang

Centre for Migration Studies University of British Columbia

1855 West Mall, Room #322

Vancouver BC V6T 1Z2 Canada

Tel: (604) 827 6401

Website: www.migration.ubc.ca

Email: admin.migration@ubc.ca

The Centre for Migration Studies (CMS), a UBC Research Excellence Cluster, was established as a university-level centre in the Faculty of Arts in 2020 as one of the strategic initiatives of the University of British Columbia (UBC). The Centre's mandate is to provide an interdisciplinary home for migration and mobility research at UBC and promote cutting-edge research, graduate training, and community and policy outreach on issues of migration. Within UBC, the Centre is supported by UBC's Excellence Funds, the Faculty of Arts (Dean's Office), the Departments of Political Science, Sociology, Geography, Anthropology, Central, Eastern and Northern European Studies (CENES), and the Peter A. Allard School of Law.

Abstract

The internment of Japanese Canadians during the Second World War has been a much-researched topic, and it has become more present in Canadian public memory thanks to the active efforts of Japanese Canadians since the 1970s to seek redress from the Federal Government. This article seeks to add to this discussion the importance of recognizing the range of carceral experiences in Canada during the war. Both academic research and popular memory of Japanese Canadian “internment” often unconsciously promote uniformity in prisoners’ experiences. This obscures the gendered nature of wartime incarceration and discourse. Men and women were often separated; only male Japanese Canadians were sent to Ontario road camps. Age and class were also crucial in forming carceral sites, as only young men were sent to road camps, and wealthier Nisei could afford to live in ghost towns in the BC interior to avoid forced labour, underlining how the degrees of immobility depended on one’s affluence. Despite the popular perception that road camps were voluntary, the Canadian-born men labelled “enemy aliens” were nonetheless imprisoned.

KEYWORDS: enemy aliens; Japanese internment; carceral sites; Nisei; Schreiber-Jackfish road camp

Authors

Lucy Warrington is an MA student in the Department of History at UBC. She graduated with an undergraduate degree in Economics and Modern History from the University of St Andrews in 2021. Her MA thesis investigates international correspondence concerning, and lived experiences within, the Amherst internment camp in Nova Scotia during the First World War.
lucyw99@student.ubc.ca

Benjamin Bryce is an Assistant Professor in the Department of History at UBC. His research focuses on migration, health, education, and religion in the Americas. He is the author of *The Boundaries of Ethnicity: German Immigration and the Language of Belonging in Ontario* (McGill-Queen's 2022) and *To Belong in Buenos Aires: Germans, Argentines, and the Rise of a Pluralist Society* (Stanford, 2018).
ben.bryce@ubc.ca

Table of Contents

Introduction	<i>1</i>
The Bombing of Pearl Harbor and Subsequent Actions	<i>4</i>
Schreiber-Jackfish Road Camps as Carceral Sites.....	<i>6</i>
Conclusion.....	<i>11</i>
Bibliography	<i>13</i>

Introduction

The Second World War magnified discriminatory discourse and actions directed against people of Japanese birth and heritage in Canada. After the bombing of Pearl Harbor in December 1941, the white majority population in both the United States and Canada increasingly lumped together Japanese North Americans with the Empire of Japan. In early 1942 and empowered by the authority of the *War Measures Act* in Canada, the federal government removed approximately 23,000 persons of Japanese heritage – largely Canadian citizens and a majority of whom were Canadian born – from their homes on the British Columbia coast.¹ Forced from the 100-mile protected zone on the West Coast, many were sent to internment camps while others were sent to road camps, sugar beet farms, self-support sites, or ghost towns in other provinces.² While considerable scholarship on Japanese Canadians' internment exists, that focus in fact conceals the variety of carceral experiences in Canada during World War II.³ This paper focuses on one such case, that of several hundred young men born in Canada, sent to work in the Schreiber-Jackfish road camps in 1942 northeast of Thunder Bay, Ontario.

By analyzing censored letters, correspondence between officials, and newspaper accounts, this paper expands the understanding of the forms of incarceration that existed during the Second World War. While internment camps were indeed carceral, labour camps were also utilized to imprison Japanese Canadians. Moreover, it was not just state officials that enabled this process, as civilians across Canada played a role in normalizing a range of carceral spaces through discourse and collective action, including by partaking in civic policing and discriminatory language. In so doing, this paper situates the history of wartime internment in a broader history of incarceration in Canada. It shows a case of immobility, but one in which there was both flexibility and nuance.

¹ Shelly Ketchell, "Carceral Ambivalence: Japanese Canadian 'Internment' and the Sugar Beet Programme during World War II," *Surveillance & Society* 7, no. 1 (2009): 21.

