

## **Portraits of Japanese Canadians**

### **First**

In this article, we will look back at Japan-Canada relations and write about the history of Japanese Canadians who have overcome extremely difficult issues.

First, I will provide an overview of the current Japan-Canada relationship. In short, it's very good. Japan-Canada relations are maturing in a wide range of areas, from politics and security to economics, culture, and grassroots exchanges. Japan and Canada share fundamental values such as freedom, human rights, democracy, the rule of law, and a market economy. Both countries are G7 members, founding members of the CPTPP, and cooperate closely with international organizations such as the United Nations and WTO.

Economically, Canada is a resource-rich country and is an important import partner for Japan, including resources such as energy and food. At the same time, direct investment in automobiles and other industries is strong in Canada, which is one of the world's largest markets in North America. Furthermore, with the geopolitical realities of the 21st century and the accelerating pace of global warming, international attention is focused on Canada's important mineral resources and new energy potential in a decarbonized society.

According to the latest poll on the favourability of each country in Canada, Japan has a favourability rating of 74%, tied for first place with the United Kingdom. This is followed by Italy (73%), Germany (72%), France (68%), South Korea (58%), and the U.S. (54%).

Although Japan-Canada relations today are extremely good, in the past, Japan and Canada fought as enemies in World War II. The fighting on the front lines was fierce. It cast a deep and dark shadow on daily life in Japan. We have overcome the indescribable deep wounds and difficult obstacles left by the war to reach the present day. At the heart of this is the Japanese Canadian Redress movement. This is the result of the wisdom, courage, determination, and sincere efforts of Japanese and Canadian people.

### **Japanese Canadian Redress Movement**

During World War II, the Canadian federal government deemed 22,000 Japanese Canadians to be "enemy aliens," and forced them to be relocated and interned, confiscated their property, and dispersed them, even though they were Canadian citizens. They even took measures to deport some of them from the country. This was a barbaric act that was completely inconsistent with the freedom, democracy, human rights, and equality under the law that Canada stands for. This was not an act that can be dismissed as a harsh reality brought about by war. Japanese Canadians confronted this issue after the war. The term "redress" was used not only to compensate and retribute for lost property, but also to right the wrongs of the past.

Below, let's look at the journey of Japanese Canadians in chronological order.



Lemon Creek Internment camp, British Columbia

### **The First Japanese Canadian**

Manzo Nagano was the first recorded Japanese to immigrate to Canada. Born in Takagi District, Hizen Province (present-day Minamishimabara City, Nagasaki Prefecture), at the age of 19 he boarded a British ship and came to New Westminster in southwestern British Columbia (BC). He started out fishing for salmon on the Fraser River and built up his fortune.

Later, in 1886, the Canadian Pacific Railway opened in Vancouver, and the following year, in 1887, the Pacific route between Yokohama and Vancouver began service, which led to the development of trade between Japan and Canada, and an increase in immigration from Japan. In June 1889, the Japanese Consulate in Vancouver was opened.

### **Development of the Japanese Canadian community**

As the number of Japanese immigrants in Canada, especially in British Columbia on the Pacific coast, increased, local opposition to hard-working and successful immigrants continued to limit the number of immigrants accepted. Still, a Japantown was created in Vancouver.

Japanese Canadian volunteer soldiers were sent to fight in World War I. Many volunteered because they wanted to increase trust in people of Japanese descent and show that they were Canadian citizens. It was late in coming, but volunteer soldiers were given the right to vote in 1931. Although there was serious racial

discrimination, Japanese Canadians did not give in to it and lived strong lives in Canadian society, gradually increasing their status.

However, then came World War II.

### **World War II and Japanese Canadians**

#### **• December 7, 1941 (Canadian time)**

When the United States and Japan went to war after the attack on Pearl Harbor, Canada entered a state of war with Japan. The following day, on the 8th, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police arrested 38 people, including Japanese community leaders. The Royal Canadian Navy began seizing 1,200 fishing boats owned by Japanese Canadians. Sentiment towards Japanese Canadians worsened, Japanese language schools were closed, and Japanese newspapers ceased publication.

#### **• December 25th**

On Christmas Day, the Japanese army occupied Hong Kong and captured 2,000 Canadian soldiers who were defending it. Anti-Japanese sentiment intensified and demands for the eviction of Japanese Canadians increased.

