

Examine **What Was the Media's Role in the Komagata Maru Incident?**

How does media coverage shape our understanding of events?

In 1914, Gurdit Singh, a Sikh businessman, tried to challenge Canada's immigration law. He chartered the *Komagata Maru* to transport 340 Sikhs and 36 other men from India to BC. The ship left Hong Kong on April 4, stopping in China and Japan before arriving in Vancouver on May 23.

Government authorities would not let the ship dock. The *Komagata Maru* and its passengers spent two months anchored in the harbour. On July 23, a Canadian military cruiser escorted it out to sea and it returned to India.



The Canadian government apologized for the *Komagata Maru* incident in 2016. None of the passengers were still alive when the apology was made. Who would this apology benefit?

▼ This was the headline on the front page of the *Vancouver Sun* the day the *Komagata Maru* reached Vancouver. How might these words affect readers? How might they affect the Sikh passengers?

▲ News of the approaching ship reached BC ahead of the *Komagata Maru*. This cartoon appeared in the *Vancouver Sun* on May 21, 1914. What does the cartoon seem to be saying about Asian immigration to Canada?

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HINDU INVADERS NOW IN THE CITY HARBOR ON KOMAGATA MARU

Vessel Arrived Here This Morning before Daybreak—Excited Crowd of Hindus Assemble on Waterfront—Newcomers Seem Assured of Being Admitted—Gunget Singh Issues Statement Containing Veiled Threat.



◀ This photo of passengers on the *Komagata Maru* appeared on the front page of the *Vancouver Daily Province* on May 26, 1914. How do you think the *Daily Province* wanted readers to feel as they looked at this photo? What choices by the photographer help create this reaction?

► Crowds of Vancouver residents came down to see the *Komagata Maru*. Compare the people in this photo with the passengers (above). What similarities and differences do you see?



Some Victoria Daily Colonist Headlines, May 19–July 24, 1914

ORDERS AGAINST HINDUS LANDING

STRICT WATCH ON KOMAGATA

VANCOUVER PUBLIC GROWS IMPATIENT

WILL INTERCEPT KOMAGATA MARU

HUNGER STRIKE ON KOMAGATA

REQUEST ACTION BY GOVERNMENT

KOMAGATA MARU REACHES CANADA

ATTEMPT MADE TO BOARD MARU

EXPECT TROUBLE ON KOMAGATA

KOMAGATA GOES TO VANCOUVER

KOMAGATA STAYS AT VANCOUVER

KOMAGATA CASE BEFORE PREMIER

NONE ALLOWED TO BOARD SHIP

WILL NOT MOVE KOMAGATA

KOMAGATA MAY DEPART SHORTLY

STRONG REQUEST FOR EXCLUSION

SUPPLIES SENT TO KOMAGATA

RAINBOW SAILS FOR VANCOUVER

URGES ENFORCEMENT OF IMMIGRATION LAW

KOMAGATA CASE TAKEN TO COURT

KOMAGATA MARU TO LEAVE TODAY

▲ The *Victoria Daily Colonist* provided a front-page update on the *Komagata Maru* situation almost every day. Many newspaper readers only scan the headlines. Analyze the headlines here. What story do they tell?

How might this media coverage make Sikhs in Canada feel? Why are the Sikhs referred to as Hindus?



Will the Dyke Hold?



▲ This cartoon ran in the *Vancouver Sun* on June 26, 1914. Its title read: **Will the Dyke Hold?** A dyke is a wall to hold back floods of water. The cartoon compares the population of India (nearing 300 million in 1914) and Canada (about 8 million). How does this cartoon try to persuade readers?

▲ The Canadian government ordered the Navy cruiser *Rainbow* (left) to force *Komagata Maru* (right) to leave. This photo was on the front page of the *Daily Province* on July 21, 1914. The headline read: **EXTRA! Hindus Finally Reply They Are Ready to Surrender Rather Than Chance a Fight** and with this large caption: **Two "Ships of War"—Rainbow and Komagata Close Together.** What message is given by these words and this image?