² Mona Oikawa, *Cartographies of Violence: Japanese Canadian Women, Memory, and the Subjects of the Internment* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 73; Roy Miki, *Redress: Inside the Japanese Canadian Call for Justice* (Vancouver: Raincoast Books, 2004), 3; 'Japs Being Placed in 'Ghost Towns,' *Gazette*, 1 May 1942, 20.

³ Pamela Hickman and Masako Fukawa, *Righting Canada's Wrongs: Japanese Canadian Internment in the Second World War* (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company, 2012); Martin Strong, "Japanese Canadians and Internment: The Role of *The New Canadian* as an Agent of Resistance, 1941-1945," (Ph.D. diss., University of Victoria, 2017); Eric M. Adams and Jordan Stanger-Ross, "Promises of Law: The Unlawful Dispossession of Japanese Canadians", *Osgoode Hall Law Journal* 54, no. 3 (2017): 1-40.

Michel Foucault defined carceral as the incorporation of “institutions of supervision or constraint, of discreet surveillance and insistent coercion.”⁴ While the prison system provides a range of examples to illustrate Foucault’s description of incarceration, this paper illustrates less formal carceral spaces also fit this definition. The names given to places, for example, a project or a sugar beet farm, dampened their carceral intentions. While road camp workers were allowed to visit neighbouring towns with permission, whereas those in internment camps could not, road camp systems still greatly diminished Japanese Canadians’ freedom and autonomy. Despite popular perceptions road camps were voluntary, the Nisei (a Canadian-born or American-born person of Japanese heritage) were nonetheless imprisoned.⁵

The Nisei were incarcerated at both state and civic levels. According to Foucault, discourse is the culmination of social signs, like phrases, that create knowledge. In turn, discourse materializes into “practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak.”⁶ What was printed and said in society became common knowledge, regardless of whether such knowledge was truthful. This ensured authorities had biopower over citizens, namely, power over their thoughts and actions. While the state relied on the media to promote wartime policies, broadcasters both shaped and were shaped by discourse, acting as a public forum that exacerbated racist sentiments. Newspapers also organized social action through surveillance, as racist norms projected in the media shaped Canadians’ activities. Newspapers documented prisoners’ every move and detailed restrictions imposed upon them. Such constraints justified the civic gaze, as citizens had a reason to watch in case the Nisei broke the law. Although Japanese Canadians did not always know if they were watched, the possibility meant the prisoner “assumes responsibility for the constraints of power...he becomes the principle of his own subjection.”⁷ State and civic surveillance meant the Nisei always felt policed which affected their actions. As Heather Ann Thompson and Douglas Blackmon explain, ordinary citizens can be complicit in the development or normalization of a racist system or event, such as forced penal labour or the Attica Prison massacre.⁸ Carceral policies and discourse were also gendered

⁴ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: Birth of the Prison* (New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing, 2012), 299.

⁵ “Volunteers’ Depart Quietly; 300 More to Entrain Tonight”, *Vancouver Sun*, 24 February 1942, 17.

⁶ Michel Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge* (Oxford: Routledge, 2002), 54.

⁷ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 203.

⁸ Heather Ann Thompson, *Blood in the Water: The Attica Prison Uprising of 1971 and its Legacy* (New York: Pantheon, 2016); Douglas Blackmon, *Slavery by Another Name: The Re-Enslavement of Black Americans from the Civil War to World War II* (New York: Anchor Books, 2008).

and racialized. Mainstream narratives on Japanese Canadian internment often unconsciously promote uniformity in prisoners' experiences. This obscures the gendered nature of wartime incarceration and discourse. Men and women were often separated, trapped in distinct carceral sites. Only male Japanese Canadians were sent to Ontario road camps, for example. Moreover, age was crucial in forming carceral sites, as only young men were sent to road camps.⁹

Class was crucial in determining carceral experiences. Wealthy Nisei could afford to live in ghost towns in the BC interior to avoid forced labour. On the other hand, poorer Japanese Canadians often had no choice but to move where they were told. Affluence determined levels of mobility wielded by those targeted by state policies, as poorer Nisei had even less influence in determining their wartime experiences compared to their wealthier counterparts. Intersectionality played a key role in shaping wartime experiences, and highlights carceral sites were far from homogeneous.

