



ENDURING FAITH

THROUGH HARDSHIP AND JOY,
VANCOUVER'S JAPANESE UNITED CHURCH

We are excited to share our [new website](#) with you. The site tells the story of a remarkable Vancouver community with a history almost as old as the city itself. But the story is bigger than Vancouver. It's a truly Canadian story that's important to know.

[VJUCARCHIVES.CA](#)

We welcome you on a tour, and we're opening our archives vault to show you some of the treasures and hidden memories that are waiting for you. We've created this program with some questions to help you explore, imagine, and think. Questions are grouped by age category (Children, Youth, Adults). You can look at them on your own, or as part of a group. You can choose some or enjoy all. We hope you have fun searching and learning!

In the spirit of the One whose love and grace abound,

*Vancouver Japanese United Church &
The Pacific Mountain Regional Council Archives*

AGE-SPECIFIC ENGAGEMENT

CHILDREN

Designed for people 9-12 years, these questions explore history, empathy and storytelling.



YOUTH

Embark on a VJUC Archives scavenger hunt on your own, or with your youth group!

ADULTS

Go deep into questions of systemic racism, identity and redress - perfect material for a study group or personal reflection.

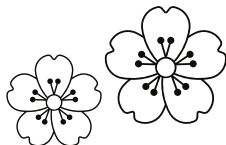
CHILDREN'S ENGAGEMENT

CAN YOU FIND IT ON THE [ENDURING FAITH](#) WEBSITE?



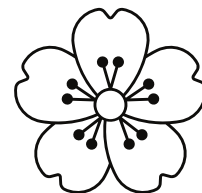
1. One hundred years ago, children in British Columbia didn't normally go to kindergarten. They started school in grade one. But the United Church provided kindergarten for Japanese and Chinese Canadian children. Their parents and their teachers wanted them to be able to speak English well and to have every opportunity to succeed in school and in their careers. Graduating from kindergarten was a BIG deal! It opened many doors.

Can you find an image or picture of kindergarten graduates? Try the Search Feature. Also, you can narrow down the results by using Advanced Search.



2. Imagine that your mom or your dad said to you one day, "Quick! Pack some clothes and your toothbrush. We have to move today. No more school. Say good-bye to your friends. No, the dog can't come with us." How do you think you'd feel? That's what happened to many, many Canadian children about 80 years ago. The rest of Canada was afraid because these families' ancestors had come from Japan—and Canada was at war with Japan. The Canadian government sent them to camps, called "internment camps", where they couldn't leave. George Takashima was in grade three when this happened to him.

Find George's interview in the "Our Story in Voice" page. At 9:49 in the recording, listen to him describe how he found out that his life was about to change.



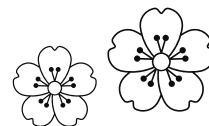
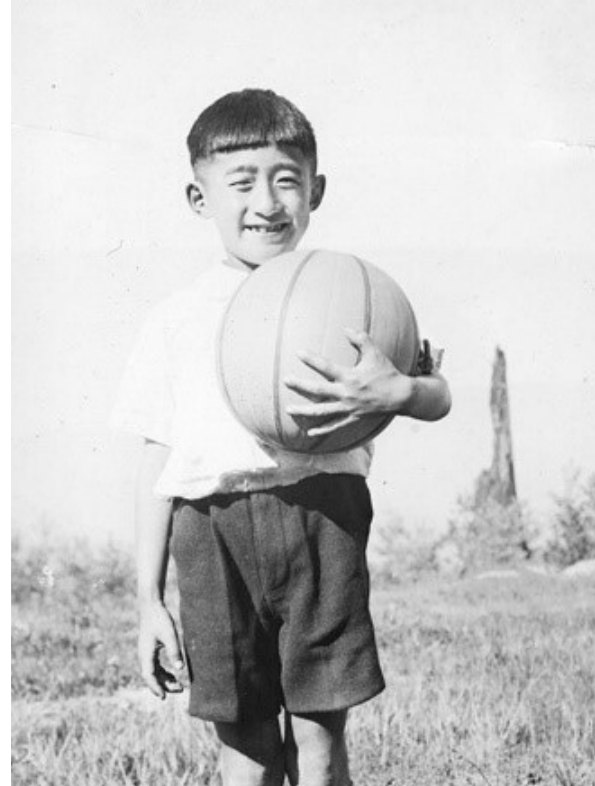
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CHILDREN'S ENGAGEMENT