► Vancouver Winter Olympics, 2010. Compare this photo with the one of the *Komagata Maru* passengers on page 85. How has Canada changed?



Check Your Learning

1. How did media coverage shape the public's response to the *Komagata Maru* situation? How reliable do you think the information presented was?
2. What does this media coverage tell you about how common and accepted anti-Asian attitudes were at the time?

Make Connections

3. Why is it important to understand how media can shape our views?

Investigate



Why Did Canada Intern People During the World Wars?

To control the First Nations, Canada confined them to reserves. In World War I and II, Canada used a similar strategy to remove and control certain groups of Canadian citizens and immigrants.

World War I began on August 4, 1914, when Britain declared war on Germany. This meant Canada was at war, too. On August 22, Canada enacted the War Measures Act. Under this Act, the prime minister, with a few advisors but without getting approval from Parliament, could restrict where any person in Canada could go, imprison them without a trial, seize their property, and expel them from the country.

Ukrainian Internment

Prime Minister Borden used the War Measures Act to force 80 000 of Canada's 170 000 Ukrainian immigrants to register as **enemy aliens**. Over 5000 Ukrainian men were confined in **internment** camps across the country.

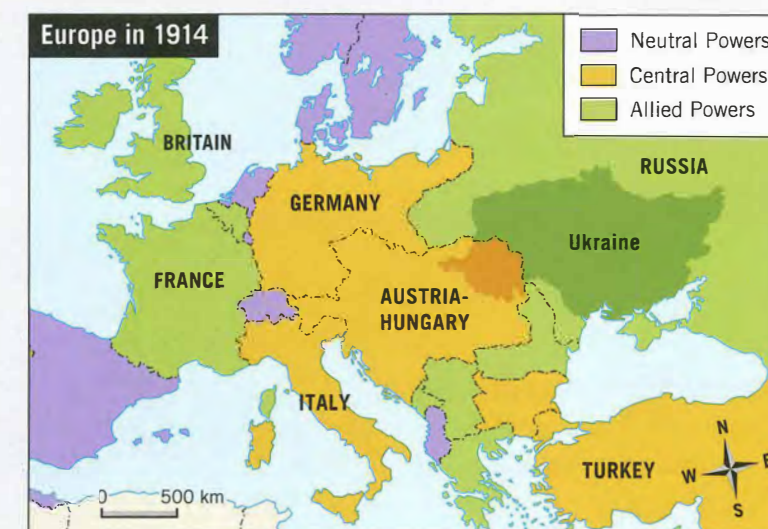
Enemy aliens who had become Canadian citizens after March 1902 lost their right to vote, unless they had relatives serving in the Armed Forces. Was this law justified?

Were the internees really enemies of Canada?

An **enemy alien** was a person from an enemy country. **Internment** is imprisonment for political or military reasons.

THINKING LIKE... a Historian

Historians use maps to help them understand conflicts in the world. In World War I, Britain, France, and Russia (joined by Italy, Japan, and the U.S.) fought Germany and Austria-Hungary (joined by Turkey). At the time, Ukraine was split between Russia and Austria-Hungary. How does this map help you understand why many Ukrainian immigrants might have been considered enemies of Canada?



Labour Issues

There was a severe shortage of work in Canada between 1913 and 1915. Many people were laid off. Ukrainian immigrants were leaders in strikes and protests. Worldwide, the Russian Revolution of 1905 had both inspired workers with hope for change and terrified business owners and governments. There was fear that workers would revolt.

Why would Ukrainian immigrants have chosen to come to Canada?

The Canadian government had encouraged farmers from Eastern Europe to immigrate to Canada. Many Ukrainian immigrants had replaced Asians as cheap manual labour. Now these immigrants were forced to work for free, building roads and railways. Many died in captivity from injuries or disease, and several were shot while attempting to escape.