Anti-Japanese sentiments had a long history in Canada, and they were part and parcel of a system of white supremacy.¹⁰ Racial prejudice against Japanese communities was widespread by the early twentieth century. As Ken Adachi cites, "from the earliest times, settlers on the West Coast were highly self-conscious of their British origins and wished to have the colony remain an area populated by British immigrants."¹¹ Economic competition strained relations between the Japanese and Anglo-Canadians. Reputably good workers, Japanese Canadians were often hired as cheap labour and strike-breakers, much to the dismay of white communities.¹² Anglo-Canadians who, according to *The Province*, were "working for and building up a white Canada," felt employment of "Orientals" was a problem.¹³ Concerns about Asian immigration culminated in the 1907 Vancouver riot.¹⁴ The state used this protest to justify work to limit Japanese immigration, highlighting the severity of Canada's pre-war anti-Asian racism.¹⁵ In the late

⁹ Yon Shimizu, *The Exiles: An Archival History of the World War II Japanese Road Camps in British Columbia and Ontario* (Wallaceburg: Shimizu Consulting and Publishing, 1993), 484.

¹⁰ Constance Backhouse, *Colour-Coded: A Legal History of Racism in Canada, 1900-1950* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 8-9; Mariana Valverde, *The Age of Light, Soap, and Water: Moral Reform in English Canada, 1885-1925* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1991), 109-117.

¹¹ Ken Adachi, *The Enemy That Never Was* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Limited, 1977), 37.

¹² Stephanie Bangarth, "The long, wet summer of 1942: the Ontario Farm Service Force, small-town Ontario and the Nisei," *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 37, no. 1 (2005): 42.

¹³ "Work of the City Creche," *Province*, 17 February 1923, 22.

¹⁴ "Orientals in B.C.," *The Province*, 3 March 1938, 4; Bangarth, "The long, wet Summer of 1942," 42.

¹⁵ Adachi, *The Enemy That Never Was*, 63.

1930s, a Canadian Legion branch demanded strict supervision of people of Japanese birth and heritage in order to preserve “Canada for Canadians.”¹⁶

Anti-Japanese racism was rife in the years and months directly preceding the bombing of Pearl Harbor. While widespread concerns over economic competition and immigration still existed, rumours also circulated that a gang founded to further Japanese expansionism, the Black Dragon Society, operated in Canada. This group was rumoured to be sending information to “Japan’s very active spy service,” though no tangible proof of such a group existed.¹⁷ Public meetings were held to discuss such rumours and some Canadians worried a “United States of Asia” was on the horizon.¹⁸ Racist stereotypes were also gendered. Japanese women were depicted as weak, submissive, and less sentient than white women. *The Daily Sun Times* depicted Japanese maids as less conscious than white girls, for example, which supposedly made them more suitable for menial labour.¹⁹ Furthermore, newspapers compared Japanese women to those from other countries, which objectified all women while also promoting anti-Asian racism.²⁰

The Bombing of Pearl Harbor and Subsequent Actions

The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941 amplified anti-Japanese sentiments in BC and Canada. According to Ken Adachi, the assault was an opportunity for white nationalists “to achieve the ultimate objective of ridding the province – and Canada – entirely of its Japanese minority.” The media used the savoury propaganda item to portray the underhanded nature of the attack as a reflection of Japanese character, and newspapers constantly updated Canadians on Japanese victories in the South Pacific and the Far East, further increasing public distress.²¹ Extravagant sabotage accusations were widespread, and surveillance of Japanese communities, particularly in BC, skyrocketed.²² Some articles in BC newspapers claimed that the West Coast was in danger until “every last Japanese [was] removed from the

¹⁶ “Would End Leases Held by Japanese,” *Times Colonist*, 4 March 1938, 3.

¹⁷ “Jap Spy Aid by Black Dragon,” *Sault Star*, 15 September 1937, 1; “No Black Dragon Society in B.C., Commission Finds,” *Province*, 11 January 1943, 1.

¹⁸ “Salem Apostolic Church,” *Province*, 16 April 1938, 34.

¹⁹ “Japanese Stores Gardens in B.C. Efficiently Run,” *Daily Sun Times*, 9 March 1942, 3.

²⁰ “Today’s Comment,” *Sault Star*, 14 March 1941, 4.

²¹ Adachi, *The Enemy That Never Was*, 201.

²² “Only 38 Japs Are Interned So Far in The Dominion,” *Sun Times*, 9 January 1942, 6; Adachi, *The Enemy That Never Was*, 204.

coastal area.”²³ Once again, racist discourse had a gendered element as Japanese women were seen as weak and dependent on men, yet still responsible for Japan’s actions. *The Edmonton Bulletin* described the “voiceless” women as “mere chattel,” who only showed “painful obedience” to Japan.²⁴ Letters to the editor, including a “What Is Your Opinion?” section in the *Vancouver Sun*, broadcast personal racist opinions to the nation and inflated anti-Japanese sentiments.²⁵ Whether living in Japan or situated in Canada, white Canadians increasingly scrutinized Japanese communities.