#### **• January 14, 1942**

The Canadian federal government designated 160 kilometers of British Columbia's Pacific coast as a "protected area." The decision was made to evacuate Japanese men between the ages of 18 and 45 and send them to labour camps at road construction sites in the Canadian Rockies.



Group of interned Japanese-Canadian men at a road camp on the Yellowhead Pass.

#### **• February 7th**

Order-in-Council P.C. 365 ordered all "persons of Japanese racial origin" living in "protected area" to leave.

When leaving, each person was only allowed to bring two suitcases, leaving behind all their property, including their house, car, farmland, and furniture. Furthermore, in 1943, it was decided that all of these assets, including the fishing boats mentioned above, would be disposed of without the consent of the owners.

The more than 22,000 Japanese Canadians ordered to leave were dispersed throughout Canada. People were forcibly removed from their homes under the guise of “voluntary evacuation” - 12,000 to camps in British Columbia, 3,500 to sugar beet farms in Alberta and Manitoba, and others to eastern Canada and elsewhere. Those who resisted the Canadian government's forced removal decisions were sent to a prison camp in Ontario.

Although World War II ended on August 15, 1945, with the signing of the official Instrument of Surrender aboard the USS Missouri on September 2, Japanese Canadians were not allowed to return to the designated “protected area” until March 31, 1949.

### **The Post-war Struggle**

In 1947, young second-generation Japanese immigrants established the National Japanese Canadian Citizens' Association (NJCCA), expanding upon the Japanese Democracy Committee, which had been established during the war in 1944. They initiated a claim for compensation for their forced evictions. In response, the Canadian government provided compensation for economic losses in 1950. There was no negotiation with the Japanese Canadians, and the amount was completely insufficient, but it was decided to leave the matter at that for the time being.

### **Centennial anniversary of Japanese immigration to Canada: Redress movement**

Time passed and the year was 1977. The 100th Anniversary of Japanese Immigration to Canada was set to be celebrated. This year marked the 100th anniversary since 1877, when Manzo Nagano, the first Japanese immigrant to Canada, arrived.

In fact, Japanese Canadians who were forcibly evicted and had their property confiscated during the war did not talk much about it, and related documents and other materials were not made public, so young second- and third-generation Japanese Canadians had little knowledge of what had actually happened and did not know the details.

However, on the occasion of the centenary, the reality of the wartime conditions were conveyed to younger generations. The Redress movement began as a new movement demanding an apology and compensation from the Canadian government.

In 1980, the National Japanese Canadian Citizens' Association (NJCCA) was renamed to the National Association of Japanese Canadians (NAJC), and this organization became the core of the Redress movement. However, the Pierre Trudeau government at the time indicated that it would respond with expressions of regret rather than an apology and refused to provide compensation. Furthermore, there were various positions within the Japanese Canadian community, ranging from those who believed that an apology alone was sufficient, to those who believed that an apology, collective compensation, and even individual compensation should be sought. The movement seemed to have hit a dead end.

### **The Birth of the Mulroney Administration - The Beginning of Negotiations**

The Redress movement began to take off after Brian Mulroney took office in September 1984. Mulroney had become a successful lawyer with knowledge of labour law and became leader of the Progressive Conservative Party in 1983, and in 1984 he defeated the Liberal government of John Turner. Reconciliation with Japanese Canadians was also a campaign promise of his.

In December 1984, Jack Murta, Minister of Multiculturalism, who would become the chief negotiator for the Canadian side, visited Art Miki, the chief negotiator for the Japanese Canadian side, and the president of the National Association of Japanese Canadians, in his hometown of Winnipeg, Manitoba, to meet for the first time. Formal direct negotiations began in January 1985.

Art Miki, the third-generation Japanese Canadian negotiation team leader, was born in September 1936 and served as a teacher for many years, becoming a leader in the Japanese community. On the Canadian side, the Minister of Multiculturalism, who served as the chief negotiator, was replaced every year by political appointment. Negotiations were sure to be extremely difficult.

Japanese Canadians' basic strategy was to seek simultaneous acknowledgement and apology for wartime injustices and compensation for lost property. However, there were various opinions among them regarding the extent of the apology and compensation that should be given, and Art Miki said that it was very difficult to bring everyone together.



