Province commemorates Japanese-Canadian historic places

VANCOUVER – The public has chosen 56 Japanese-Canadian historic places with significance to British Columbians of Japanese descent following a four-month nomination period.

These places reflect the development and history of the province, North Vancouver-Lonsdale MLA Naomi Yamamoto and Minister Responsible for Multiculturalism Teresa Wat announced today.

In the government’s continued efforts to recognize and celebrate the diversity and multiculturalism of B.C., the final list of historic places to be provincially recognized for their heritage values and significance to the Japanese-Canadian community have been released. April 1st marks the 75th anniversary of The Internment Period, when over 22,000 Japanese-Canadians were forcibly removed from the B.C. coast, and incarcerated in camps in the Interior of the province, and beyond, between 1942 and 1949.

Following a public nomination process and evaluation by sector and community experts, 56 historic places were chosen to receive provincial recognition status, as part of the Provincial Recognition Program’s Japanese-Canadian Historic Places Project.

The 56 chosen sites will be listed with statements of significance on the B.C. Register of Historic Places. All 176 nominated places appear on an interactive map produced by Heritage BC: https://secure.heritagebc.ca/japanese-canadian-map/?lang=en

Included in the recognized places are the internment camps, self-supporting sites, and road camps where Japanese-Canadians were held or forced to work during the internment years.

Other recognized places include fishing, mining and logging communities that had large Japanese-Canadian populations prior to 1942, many of which never saw the return of their former residents after 1949. The recognized places also celebrate the importance of education, civic responsibility and co-operative enterprise to the Japanese-Canadian community.

The nominated places were evaluated by the Japanese-Canadian Evaluation Team, consisting of members from the Japanese-Canadian community to determine which sites could be considered to have provincial significance. Heritage BC, a not-for-profit organization, Ministry of International Trade and Responsible for Asia Pacific Strategy and Multiculturalism and the Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations’ Heritage Branch supported the process.

The Provincial Recognition Program follows a highly successful 2015 pilot project, which focused on historic places of heritage significance to Chinese-Canadians, resulting in the addition of 21 provincially recognized places in British Columbia to the B.C. Register of Historic
Quotes:

Teresa Wat, Minister Responsible for Multiculturalism –

“Historic places hold community memories and untold stories. This was a dark part of B.C.’s history and it’s important that we remember and respect the impacts of these events on people both then and now. I want to thank the Japanese-Canadian community for selecting these historic places to bring the stories of this part of British Columbia’s heritage and history to life, illustrating how Japanese-Canadians helped build B.C and contribute to our province’s rich cultural mosaic.”

Steve Thomson, Minister of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations –

“British Columbia is known for our rich culture. Recognizing these historic places is a testament to the diverse population that makes British Columbia what it is today.”

Naomi Yamamoto, MLA for North Vancouver-Lonsdale –

“As the first Canadian of Japanese descent to be elected to the B.C. government, I am thrilled to see the Japanese-Canadian Historic places announced. I’m very proud of my heritage and it’s an honour to be a part of this announcement today.”

Quick Facts:

- One-quarter of the people in B.C. are self-identified visible minorities, and 5% identify as Aboriginal.
- B.C. is the most ethnically diverse province in Canada and welcomes nearly 40,000 new immigrants every year.

Learn More:

To learn more about the 56 historic sites, visit: http://www.heritagebc.ca/japanese-historic-places

Canadian Register of Historic Places: www.historicplaces.ca

A backgrounder follows.

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Historic Places to be marked on the B.C. Register of Historic Places

No other event had a greater traumatic impact on the Japanese-Canadian community in British Columbia and Canada than the Second World War internment. The Protected Area is significant to the development of Japanese-Canadian history because it impacted all Japanese-Canadians regardless of where they lived at the time that PC-1486 was enacted. Japanese-Canadians were uprooted from their livelihoods, businesses, homes, culture, and language base in the Protected Area. It was particularly traumatic for those Japanese-Canadians who actually experienced being torn out of their homes in the Protected Area, sent to internment camps and other places, such as the sugar beet farms in Alberta and Manitoba, or to Ontario. Japanese-Canadians could not enter or return to the Protected Area until 1949, four years after the end of the War.