Soon after Pearl Harbor, Japanese Canadians had personal rights removed by orders-in-council under the *War Measures Act*. Fishing vessels were confiscated as “defence measures” under Order-in-Council P.C. 288, while Japanese people’s property was seized and sold cheaply to Anglo-Canadians.²⁶ Japanese communities in BC were banned from using shortwave radios, their gasoline purchases were controlled, their cars confiscated, and they were subjected to a dusk till dawn curfew.²⁷ Furthermore, Order-in-Council P.C. 1665 banned those of Japanese origin from leaving their homes, and allowed authorities to forcibly remove them to other places without any notice.²⁸ While the federal government ordered the removal of male Japanese nationals aged 18 to 45 from the West Coast’s 100-mile protected zone in January 1942, this mandate expanded in February to encompass all Japanese “aliens”, indicating, in the words of Ken Adachi, “a capitulation to racist pressure.”²⁹ The concept of enemy alien was assigned to a group of people defined along racial lines and deviated from the bureaucratic origins of the word to describe foreign nationals. Importantly, approximately half of these so-called aliens were born in Canada and did not fit any previous definition of the legal category. Thousands were detained without charge or trial on suspicion of subversive behaviour, and others were deported to Japan. Many were housed in clearing centres in the BC interior, including Hastings Park’s cattle stalls, before being sent elsewhere.³⁰

²³ “M.P. Stresses Jap Danger on Coast,” *Vancouver Sun*, 27 January 1942, 5.

²⁴ “Japanese Women Mere Chattel in Nation of Warriors,” *Edmonton Bulletin*, 23 December 1941, 3.

²⁵ “What Is Your Opinion?” *Vancouver Sun*, 17 December 1941, 6.

²⁶ Sunahara, *The Politics of Racism*, 28; Oikawa, *Cartographies of Violence*, 106.

²⁷ Adachi, *The Enemy That Never Was*, 209; ‘Japs Confused About Curfew, Ban on Autos,’ *Times Colonist*, 27 February 1942, 1; ‘Curfew Hits Japs Hard in Vancouver,’ *Windsor Star*, 28 February 1942, 10.

²⁸ Oikawa, *Cartographies of Violence*, 106.

²⁹ Adachi, *The Enemy That Never Was*, 215.

³⁰ Adachi, *The Enemy That Never Was*, 218.

After being apprehended in BC, some Japanese Canadian men were sent to Ontario under police supervision to work on the Schreiber-Jackfish highway project, one of the first projects proposed for Nisei prisoners.³¹ The role of public opinion in enforcing this action is evidenced by Commissioner Wood stating those sent were “British subjects...and the only reason for protection measures in the way of guards is to appease public alarm.”³² While euphemisms perceived the camps as voluntary sites, the Nisei who tried to avoid being sent to Schreiber were apprehended or forced, highlighting that men were coercively incarcerated.³³

In addition to being a place to exile and separate Nisei from their families and men born in Japan, Schreiber was intended to be a “manning pool,” a place where men were temporarily stationed before being sent elsewhere to help the war effort.³⁴ Wartime labour shortages were used to justify such camps, as the Nisei were sent to work in industries of value to the war effort. The persistence of road camps was aided by the sites’ political invisibility. The Nisei were placed in isolated areas miles from public view.

The post-war decision to expel the Nisei camp workers from Ontario is also noteworthy. A Memorandum of Agreement between the Dominion and Provincial governments ensured the federal government would “remove these Japanese labourers from the Province of Ontario at the conclusion of the war” which quelled Ontarians’ fears of economic competition and made them more favourable towards importing Japanese Canadian workers.³⁵ “Evacuated” from BC during the war, the Nisei sent to road camps were also expected to be exiled from Ontario afterward.

Schreiber-Jackfish Road Camps as Carceral Sites

The labourers at the Schreiber-Jackfish road camps were coerced and policed. Initially, Ontario officials tried to prevent the use of Japanese Canadians in such road camps.³⁶ The provincial government agreed for Nisei to be sent to Ontario if the British Columbia Security Commission (BCSC) made suitable arrangements, including assurances that Japanese Canadians

³¹ Shimizu, *Exiles*, 478.

³² Shimizu, *Exiles*, 482

³³ “‘Volunteers’ Depart Quietly,” 17.

³⁴ Shimizu, *Exiles*, 478

³⁵ ‘Kinzie Tanaka to B.C. Security Commission,’ 26 May 1942, B.C. Security Commission fonds, RG36/27, volume 31, file 1808, LAC.