Dr. Art Miki (2nd from left)

### **Calculation of Compensation Amount**

In January 1986, Canada's second chief negotiator, Minister of Multiculturalism Otto Jelinek, acknowledged the injustices committed during the war and offered an apology. However, no progress had been made regarding compensation because the amount of loss based on objective facts is unknown.

Therefore, the Japanese Canadians requested several accounting firms to conduct an investigation to calculate the losses. However, the average research cost was \$150,000, and the Japanese Canadians had managed to come up with only \$30,000. Requests for investigation were declined across the board. If the amount of compensation could not be calculated, negotiations would not proceed any further. At this point, the major accounting firm Price Waterhouse undertook the investigation. In fact, the previous president of that same accounting firm believed that the Canadian government's measures against people of Japanese ancestry were completely unjustified, and the current president, who inherited that strong belief, demonstrated considerable flexibility and dissolved the problem of the cost. A full-scale investigation into the amount of the losses began.

In May 1986, the total amount was calculated at \$433 million. There was an opinion that this amount was only for assets for which supporting documents remained, and that the actual amount of the losses would have been much higher, but subsequent negotiations proceeded based on the results of this investigation. Additionally, as the amount of damage was clearly stated, various media outlets began to make favourable statements about the Redress movement.

### **Negotiations break down?**

In July 1986, the representative of the Government of Canada was replaced by the third Minister of Multiculturalism, David Crombie. Art Miki asked for \$400 million in personal compensation for the 14,000 survivors at the rate of \$25,000 each and \$50 million for the Japanese Canadian community. They negotiated tenaciously with the aim of reaching a compromise with Minister Crombie. However, while Canada proposed a \$12 million fund for community compensation, it still refused to provide individual compensation.

During the negotiations in July 1987, the government announced that the \$12 million community compensation plan was the final plan and pressed for a deal or a breakdown. The Japanese Canadians refused, saying they could not accept a deal without personal compensation. In effect, negotiations broke down and at this point, negotiations ceased.

Now, as a new negotiation strategy, the Japanese Canadian side decided to appeal to a wide range of other ethnic groups, such as indigenous peoples and Jewish Canadians, to support the Redress Movement. Redress was not just an issue for Japanese Canadians, but an issue of justice for the nation of Canada as a whole.

### **Redress Agreement**

A turning point came in 1988, four years into the negotiations. As Prime Minister Mulroney prepared for a general election in the fall, his approval ratings were slumping and he needed a revival plan. The Japanese Canadian Redress Movement was not just an issue for Japanese Canadians, but an issue for all Canadians related to citizenship and justice, and it was supported by 61 organizations, including First Nations and other ethnic groups. The Prime Minister believed that this was the time to move forward with Redress, which was a promise made in the 1984 election that had resulted in a dead end, and appointed Gerry Weiner, the fourth Minister in charge of multicultural affairs, in March. Meanwhile, on Thursday, April 14, 1988, a march in support of the Redress movement was held in the square in front of Parliament in Ottawa. Many organizations participated, making a strong impression that this was an issue of justice for Canada.

On August 10, President Ronald Reagan signed the Civil Liberties Act of 1988, to redress Japanese Americans who went through similar injustices, which included personal compensation. From here, negotiations began to move forward. However, former members of the Canadian military, and those who had served in Hong Kong, were against redress. They had hidden political power. The government silenced opposition by promising to increase pensions for the veterans.

On August 27th, an agreement was finally reached on both an official apology and compensation. Individual compensation was set at \$21,000 per person. The total compensation included \$12 million for the Japanese

Canadian community, \$12 million for the fund to preserve the memory for those who have suffered injustice, and \$12 million for the Racial Harmony and Intercultural Understanding Fund. The total amount was \$306 million, or 75% of the \$400 million requested by the Japanese side.

On September 22, in Parliament in Ottawa, Prime Minister Mulroney publicly apologized for the injustices against Japanese Canadians. He then signed the redress agreement with Art Miki, president of the National Association of Japanese Canadians. September 22, 1988 was a historic day not only for Japanese Canadians, but also for Canada.