By 1916, the need for soldiers to fight in the war had led to a shortage of workers. The government provided the owners of factories, mills, and mines with thousands of Ukrainian internees. Many were not set free from this work until two years after the war ended in 1918.

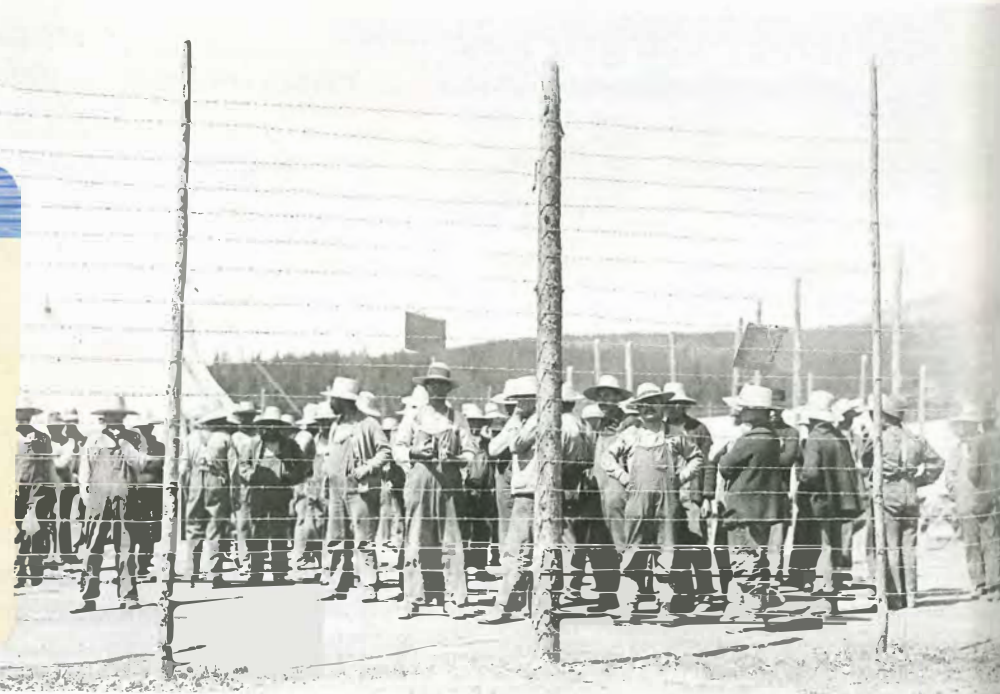
Who benefited from the Ukrainian internment?

► Ukrainian internees. What do you think conditions were like in these camps?

VOICES

There are men running away from here every day, because the conditions here are very poor, so that we cannot go much longer, we are not getting enough to eat...

—N. Olynik, prisoner at Castle Mountain Internment Camp, writing to his wife, 1915



Why might the government fear that Ukrainian workers would revolt?

Ukrainian Soldiers

During World War I, more than 10 000 Ukrainians enlisted in the Canadian Armed Forces.

► Filip Konowal enlisted in 1915. He was awarded the Victoria Cross, Britain's highest award for bravery in war. He was not considered an enemy alien because he was from the part of Ukraine that was in Russia. How might Canada's different policies for Ukrainians from Russia and Austria-Hungary have contributed to divisions within the Ukrainian community in Canada?



Ukrainians who had been interned or forced to register as enemies were left confused and disappointed in Canada. They had committed no crime, and yet they had been punished. In 2005, the Canadian government apologized for its internment of Ukrainian immigrants. It set up a \$10 million fund to be used to honour the suffering of the internees and raise awareness.

Why did Canada call some Ukrainians enemies and take away their freedom?

► The Castle Mountain Internment Camp in Banff National Park was the largest camp in the Rockies. The internees built the roads through Banff National Park, working through bitterly cold winters. The statue at this memorial to them has one word on it: "Why?"