³⁶ Shimizu, *Exiles*, 478.

would not financially burden the province. The federal government guaranteed that no Japanese Canadians would “become a charge on the province or on any municipality for relief, social service or school costs,” despite the fact that Canadians of Japanese heritage would have had every right to be covered by provincial governments.³⁷ While the men earned 25 cents per hour when working at the camps, they had to pay for their incarceration, including 25 cents per meal, and also had to pay twenty dollars per month for their families’ living costs to protect the BCSC from financial responsibility.³⁸ The BCSC’s aspiration to minimize costs was evidenced when A. MacNamara, the Dominion Deputy Minister of Labour, urged Ontario authorities operating in many carceral sites to ensure these allowances were being met as “we do not wish to allow malnutrition to develop to the extent of causing a fatality which would result in burial expenses.”³⁹ If the Nisei could not earn enough to cover such requirements, the BCSC had to cut costs.

Prisoners were also constantly monitored by camp guards and controlled through various measures. Ontario officials demanded that the RCMP provide police protection for road work projects, with at least one guard stationed at each camp.⁴⁰ Following this rule, at least nine RCMP special constables were recommended to supervise the first group of Japanese arrivals.⁴¹ Commissioner Stringer of the Ontario Provincial Police stated guards were necessary to prevent unrest and sabotage: “the uncertainty of the conduct of the Japanese while in this area would make it imperative that every precaution be taken by strong and effective guarding arrangement which will ensure that no outbreak or break of the peace will occur.” Camps were situated near sensitive areas, including the Canadian Pacific Railway’s main line, internment camps, and Ontario Hydro-Electric Power Commission plants, and such proximity further justified the use of guards.⁴²

If Nisei workers showed even slight resistance, they were interned as POWs in camps in Angler and Petawawa, Ontario.⁴³ A newspaper article described road camps as “enforced labour,” an interesting euphemism for forced labour.⁴⁴ Their rights were restricted and they were subjected

³⁷ “Living Wage To Be Paid Japs,” *Windsor Star*, 11 April 1942, 11.

³⁸ “Notice,” *New Canadian*, 2 April 1942, 4.

³⁹ ‘Province of Ontario Plans for Japanese Workers, MacNamara to S.H. McLaren, Director, OFSF,’ 27 May 1942, Lacelle Files

⁴⁰ Shimizu, *Exiles*, 479.

⁴¹ Shimizu, *Exiles*, 482.

⁴² ‘Commissioner W.H. Stringer to Commissioner Wood, RCMP,’ 23 March 1942, Royal Canadian Mounted Police (R.C.M.P.) fonds, RG18, volume 3563, file C-1 1-19-2-9, part 2, LAC.

⁴³ Pamela Sugiman, “Passing Time, Moving Memories: Interpreting Wartime Narratives of Japanese Canadian Women,” *Social History* Vol. 37, no. 73 (2004): 54.

⁴⁴ “Jap Labor For Highway Sought,” *Edmonton Bulletin*, 9 March 1942, 5.

to curfews. If prisoners wanted to leave the camp outside of prohibited hours, they “must first register their time of departure with the guards and on return to camp must immediately record their arrival.”⁴⁵ A camp officer suggested a system should be set up “whereby should any Jap be absent from camp, record of such absence would be immediately available.”⁴⁶ While a curfew was imposed for prisoners to go to Schreiber, Japanese Canadians became barred from going to Jackfish, a neighbouring village. According to a letter from Shige, a prisoner at one of the camps: “Boys used to go to Jackfish for a walk once in a while, but now the BC Security clamped down on us. We can’t go out of this camp, there’s a boundary set and beyond that, there’s a guard.”⁴⁷ Japanese Canadians’ day-to-day activity was regulated and under careful surveillance.

The Nisei at these road camps were subjected to poor living conditions, and the site was “still in its natural and primitive state,” underscoring the severe lack of available facilities.⁴⁸ There was no running water or electricity, and the men had to bathe and collect water in the cold lake nearby.⁴⁹ In a letter to a relative, Tad, a camp prisoner, described this ordeal: “any time you are enjoying hot running water, just think of us shivering in the wilds of far away Ontario, and feel sorry for us.”⁵⁰ The food portions at the camps were also small and lacked nutritional value. Writing to someone in Alberta, Bobby Jones remarked, “I’ve been living on crackers and prunes for the last month. The food is sure lousy, greasy, and smells. Am skin and bones.” Sleeping arrangements were bad and men slept in a bunkhouse with wooden beds, like what prisoners living in the stables at Hasting Parks had, and were subjected to a lights-out rule. They slept in “smelly blankets that haven’t been washed in the last ten years, with a generous sprinkling of lice and other vermin.” According to Jones, workers had to walk five or six miles to the worksite, leading to further exhaustion and illness.⁵¹ While some non-Japanese men also worked at the camp, like conscientious objectors, they were treated better and allotted more desirable jobs.⁵² Proposals were

⁴⁵ ‘Sergeant Renton camp report’, 13 April 1942, R.C.M.P. fonds, RG18, volume 3563, file C-11-19-2-9, part 2, LAC.