3. A few years after the war had ended, Japanese Canadians were allowed to come back to Vancouver. Those who belonged to the United Church wanted to return to their church building. But they couldn't use the building. And then, with no say, they lost it. The United Church of Canada sold their church home. It took them 25 years to find a new church building that they could call their own. The United Church eventually apologized for selling the Vancouver Japanese United Church building.

Can you find a copy of the apology that the Church offered in 2009? How is it different from the celebration and redress payment in 2018?



QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES TO HELP YOU WONDER AND IMAGINE

4. Imagine that your grandfather or grandmother had been sent far away from their home during a war just because their ancestors were from a certain country—say England, Mexico, Germany or Japan. They moved away from all their friends and had to say goodbye to their school and their neighborhood.

What would you want to ask your grandmother or grandfather about how they felt when this very traumatic thing happened to them?

5. Pretend you had a friend who had to move to an internment camp. What's their name? What especially do you like about them? What kinds of things did you do together?

Now write a letter to your friend. You might mention what you miss doing with them, ask about what their home or school is like... maybe tell them what you've heard about the camps. Use pen and paper; sending a handwritten letter by mail would have been the only way to contact your friend back then.

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YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

ONLINE SCAVENGER HUNT @ [VJUCARCHIVES.CA](https://vjucarchives.ca)

1. When Canada declared war on Japan in 1941, the Canadian government uprooted thousands of people of Japanese descent whose homes were on the west coast. They were registered as “enemy aliens,” even though the majority were Canadian citizens. The government sent most of them to internment camps in the interior of BC, Alberta or Manitoba. At the same time, the government of BC took away high school education for young Japanese Canadians living in the camps and—just like that—snuffed out opportunity and promising futures. But some of the women in the churches rose to the occasion and set up high schools. In the United Church, these were the Woman’s Missionary Society workers. They helped keep the doors of opportunity open.

Find some excerpts from the Lemon Creek High School yearbook (the “ELCEEHI annual”). Do the pages suggest how the students felt during those dark days?

2. In 1949, the Canadian government allowed Japanese Canadians to return to the west coast. Many young people moving from internment camps to Vancouver had to find work at a time when prejudice made that especially challenging. As part of a visible minority, they were apt to feel isolated and alone. Out of that context was born the Vancouver Nisei Fellowship Group. (Nisei = second generation Japanese.)

One woman made a deep impression on the Fellowship Group. She formed a deep and lasting bond with the group.

Who was she, and why the close bond?



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YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

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*Can you find a copy of the apology that the Church offered in 2009?
How is it different from the celebration and redress payment in 2018?*

4. Before the Second World War, the United Church saw its role as one of assimilating ethnic minorities into the predominantly Caucasian culture of Canada.

What is assimilation?

Nowadays, the United Church holds a vision for becoming an intercultural church.

What do you think is the difference between multicultural and intercultural? Why does the United Church strive to become an intercultural church?

(Hint: Search the web for "Vision for becoming an Intercultural Church")



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YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

QUESTIONS TO PONDER AND DISCUSS

5. The vast majority of Japanese Canadians who were interned during the Second World War were Canadian citizens.

Why do you think that didn't protect them from being interned and losing all their property and possessions? What does that tell us about the attitudes and prejudices of that time?

6. Canadians now know that it was very wrong that Japanese Canadians were interned during the Second World War.

If you had been a non-Japanese Canadian in 1942—when these families were losing their homes and possessions and being sent away to internment camps—would you have done anything? If yes, what would you have done? If no, why not?

7. How do racism and other forms of prejudice take form today, particularly during periods of societal stress? Have you heard any examples in the news? How might we respond as individuals and as a church?