Japanese Internment

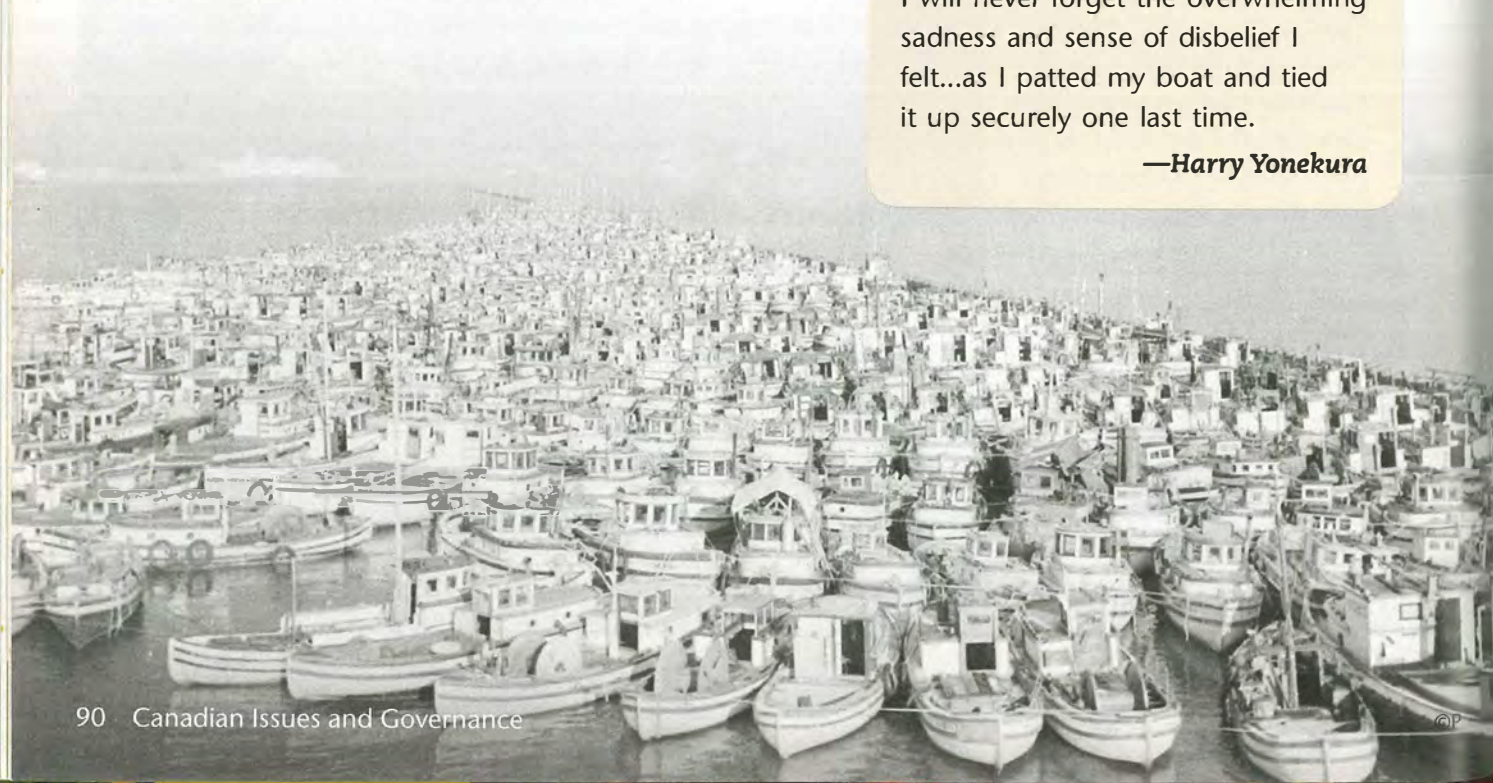
World War II lasted from 1939 to 1945. Japan attacked Pearl Harbor in Hawaii on December 7, 1941. The United States and Canada both declared war on Japan the next day. People from Japan were now enemy aliens, along with Germans and Italians.

