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Japanese-Canadian Internally Displaced Persons
Labour Relations and Ethno-Religious Identity in Southern Alberta, 1942–1953

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Article abstract

This article examines the resettlement of Japanese-Canadian internally displaced persons (idps), who were relocated from the West Coast of British Columbia to sugar beet communities in southern Alberta between 1942 and 1953. It argues that the idps, assisted both by pre-World War II Japanese residents in southern Alberta and by the federal government, contributed to the rising awareness of ethnic rights. For this purpose, my study adds two new angles to the study of human rights and Japanese Canadians. First, while ethnic activism for human rights has often been examined in an urban context, it was the negotiations in the local sphere between the Alberta Sugar Beet Growers' Association and Japanese idps that played a significant role in promoting human rights. Second, this study applies both local and transnational contexts to the question of Japanese-Canadian idps, which has hitherto been studied only in terms of state violence against an ethnic minority. The Japanese idps retained Pure Land Buddhism as a symbol of their loyalty to Japan, and the religion strengthened its influence in southern Alberta as a focal point of their identity.

ARTICLE

Japanese-Canadian Internally Displaced Persons: Labour Relations and Ethno-Religious Identity in Southern Alberta, 1942–1953

Aya Fujiwara

Japanese farm labourers in Alberta have been marginalized in Japanese-Canadian history and collective memory. Prior to World War II they constituted only a fraction of the Japanese-Canadian population, the majority of which resided in British Columbia. Prime Minister Mackenzie King's wartime measure of 1942 to relocate Japanese Canadians eastward from the West Coast of British Columbia augmented the number of Albertan Japanese farmers overnight. Yet they were still relatively insignificant in comparison to the number of the Japanese who had gone to interior camps in British Columbia. Their wartime experience in Alberta was thus overshadowed by their life in the camps.[1] After the war, as Toronto became the major centre of

1. Despite the fact that a number of studies have been written on the Japanese-Canadian evacuation, no scholarly monograph has fully explored Japanese internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Alberta. At the same time, their experience seems to be outside of "mainstream" Japanese-Canadian collective memory. On 19–21 November 2010, approximately 400 Japanese IDPs attended the Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre's conference "The Japanese Canadian Experience Conference: Sharing Your Stories of the War Years" in Toronto to discuss their wartime stories. The majority of the delegates were people who had been sent to camps, and only a handful had lived on sugar beet farms in Alberta. Academically, while few studies focus on the Japanese on sugar beet farms in Alberta during World War II, Shelly D. Ketchell's MA thesis examines their lives. Although I do not agree with her conclusion that "Japanese-Canadian resistance was arguably futile" (166) because of various restrictions imposed by the state, it provides an interesting analysis of two mainstream newspapers in Manitoba and Alberta: *The Winnipeg Free Press* and the *Calgary Herald*. See her "Re-locating Japanese Canadian History: Sugar Beet Farms As Carceral Sites in Alberta and Manitoba, February 1942–January 1943," MA Thesis, University of British Columbia, 2005. For a study of a Japanese-Canadian woman in Southern Alberta, see Tadamasa Murai, *Nikkei Kanada-jin Josei no Seikatsushi, Minami Arubata Nikkei-jin Shakai ni Umarete* (Tokyo 2000).

Aya Fujiwara, "Japanese-Canadian Internally Displaced Persons: Labour Relations and Ethno-Religious Identity in Southern Alberta, 1942–1953," *Labour/Le Travail*, 69 (Spring 2012), 63–89.

Japanese-Canadian activism, the Japanese in Alberta received little attention. As Stephanie Bangarth has argued, the study of Japanese Canadians benefits from case studies of the regions outside British Columbia.[2]

The Japanese community in the sugar beet districts of southern Alberta provides a unique case where forced labour or labour relations between the local farmers and Japanese-Canadian internally displaced persons (IDPs) shaped Japanese Canadians' understandings of their rights and freedoms. Having originated from various places in British Columbia and coming from different social strata, they hardly possessed any sense of strong unity either in terms of class or ethnicity, except for the vague feeling that they all were part of a loose province-wide ethno-religious community. However, by becoming paid labourers who were not allowed to own land, they gradually developed the tendency to view their employers and the Alberta Sugar Beet Growers' Association (the ASBGA) as oppressors. This experience adds a rural labourers' perspective to the studies of Japanese Canadians during World War II, augmenting studies of the predominantly urban-based nation-wide Japanese-Canadian activism against racism.