A program was established by the BC Security Commission through which family groups who had the financial means could remain together and live in selected “self-support” internment sites.

Vancouver/Lower Mainland:

Vancouver Japanese Language School – Founded in 1906 in a newly constructed wooden building at 439 Alexander St., right in the heart of Vancouver’s Powell Street neighbourhood. From the early 1880s, Japanese pioneers to Canada began to settle and work in the Powell Street area, which later became known as “Japan Town”.

Powell Street Historic Japanese-Canadian Neighbourhood (Paueru-gai/パウエル街) – The area once known as Poweru-Gai has seen an ebb and flow of Japanese-Canadian culture since the late 19th century. In 1877, the first groups of Japanese immigrants to Canada started what would eventually become a uniquely Japanese-Canadian community around the Hastings Mill and Burrard Inlet waterfront.

Mountain View Cemetery – The City of Vancouver’s only cemetery and one of the oldest in the region, Mountain View opened in 1887, the cemetery covers the land between 31st and 43rd avenues. It is the final resting place of almost 150,000 people, of which over 3,000 are Japanese-Canadians.

Nikkei National Museum, Burnaby – This centre of excellence for Nikkei Japanese-Canadian history for all Canadians and for many international scholars and interests consists of a 93 square-metre (1,000 square-foot) gallery space, archives in a vault, resource centre, gift shop and three small office spaces.

Annieville Slough, Delta – Vessels owned by Japanese-Canadian fishers were impounded, confiscated and towed here to be sold off during the dispossession and forced relocation of
1942.

Don and Lion Island – Two small islands located on the South Arm of the Fraser River in Richmond were home to approximately 400 Japanese-Canadian residents between 1901 and 1942.

Steveston – In 1887, the first Japanese immigrant to arrive in Steveston, Gihei Kuno, initiated a large migration of several thousand from his area of Japan, with Japanese boat builders following later in the same decade. Japanese men naturalized as soon as they could after the required three-year residence, which meant that they could obtain fishing licences.

Strawberry Hill, Surrey – Beginning in the early 1900s, farmers of Japanese descent began to settle in this area. The origins of the Strawberry Hill community are deeply tied to local Japanese-Canadian families who moved to the area and began farming in the early 1900s, greatly impacting the neighbourhood’s formation through community and agricultural projects.

Seymour Valley Camp – Likely founded by prominent Japanese-Canadian and entrepreneur Eichiki Kagetsu, also owner of the Deep Bay Logging Company, the community was initially established as a logging camp in about 1920.

Marpole Boy Scout Hall/Japanese Language school – Constructed by the Japanese-Canadian community in the area in 1927, initially, the building was primarily used as a Japanese-Language school, and in 1934 had a student population of 68.

Hastings Park, Vancouver – In early 1942, after Canada declared War on Japan, the Pacific National Exhibition (PNE) grounds at Hastings Park in East Vancouver were used to temporarily house Japanese-Canadians who were being uprooted from the B.C. coast. Over 8,000 people were detained in the exhibition buildings and stables at Hastings Park before being sent to internment sites in the B.C. interior.

Stanley Park First World War Cenotaph, Vancouver – The cenotaph is a tribute to the Japanese-Canadian soldiers who fought in wars for Canada. In particular, it is a lasting memory of the 190 men who answered the call of duty for Canada and to the 54 who lost their lives in the First World War.

Tonari Gumi, Vancouver – Founded in 1974 to improve the lives of Vancouver’s dying population, Tonari Gumi is the Japanese-Canadian Volunteers Association. It provides a wide range of services to help seniors, families of seniors, new immigrants and temporary residents who need assistance.