### **December 10, 2023, at the Human Rights Museum**

Winnipeg, the capital of Manitoba, is home to the Canadian Museum of Human Rights, the first national museum outside the Ottawa metropolitan area. It is 100 meters tall, eight stories high, and has a total floor space of 24,000 square meters, with detailed displays of a variety of cases related to Canada and human rights. There is also an extensive section on Japanese Canadians and the Redress movement, a place where we can face the mistakes of the past and learn the lessons of history.

On December 10, 2023, a ceremony was held at the Canadian Museum of Human Rights to commemorate the publication of the new book "Gaman - Perseverance" by Art Miki, the Japanese Canadian leader who led to the Redress movement. Gaman means "to endure." This is a first-class history written by a chief negotiator who knows all about the negotiations that led to the Redress agreement. Truly, the devil is in the details. However, if you read that sincere efforts can make God dwell in the details, you will be convinced. "Through hardship to joy" is the theme of Schiller's poem "Ode to Joy," which also happens to be the theme of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, and I think it applies to the Redress Agreement as well.

December 10th is Human Rights Day, and 2023 also marked the 35th anniversary of the Redress Agreement and the 95th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Canada. In fact, the Redress Agreement has since become an important model for promoting reconciliation between the Canadian government and Indigenous peoples. Approximately 200 people attended a ceremony related to the Redress movement, including Lieutenant Governor of Manitoba Anita Neville, Minister of Economic Development Jamie Moses in Manitoba, members of the Manitoba Legislature, and representatives of the Japanese community. I was really moved by Art Miki's speech.

A local Japanese drum group, Hinode Taiko, added to the excitement with a passionate performance. I was invited to the wonderful ceremony, and I gave a brief speech to express my gratitude and respect.

After the ceremony, a young man from Jordan approached me. Although he expressed concern about the current situation between Israel, Hamas, and Gaza, I was impressed by how he learned from the Redress



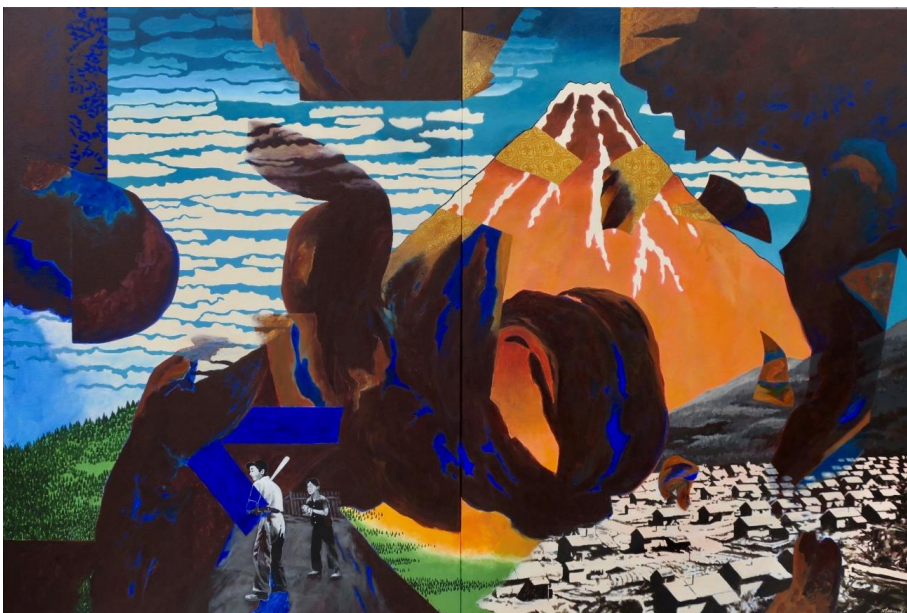
Agreement the importance of continuing communication without giving up and looking for room for compromise.



Canadian Museum for Human Rights

### **Conclusion**

One of the things that I have come to realize through my work as a diplomat is that the relationship between countries is ultimately a collection of relationships between people. The Redress movement introduced here shows that faith and passion can overcome difficult problems and lead to a brighter future. It is an important history that should continue to be passed down.



Norman Takeuchi View of Mount Fuji from Lemon Creek. Collection: Andrew Gibbs. Photo courtesy of the artist.