Albertan Japanese were allowed a certain degree of ethnic and religious freedom, and were thus more concerned about their economic resettlement. First, the fact that Albertan IDPs worked under the direct supervision of local sugar beet farmers made them more likely to adopt socialist concepts than to focus their resentments on the racist policies of federal and provincial governments. They blamed the ASBGA more than governments for the injustice that they experienced. At times, they even regarded the federal government as a guardian that could counter the ASBGA's exploitation. Second, the presence of pre-war Japanese residents, mainly in Raymond, who were never relocated during the war, reduced discrimination against the Japanese IDPs. Some of them, who were members of the ASBGA, assisted the IDPs. In other words, among all Japanese residents, ethnicity and religion transcended both old and new resident tensions in this district. Third, the expansion of Buddhism in this area throughout the period under examination made Albertan IDPs less focused on ethno-religious persecution. Raymond had a foundation of Buddhism, as it was the only place outside British Columbia where a Japanese church had existed since 1929. Albertan IDPs invested significantly in their religion both psychologically and financially, regarding it as a space where they could maintain freedom. As Patricia Roy has shown in the case of New Denver, Japanese IDPs did have a significant social and economic impact on places where they were sent, developing a sense of "community" with local residents.[3] What made southern Alberta different from the interior of British

2. Stephanie Bangarth, "The Long, Wet Summer of 1942: The Ontario Farm Service Force, Small-town Ontario and the Nisei," *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, 37, 1 (2005), 41.

3. Patricia Roy, "If the Cedars Could Speak: Japanese and Caucasians Meet at New Denver," *BC Studies*, 131 (Autumn 2001), 90.

Columbia was its considerable degree of religious tolerance. Raymond, in particular, was largely settled by Mormons who, as David B. Iwaasa points out, also experienced "persecution."[4] They were more accustomed to newcomers and were more tolerant towards the presence of formal ethnic activities.[5] Yet at the same time, the churches were fundamental as focal points in rural settlements for many European groups. The fact that religious "utopianism" was part of the prairie identity[6] facilitated the expansion of Buddhist activities.

This article shows that IDPs' constant negotiations with the British Columbia Security Commission (BCSC) and the ASBGA for better economic and living conditions and their concern to retain an ethno-religious identity played significant roles in promoting the awareness of human rights among Albertan Japanese IDPs. At the same time, this study situates Japanese-Canadian IDPs in a transnational context, incorporating into the analysis their effort to retain Pure Land Buddhism (Jôdo shinshû), which was then strongly tied with nationalism and the war effort of Imperial Japan. The efforts made by Japanese IDPs to strengthen Buddhist influence in the district exemplify an early claim by marginalized people for their freedom of worship. These were the people who contributed to the consolidation of Japanese identity in southern Alberta.

Over a decade, this community went through several changes. First, the War Measures Act, which was applied to Japan in late 1941 after its attack on Pearl Harbor, categorized all Japanese Canadians residing both inside and outside of the West Coast province as "enemy aliens." Approximately 22,000 people who resided in British Columbia became internally displaced persons. Among them, some 3,000 Japanese went to sugar beet farming communities such as Raymond, Coaldale, and Taber in southern Alberta. Second, the end of the war meant another relocation for most IDPs. The majority of them moved to eastern provinces, while others were repatriated to Japan or settled elsewhere in Canada. Among those who remained in Alberta, many resettled in surrounding urban centres, yet some continued farming in the district after the war. Neither the end of the war nor the passage of the *Canadian Citizenship Act* in 1947 brought back the old life for the IDPs. Finally in 1949, the IDPs were allowed to return to the west coast of British Columbia, even though most of them decided not to move back to their previous homes. Thus, it was only in

4. David B. Iwaasa, "The Mormons and their Japanese Neighbours," *Alberta History*, 53 (Winter 2005), 7.

5. On the relationship between the Japanese and Mormons in this district, see Iwaasa, "The Mormons and their Japanese Neighbours," 7–22. See also his "The Japanese in Southern Alberta, 1941–45," *Alberta History*, 24 (Winter 1976), 5–19.