⁴⁶ ‘TV Sandys-Wunsch to NCO’ 30 March 1942, R.C.M.P. fonds, RG18, volume 3563, file C-11-19-2-9, part 2, LAC.

⁴⁷ ‘Shige’ to H.M., 21 April 1942, Indian and Northern Affairs fonds, RG22, volume 725, file EC-7-26, LAC.

⁴⁸ ‘Commissioner W.H. Stringer to Commissioner Wood, RCMP’, 23 March 1942, R.C.M.P. fonds, RG18, volume 3563, file C-1 1-19-2-9, part 2, LAC.

⁴⁹ ‘Japs Like New Camp,’ *Windsor Star*, 30 May 1942, 12.

⁵⁰ ‘Tad to Margaret H’, 29 April 1942, Indian and Northern Affairs fonds, RG22, volume 725, file EC-7-24-4, LAC.

⁵¹ ‘Commissioner W.H. Stringer to Commissioner Wood, RCMP’, 23 March 1942, R.C.M.P. fonds, RG18, volume 3563, file C-1 1-19-2-9, part 2, LAC.

⁵² ‘Says Trucks To Survive,’ *Windsor Star*, 22 October 1942, 19; Shimizu, *Exiles*. 489-490.

also put forth for separate kitchen and dining areas for white men.⁵³ While experiencing such horrendous and discriminatory living conditions, one person described Schreiber as a “hell hole” in a censored letter.⁵⁴

The Nisei could only leave if they were arrested or could find suitable work elsewhere. While some industries requested their work, they were not deemed essential enough to justify sending the Nisei away from the work camps. For example, farms and canneries in eastern Ontario requested Nisei labourers, but their petitions were denied as they were not deemed necessary for the war effort.⁵⁵ Though the Department of Labour authorized the employment of five hundred Nisei in the road camps to work on sugar beet farms during the 1942 harvest, this was undesirable, back-breaking work. Men often preferred to stay at the road camps compared to working on such sites.⁵⁶ While the BCSC tried to entice the Nisei to move to Ontario by telling them they were wanted in private industries, this was misleading. In a censored letter, a prisoner wrote, “we are wanted in industries around here as much as a skunk is wanted in a New York penthouse.”⁵⁷ A government censor intercepted a letter by Tad, a prisoner at the camps, who described his status as “lower than that of an Indian.”⁵⁸ Another prisoner, Shige, also described the dreadful conditions: “We can’t fish, can’t hunt, can’t go out, can’t own a short wave radio, gotta turn the lights out at ten o’clock, we gotta pay for all the tools we damage...can’t get a job outside of here. Schreiber is no Manning Pool its [sic] a concentration camp...this is a jail...just a jail.”⁵⁹ In describing the site as a concentration camp, Shige underscored the prison-like conditions.

Even during the limited times prisoners were allowed to leave the camps and visit the nearest town, Schreiber, they still experienced constant disciplinary measures and policing. White Canadians had a stake in surveillance. The Nisei workers were framed as potential threats both by government actions and in the media. Japanese Canadians did not need a prison uniform to be recognized and initially, if they needed to visit the town – which they were advised not to do –

⁵³ ‘W.B. Hutcheson to A.A. Smith’, 7 April 1942, Department of External Affairs fonds, RG25, volume 3004, file 3464-J-40, LAC.

⁵⁴ ‘T.O. to M.O.’, 1 June 1942, Indian and Northern Affairs fonds, RG 22, volume 725, file EC 7-24-4, LAC.

⁵⁵ Bangarth, “The long, wet Summer of 1942,” 44.

⁵⁶ “Ottawa Approves Move to Transfer Japs to Beet Areas,” *Sault Star*, May 23, 1942, 1; “More Japanese Leave Schreiber,” *North Bay Nugget*, 4 June 1942, 9; “Dominion May Face Serious Shortage in Supply of Sugar,” *Province*, 17 July 1942, 10; Bangarth, “The long, wet Summer of 1942,” 45.

⁵⁷ T.O. to M.O.’, 1 June 1942, Indian and Northern Affairs fonds, RG 22, volume 725, file EC 7-24-4, LAC.

⁵⁸ ‘Tad to Margaret H’, 29 April 1942, Indian and Northern Affairs fonds, RG22, volume 725, file EC-7-24-4, LAC.