University of British Columbia – UBC is significant to the heritage of Japanese-Canadians in British Columbia as a symbol of the importance of higher education to the community, and as a symbol of the loss and discrimination that was imposed on students during the Second World War.

Vancouver Buddhist Temple – In 1904, 14 Buddhist followers gathered to discuss the construction of a Buddhist temple in Vancouver. On Nov. 9, 1906, the property at 32 Alexander St. was purchased and became the centre of activity for Jodo Shinshu followers.

Fraser Valley:
**Fraser Valley Buddhist Temple** – Founded in 1954, the Fraser Valley Buddhist Temple has been the gathering place for Japanese-Canadian Buddhists who moved back to the area after the war.

**Haney, Maple Ridge** – Haney was a very important settlement area for Japanese-Canadians in the Fraser Valley, who constituted almost one-third of the population prior to the Second World War, with approximately 220 Japanese-Canadian-owned farms thriving in Maple Ridge.

**Westminster Abbey, Mission** – The former Mission Japanese-Language school had a student population of 92 in 1934. Children from as far away as Clayburn, near Abbotsford, attended this school, since the Japanese-Canadian population in some of the smaller communities was too small to sustain their own Japanese-language school.

**Pitt Meadows Japanese Meeting Hall** – Built by the Pitt Meadows Japanese-Canadian Farmers’ Association in the 1920s, this building served as the meeting hall and social centre for the Japanese-Canadian population in Pitt Meadows, with the basement of the Hall serving as a Japanese-language school for children.

**Tashme** – Located near Hope, only approximately 22.5 kilometres (14 miles) inland from the eastern boundary of the Protected Area, Tashme was the largest and most isolated of 10 internment camps for Japanese-Canadians that were constructed in the B.C. Interior.

**Hope-Princeton Road Camp** – This is an example of the road camps established by the federal government where Japanese-nationals and then married men worked to complete highway projects during internment in Second World War.

**Vancouver Island/Coast:**

**Protected Area** – On Feb. 24, 1942, the federal government issued Order in Council PC-1486 ordering over 22,000 men, women and children of Japanese descent, including landed immigrants, Canadian citizens by naturalization or Canadian citizens by birth out of the “Protected Area.” The Protected Area, which included the islands lying off the Pacific coast of British Columbia, extended inland from the coast for 160 kilometres (100 miles):

- Extended inland for 160 kilometres (100 miles).
- Extended from B.C.-Washington border to B.C.-Yukon border or southern tip of Alaska Panhandle.
- Included all islands lying off the west coast of British Columbia.

**The Gulf Islands** – The Southern Gulf Islands were home to a thriving Japanese-Canadian community prior to the Second World War incarceration and internment of Japanese-Canadians. They played a significant role in the history of settlement in British Columbia, especially along the coast, in the agriculture, fishing and logging industries.

**William Head Quarantine Station** – Victoria was the port of entry for immigrants from Japan until ocean liners were diverted to Vancouver. From 1893 to 1958, the Canadian government operated a quarantine station at William Head to inspect the passengers on ocean-going vessels.

**Duncan/Paldi/Chemainus** – These communities were home to large Japanese-Canadian populations prior to the Second World War, demonstrating the importance of the logging,
fishing, and sawmilling industries in shaping Japanese immigrant settlement and their new lives as Canadians in the late 1800s and early 1900s.

**Newcastle Island** – Newcastle Island is a significant cultural landscape with strong ties to the Japanese-Canadian community on Vancouver Island prior to the Second World War. Nanaimo was home to Japanese-Canadian entrepreneurs who had the money to establish salteries and shipyards, with a history dating back to the late 1800s.

**Cumberland/Royston** – Cumberland/Royston was a significant community for Japanese-Canadians on Vancouver Island prior to the Second World War, a reminder of the prosperous and strong Japanese-Canadian communities built through hard work, perseverance, and entrepreneurship.