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YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

QUESTIONS TO PONDER AND DISCUSS

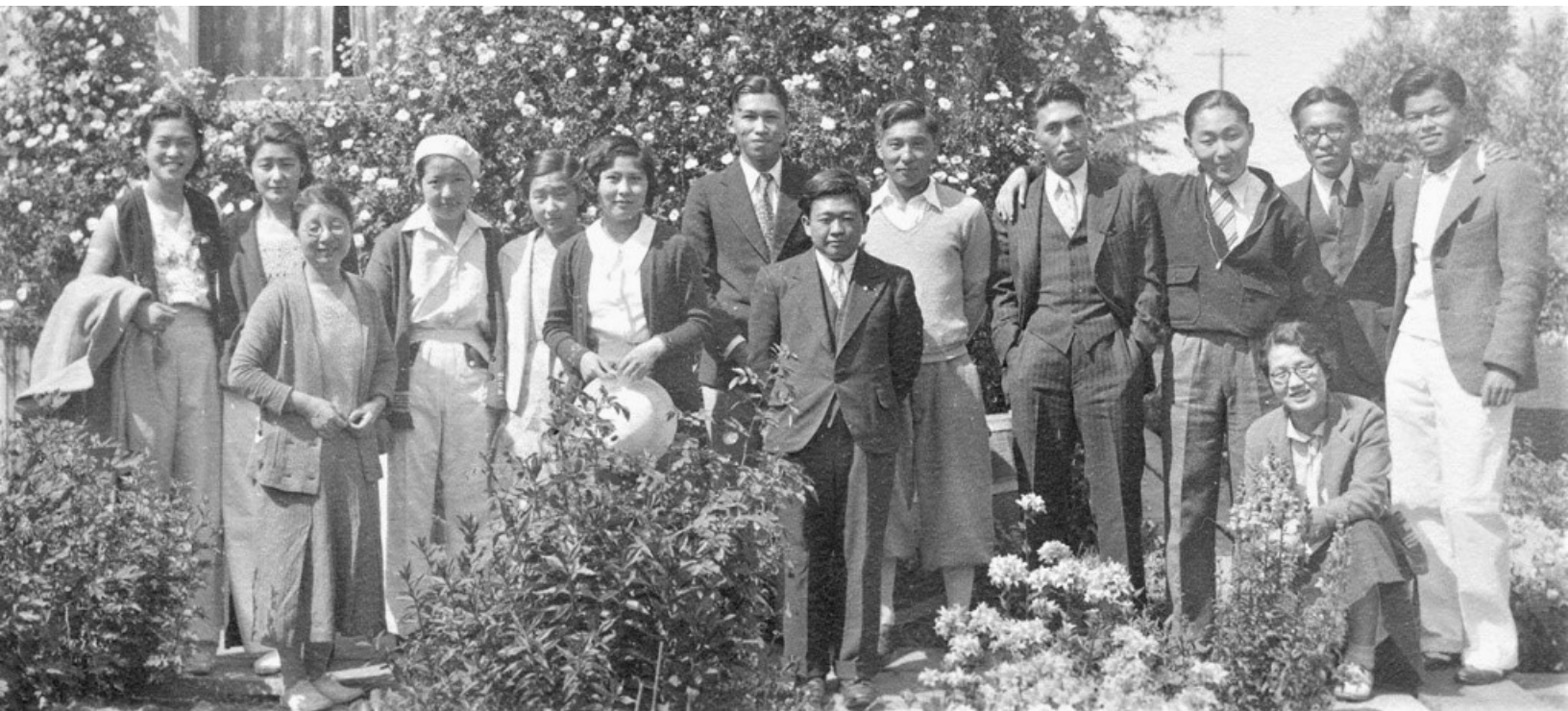
8. When you talk to older people who were children when they were interned in sites in the BC interior, they often say that as kids they had a lot of good times and some good memories. But they say it was much harder on their parents.

What do you think are the reasons for that?