⁵⁹ ‘Shige’ to H.M.’, 21 April 1942, Indian and Northern Affairs fonds, RG22, volume 725, file EC-7-26, LAC.

they were told to “be in the company of a white person, to avoid incidents.”⁶⁰ Some residents were vocally against their presence and objected to them attending dances and social functions.⁶¹ While one report deemed townsfolks’ reaction to the camps seemed “favourable,” it explained this was “subject to change without notice.”⁶² Through state policies and media reporting, the Nisei were perceived as devious outsiders.

Regardless of the exact sentiments people had, huge public interest in Japanese Canadians’ activities was clear, and restrictions the Nisei were subjected to were used to justify civilian surveillance of the minority group. Japanese Canadians were barred from partaking in many activities, despite being granted assurances of greater freedoms in eastern provinces before they left Vancouver.⁶³ In addition to camp curfews, the BCSC also required Japanese Canadians to have a permit to travel more than ten miles from where they lived. Moreover, on 19 May 1942, the Liquor Control Board of Ontario stated authorized premises and liquor purchases were “‘Out-of-Bounds’ to Japanese who have been moved from Canadian West Coast areas to Camps in this Province for employment purposes.”⁶⁴ Citizens used such restrictions to justify civic policing of the Nisei when in Schreiber. Reporters in Schreiber documented their whereabouts. One reporter detailed how Japanese Canadians often went to the Chinese laundry and were big spenders, for example.⁶⁵ Although one article claimed the Nisei were “allowed full freedom” in Schreiber, this was far from reality.⁶⁶ Surveillance did not always take on institutional forms. By supporting exclusionary imagined communities manifested by the press, every citizen was a potential watcher of Japanese Canadians. While road camps and Schreiber were not conventional penitentiaries, the Nisei prisoners were perpetually policed and restricted in these spaces.

While the Schreiber-Jackfish road camps and the surrounding area were carceral spaces for Japanese Canadians, the responsibility of normalizing such incarceration throughout the war was not solely held by local Ontarians. Reporters stationed in Schreiber had their accounts and statistics published in various provinces, including Saskatchewan and Quebec.⁶⁷ *The Victoria Daily Times*

⁶⁰ ‘Wood to O.C.’, 21 March 1942, R.C.M.P. fonds, RG18, volume 3563, file C-11-19-2-9, part 2, LAC.

⁶¹ ‘Smith to Mills’, 4 August 1942, Indian and Northern Affairs fonds, RG22, volume 725, file EC-7-24-4., LAC.

⁶² ‘Mills to Mills’, 7 April 1942, Indian and Northern Affairs fonds, RG22, volume 738, file U-2003, part 1, LAC.

⁶³ Shimizu, *Exiles*, 500.

⁶⁴ ‘Liquor Control Board of Ontario Special Circular for Authority Holders’, 19 May 1942, R.C.M.P. fonds, RG18, volume 3568, file C-3129-1-6.

⁶⁵ “Chinese Laundry Keeps Busy Washing Clothing for Japs,” *Sault Star*, 20 April 1942, 2; “Japanese Nationals Go Shopping in Schreiber,” *North Bay Nugget*, April 25, 1942, 2.

⁶⁶ “Japs Allowed Full Freedom,” *Montreal Star*, 25 April 1942, 30.

⁶⁷ “Can Move Freely” *Star-Phoenix*, 25 April 1942, 12; “Japs Allowed Freedom,” *Montreal Star*, 25 April 1942, 30.

detailed Japanese Canadians going to the road camps and provided a photograph of prisoners looking like they were happy to be there, depicted in Figure 3. It described how “they enjoyed the train trip, spending their time listening to records and playing cards,” as if they were going on holiday.⁶⁸ Another statement claimed they were “pleasantly surprised” about how they were treated in Schreiber, despite the fact they were faced with numerous restrictions and some townsfolk vocally opposed them being there. Clearly, this paper painted a rose-tinted image of the Nisei prisoners’ circumstances, and in turn promoted and normalized the state of incarceration they were subjected to.⁶⁹



Figure 3: “B.C. Japs Reach Ontario,” *Victoria Daily Times*, 6 April 1942, 1.

While playing a role in policing Nisei activities, newspapers also silenced prisoners’ true experiences, rendering the carceral spaces in a more positive light.

Conclusion

The Schreiber-Jackfish road camps highlight carceral sites existed in forms other than conventional prison structures. Japanese Canadian wartime imprisonment took shape in structures other than conventional internment camps. Road camps incarcerated Nisei men as they were perpetually policed and disciplined within the site’s confines. Furthermore, neighbouring towns were also carceral sites, as Japanese Canadians were still constrained and under constant surveillance by both state authorities and the general public. In fact, Canadians from provinces other than Ontario also played a role in incarcerating the Nisei. Their activities in the road camps and the surrounding area were readily reported on in local newspapers, exacerbating the extent of policing Japanese Canadians were subjected to. During the Second World War, a range of

⁶⁸ “B.C. Japs Reach Ontario,” *Victoria Daily Times*, 6 April 1942, 1.