In BC, newspapers and radio stations falsely reported that Japanese spies were hiding in communities, ready to help the Japanese when they invaded. Military leaders said there was little danger of a Japanese invasion. The RCMP reported there was no evidence of any spying or sabotage among the Japanese in BC. But Prime Minister Mackenzie King used the War Measures Act to allow the relocation of Japanese Canadians away from the BC coast and the seizure of their property.

The Royal Navy seized 1200 Japanese-owned fishing boats in BC and suspended Japanese fishing licences. The government sold off all the boats to other fishermen, for much less than they were worth.

Was there evidence that Japanese Canadians were a threat to the security of Canada during World War II?

▼ Japanese-Canadian fishing boats taken by the government are docked on the Fraser River in December 1941. What effect would the loss of their boats have on fishermen's families?



VOICES

I will never forget the overwhelming sadness and sense of disbelief I felt...as I patted my boat and tied it up securely one last time.

—Harry Yonekura

In January 1942, all Japanese-Canadian males between the ages of 18 and 45 were taken to old logging camps throughout the BC interior. They were told it was just a temporary measure that would show their loyalty to Canada.

Six weeks later, 21 000 more Japanese Canadians, two-thirds of them Canadian-born, were taken by train to camps and abandoned mining towns in the BC interior. They were put to work. Men were often separated from their wives and children.

All of their property—houses, farms, businesses, personal possessions—was taken from them. Everything was sold off without the owner's consent.

At this time, BC did not allow Asian Canadians to vote in elections. Why might BC have had such a law?"



Relocation



Why Did Canada Deny Some Groups the Vote?



1867
Only men aged 21 or older who own property and have a good income can vote. Most workers earn very little and few own their own homes. Virtually no First Peoples own property.

1907
BC takes away the right to vote of Canadians from India, so now they can no longer vote in federal elections.

1917
Conscientious objectors, such as the Doukhobors, lose their right to vote until the end of the war. Doukhobors also lose the right to vote from 1934 to 1955, when the ban on conscientious objectors is lifted.



1918
Most women gain the right to vote in federal elections. Which women still cannot vote?

1934
Inuit are disqualified from voting.

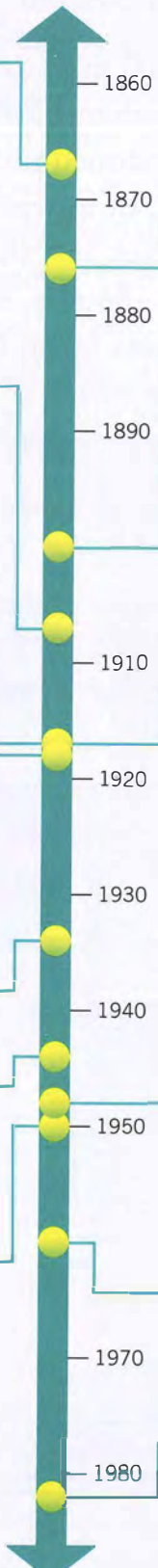
1944
Japanese Canadians forced to leave BC and move to other provinces are nevertheless still denied the right to vote in federal elections.



1950
Canada wants to protect its Arctic sovereignty. Inuit are given back the right to vote. But there are no ballot boxes in the North until 1962.

For many years, Canada denied the right to vote to women, First Peoples, and Asians. Voting rights were also denied to enemy aliens during the wars.

- What brought change for each group of voters?
- How does having the right to vote help make Canada more representative?



1876
The Indian Act says First Nations have to give up their status if they want to vote.

1900
People who can't vote provincially are no longer allowed to vote in federal elections. First Nations, Chinese Canadians, and Japanese Canadians can't vote in BC, so now these residents of BC can't vote in federal elections, either.