Why would things be different for parents and kids?

9. As you know, Canada is a multicultural society and we celebrate a country where adults and children—whose parents and ancestors are from many different countries—can work, go to school and play together. But people from different backgrounds often like to worship together—for example, at a Japanese United Church, a Chinese United Church etc.

Why do you think these Christian communities want to worship together?



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ADULT ENGAGEMENT

QUESTIONS TO HELP YOU EXPLORE THE SITE ENDURING FAITH

1. The early Vancouver Japanese United Church congregation ("Powell Street Church") counted medical professionals among its membership.

During the influenza outbreak of 1918, how did the congregation respond? What presented a special challenge?

2. By the beginning of the Second World War, there were many Japanese United Church congregations in BC, but none in the rest of Canada. In 1942, the Government of Canada uprooted all people of Japanese descent from the west coast and seized their property. Find a document giving a list of Japanese United Church congregations (then known as "Japanese Missions") in 1942, just before they closed.

How many Japanese United Churches existed prior to the war? Where were they located?

3. Find an image that reveals patriotism among interned Canadian children, despite the injustices they endured from Canada during the Second World War. What do the words from our national anthem "We stand on guard for thee" mean to you?



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ADULT ENGAGEMENT

QUESTIONS TO HELP YOU EXPLORE THE SITE [ENDURING FAITH](#)

4. After she was expelled from the nursing program at Vancouver General Hospital, May Komiyama and her family were interned at Kaslo. "I wanted to lose my faith," she said, "but I wanted to hang onto it."

What helped her hang onto her faith?

(Hint: she explains in her interview, at the 14:26 mark.)

5. Find an image (photo or text) of the United Church's apology to the Vancouver Japanese United Church in 2009.

What, specifically, did the United Church apologize for?

In 2018, BC Conference and the General Council of the United Church presented a \$500,000 redress payment to the congregation. This website was made possible through some of the funds from that compensation.

What do you think of the redress payment?



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ADULT ENGAGEMENT

QUESTIONS TO PONDER AND DISCUSS

6. The religions indigenous to Japan are Buddhism and Shintoism. Many Japanese immigrants who came to Canada in the late 1800s and early 1900s continued to practice those religions.

Why do you think some converted to Christianity? What could have been the impetus or reasons?

7. When you speak with older Japanese Canadians about their experience of being interned with their parents during the war, many of them express no bitterness and anger against the government and their fellow Canadians who didn't speak up against this injustice.

Why do you think that is? What do you think that tells us? What do you think it says about the power of forgiveness?

8. The vast majority of Japanese Canadians who were interned during the Second World War were Canadian citizens.

Why do you think that didn't protect them from being interned and losing all their property and possessions? What does that tell us about the attitudes and prejudices of that time?



ADULT ENGAGEMENT

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10. *How do racism and other forms of prejudice take form today, particularly during periods of societal stress? Have you heard any examples in the news? How might we respond as individuals and as a church?*



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The VJUCARCHIVES.CA website is a joint project of the Vancouver Japanese United Church (VJUC) and the Pacific Mountain Regional Council Archives of The United Church of Canada. It was made possible through some funds from the redress payment that the congregation received from the United Church in 2018. The website tells the history of the Vancouver Japanese United Church, which is particularly important to research, assemble and publish at this time while individuals who were part of that history are still living.



Thanks to the BC History Digitization Program of UBC's Irving K. Barber Learning Centre, which provided matching funds for the digitization portion of the project. Thanks to the Nikkei National Museum & Cultural Centre for guidance on policy and practice, and for help in identifying a number of individuals in the images. Thanks to the Vancouver Japanese United Church advisory team: Joan Fairs, Rev. Daebin Im, Jean Kamimura, Becky Maruno, Keiko Norisue and Dorothy Yamamoto. They guided the project and provided important context and details that made the history more enriching and accurate. Thanks to those who participated in the interviews: VJUC advisory team, Sumi Yoshida, Margaret Eto, Rev. Tad Mitsui, Rev. Kenneth Moy and Pastor George Takashima.



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