⁶⁹ “More B.C. Japs,” *Victoria Daily Times*, 15 April 1942, 3.

structures and communities, both state and civic, collectively imprisoned and limited the rights of those deemed “enemy aliens”, including those who were British subjects and not in fact aliens.

Bibliography

Archival Sources

Library and Archives Canada (Ottawa)
RG18. Royal Canadian Mounted Police fonds.
RG22. Indian and Northern Affairs fonds.
RG25. Department of External Affairs fonds.
RG36. B.C. Security Commission fonds.

Newspapers

Calgary Herald
Edmonton Bulletin
Edmonton Journal
Gazette
Montreal Star
National Post
New Canadian
North Bay Nugget
Ottawa Citizen
Province
Sault Star
Star-Phoenix
Sun Times
Times Colonist
Vancouver Sun
Victoria Daily Times
Windsor Star

Secondary Sources

‘Jap.’ Dictionary.com. Accessed April 19 2022. <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/jap>

Adachi, Ken. *The Enemy That Never Was*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Limited, 1977.

Adams, Eric M., and Jordan Stanger-Ross. “Promises of Law: The Unlawful Dispossession of Japanese Canadians.” *Osgoode Hall Law Journal* 54, no. 3 (2017): 1-40.

Backhouse, Constance. *Colour-Coded: A Legal History of Racism in Canada, 1900-1950*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999.

Bangarth, Stephanie. “The long, wet summer of 1942: the Ontario Farm Service Force, small-town Ontario and the Nisei.” *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 37, no. 1 (2005): 40-62.

Blackmon, Douglas. *Slavery by Another Name: The Re-Enslavement of Black Americans from the Civil War to World War II*. New York: Anchor Books, 2008.

Davis, Angela. *Are Prisons Obsolete?*. New York: Seven Stories Press, 2003.

- Dick, Lyle. "Sergeant Masumi Mitsui and the Japanese Canadian War Memorial: Intersections of National, Cultural, and Personal Memory." *Canadian Historical Review* 91, no. 3 (September 2010): 435-463.
- Downey, Allan. *The Creator's Game: Lacrosse, Identity, and Indigenous Nationhood*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2018.
- Farrar, Martin John. "The Illusory Threat: Enemy Aliens in Britain during the Great War." PhD diss., King's College London, 2016.
- Foucault, Michel. *Archaeology of Knowledge*. Oxford: Routledge, 2002.
- Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing, 2012.
- Gross, Kali N. *Colored Amazons: Crime, Violence, and Black Women in the City of Brotherly Love, 1880-1910*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2006.
- Hickman, Pamela, and Masako Fukawa. *Righting Canada's Wrongs: Japanese Canadian internment in the Second World War*. Toronto: James Lorimer & Company, 2012.
- Ketchell, Shelly. "Carceral Ambivalence: Japanese Canadian 'Internment' and the Sugar Beet Programme during World War II." *Surveillance & Society* 7, no. 1 (2009): 21-35.
- Miki, Roy. *Redress: Inside the Japanese Canadian Call for Justice*. Vancouver: Raincoast Books, 2004.
- O'Hagan, Michael. "Beyond the Barbed Wire: POW Labour Projects in Canada during the Second World War. PhD diss., Western University, 2020.
- Oikawa, Mona. *Cartographies of Violence: Japanese Canadian Women, Memory, and the Subjects of the Internment*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012.
- Shimizu, Yon. *The Exiles: An Archival History of the World War II Japanese Road Camps in British Columbia and Ontario*. Wallaceburg: Shimizu Consulting and Publishing, 1993.
- Strong, Martin. "Japanese Canadians and Internment: The Role of *The New Canadian* as an Agent of Resistance, 1941-1945." PhD diss., University of Victoria, 2017.
- Sugiman, Pamela. "Passing Time, Moving Memories: Interpreting Wartime Narratives of Japanese Canadian Women." *Social History* 37, no. 73 (2004): 51-79.
- Sunahara, Ann Gomer. *The Politics of Racism: The Uprooting of Japanese Canadians during the Second World War*. Toronto: Lorimer, 1981.
- Thobani, Sunara. *Exalted Subjects: Studies in the Making of Race and Nation in Canada*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007.
- Thompson, Heather Ann. *Blood in the Water: The Attica Prison Uprising of 1971 and its Legacy*. New York: Pantheon, 2016.
- Valverde, Mariana. *The Age of Light, Soap, and Water: Moral Reform in English Canada, 1885-1925*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1991.