1917
Canada needs more soldiers to fight in Europe. It introduces conscription (forced military service). This is very unpopular with voters. The government gives the vote to all active members of the Armed Forces, including women and First Nations.



Enemy alien citizens cannot vote, unless they have relatives serving in the Armed Forces.

1948
The United Nations says voting is a human right. All Asian Canadians regain the right to vote.

1960
All First Nations are given the right to vote without having to give up status.

1982
The *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* guarantees all Canadian citizens over 18 the right to vote.

On September 2, 1945, Japan surrendered to the United States after the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. World War II was over. Japanese Canadians were given the choice of returning to Japan or going east of the Rockies. Most chose to stay in Canada.

In 1949, Japanese Canadians were finally allowed to return to the Pacific coast. However, their homes and livelihoods were gone.

What gave the government the power to order this?

Japanese-Canadian Population, 1945 and 1947

	1945	1947
British Columbia	15 610	6 776
Alberta	3 550	4 180
Saskatchewan	157	505
Manitoba	1 052	1 186
Ontario	2 914	6 616
Québec	716	1 247

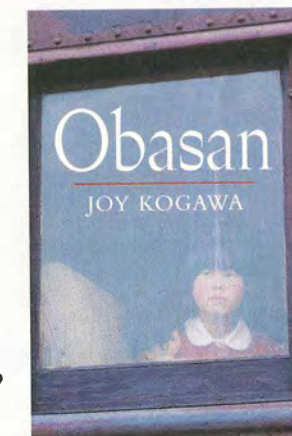
Source: *Redress: Inside the Japanese Canadian Call for Justice* by Roy Miki

▲ Where in Canada did the most Japanese Canadians go after the war? Why? What happened to the Japanese-Canadian community in BC?

THINKING LIKE...

a Sociologist

Can art influence change in society? Many Canadians did not know about the Japanese internment until they read Joy Kogawa's *Obasan*. The novel was published in 1981. It played an important role in building public support for a formal government apology and compensation, which finally came in 1988. What books or works of art have changed the way you think or feel about something?



Check Your Learning

1. What do you think was the government's motive for the Japanese internment and relocation? Why?
2. Compare the causes and consequences of the Ukrainian and Japanese internments.

Make Connections

3. How do you feel when someone breaks your trust? What might it take for that trust to return?

Has Canada treated diverse peoples fairly?

Choose one or more of the questions below. Represent your learning in any way you choose.

- What was the original purpose of the Indian Act, and what are its continuing impacts? **Cause and Consequence**
- Why did Canada need a Truth and Reconciliation Commission? **Significance**
- Why did Canada once exclude Asians? **Cause and Consequence**
- Could internment camps happen again in Canada? **Continuity and Change**

Suggestions for Representing Your Learning

- Use a fishbone diagram.
- Create an infographic.
- Write a letter or diary entry in the role of a person living at the time.
- Record a Q&A on the topic with a friend.

► In August 2018, the city of Victoria replaced this statue of Sir John A. Macdonald with a plaque with a message for reconciliation.



Select one of the groups below or a group you read about in this topic. Conduct research, or additional research if you choose a group you have already read about. Analyze the causes and consequences of the policy, action, or treatment. What were the intended consequences? What were the unintended consequences? What can we learn from this history? How can we help create a more fair and better Canada?

German Canadians

We were labelled enemy aliens and interned in both World Wars.



Doukhobors

They took our land and put our children in school in an old sanitorium.



Inuit

We were relocated from Northern Québec to the High Arctic.



FINDING SOURCES

- Use keywords when searching.
- Use an encyclopedia to get an overview.
- Use an online image search to find photos.
- Ask your librarian for leads.

EVALUATING SOURCES

- Is the source reliable?
- Do you have more than one source?
- Which source is more reliable?
- What is the author's perspective?