**Fanny Bay** – This historic place is important in the development of Japanese community in British Columbia, due to the huge success of Eikichi Kagetsu, who developed the Deep Bay Logging Company, which became the largest in the Commonwealth, even though a B.C. Forestry Law barred Japanese from logging.

**West Coast of Vancouver Island** – Primarily Tofino and Ucluelet, significant in B.C.'s economic, political and social history as they were the last of the fishing grounds to attract Japanese-Canadian fishers.

**Ocean Falls** – Settled in 1906 by Japanese-Canadian workers in the pulp and paper industry. It was home to a thriving Japanese-Canadian community prior to the Second World War and the systematic removal and internment of all people of Japanese heritage from the west coast.

**Port Essington** – On the south bank of the Skeena River, Port Essington became the centre of the salmon-canning industry in the 1880’s. It was also the centre of a large Japanese-Canadian community that was involved in the fishing industry prior to the Second World War.

**Thompson/Okanagan:**

**Bella Vista/Old Kamloops Road, Vernon** – Japanese pioneers settled on these two roads as farmers outside the Protected Area before its designation during the Second World War, and were not subject to forced evacuation during the war.

**Kamloops Japanese-Canadian Association** – Formed in 1976 as a social and cultural organization with the purpose of fostering fellowship amongst its members, assisting in community activities that will be for the benefit and welfare of the community, and furthering of Japanese-Canadian heritage.

**Kelowna Buddhist Temple** – The temple serving the Japanese-Canadians in the central Okanagan area was founded in 1933 and continues today. The Japanese-Canadians in the Central Okanagan were not affected by the forced relocation, resulting in a history slightly different from coastal communities.

**Lillooet, Miyazaki House** – Dr. Miyazaki was born in Japan and immigrated to Canada at the age of 14 years. He graduated from high school in 1921 and from the University of British Columbia in 1925. Dr. Miyazaki was a respected community leader and very active in the community, implementing an ambulance service and involved with scouting. He received many awards and honours in his life time, including the Order of Canada in recognition of his services
to the residents of Lillooet.

The following places were “self-support” internment sites established by the BC Security Commission:

- Lillooet/East Lillooet Self-Supporting and Internment Camp.
- Bridge River.
- Minto Mine.
- McGillivray Falls.

Taylor Lake – Roughly 20 kilometres east of 100 Mile House, Taylor Lake was an independent settlement community also known as a “self-supporting camp” during the Second World War internment of Japanese-Canadians.

Yellowhead-Blue River Road Camp – The Highway Project was a project of the Surveys and Engineering Branch of the federal Department of Mines and Resources. It ran from 1942 to 1944 and employed Japanese-Canadian men over the age of 18 years.

Kootenays:

Given the distance from the coast, a number of internment camps and self-support sites were set up in the Kootenays. The following are being formally recognized:

- Bay Farm – housed 1,376 people.
- Christina Lake – self-support site in hotel and cabins.
- Greenwood – internment camp for about 1,200 people.
- Kaslo – internment camp.
- Lemon Creek – internment camp housing over 1,850 people
- Midway – in 1944, families were relocated here when the Kaslo camp closed in 1944.
- Popoff – over 1,000 people were interned at this family farm. This was the last internment camp built.
- Roseberry – internment camp housed 356 people.
- Sandon – internment camp housed 933 people.
- Slocan City/Slocan Extension – internment camp that housed 595 people.

The New Denver Orchard internment camp – Housing about 1,500 Japanese-Canadians “In the heart of the Orchard”, the “Nikkei Internment Memorial Centre” and the “Kohan Reflection Garden” are also being formally recognized. The memorial centre consists of the original buildings, artefacts and interpretive display. The “New Denver Church”, formerly the 1893 “Turner Memorial United Church”, is a symbol of community integration.

Eagle Pass (Revelstoke-Sicamous) Road Camp – This was the location of the third road camp project in which Japanese-Canadian men were sent to work during internment in the Second World War. Three hundred forty-six Japanese-Canadian workers built this section of the Trans Canada Highway.
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