6. The term "utopianism" in this context was taken from A. W. Rasporich, "Utopian Ideals and Community Settlements in Western Canada, 1880–1914," in Howard Palmer, ed., *The Settlement of the West* (Calgary 1977), 114–29. See also R. Douglas Francis and Chris Kitzan, eds., *Prairie West as Promised Land* (Calgary 2007). On the relationship among ethnicity, religion, and region, see Frances Swyripa, *Storied Landscapes: Ethno-Religious Identity and the Canadian Prairies* (Winnipeg 2010).

the early 1950s that the Japanese began enjoying their full rights in Canada. This paper thus deals with the decade after the IDPs arrived in Alberta as one era rather than applying the conventional periods of "wartime" and "postwar."

Conceptualizing IDPs in Local, National, and Transnational Contexts

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees defines "Internally displaced people (IDPs)" as people who "have fled for similar reasons as refugees (armed conflict, generalized violence, human rights violations)," but "legally remain under the protection of their own government – even though that government might be the cause of their flight."[7] This means that their protection remains under the state's jurisdiction and, therefore, their fate depends on the government's policies. Japanese Canadians, who were uprooted from the west coast of British Columbia as enemy aliens during World War II, belong to this category of displaced persons.

Yet it is important to note that IDP is a new term which, according to Erin Mooney, entered the United Nations' vocabulary only in the early 1990s.[8] To apply such a contemporary concept in wartime Alberta, where contemporary ideas of human rights were not common, might sound inappropriate, but it contributes to the conceptualization of internal displacement by adding historical dimensions to the issue. The Japanese Canadians who were removed from the West Coast to internment camps were often described as "internees," but in the case of Alberta they were not interned. They were more generally called "evacuees," but the term "evacuation" implies only movement from one place to another, and does not necessarily refer to the conditions under which the Japanese "evacuees" were relocated. The uncertainty about the future and the sense of rootlessness that they confronted for a long period of time requires a much broader notion. The term internal displacement, as Mooney argues, refers to a condition in which not only materialistic or financial losses happened, but also the destruction of family, community, and traditional lifestyle occurred.[9] It also meant the lack of freedom to move, find jobs, and purchase property. Such conditions could be compatible with the experiences of Displaced Persons (DPs) from Europe after World War II. Franca Iacovetta's 2006 study on the integration of postwar immigrants into democratic citizenship in the context of the Cold War reveals that the federal government and ethno-religious organizations introduced a number of programs and strategies

7. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49c3646c146.html> (11 September 2011).

8. Erin Mooney, "The Concept of Internal Displacement and the Case for Internally Displaced Persons as a Category of Concern," *Refugee Survey Quarterly*, 24 (September 2005), 10.

9. Mooney, "The Concept of Internal Displacement," 15.

for the promotion of a democratic nation.[10] While new Canadians, including European DPs, had a great impact on Canada's postwar developments, IDPs also played their part.

Studies on wartime relocation of Japanese Canadians and their resettlement tend to apply a national framework to the analysis, regarding it as violence imposed by a racist state. Studies of this kind focus on relations between the federal government and IDPs. In the 1980s and 1990s, a major approach taken in the investigation of this subject stressed the need to ascertain the intentions of the federal and/or British Columbian governments regarding the policy of relocation. Ann Sunahara examines in considerable detail the process of internment and the injustice that the policy entailed. While she acknowledges that Japanese IDPs were never silent, her study emphasizes the unfair federal and provincial policies, regarding them as the result of racism.[11] Jack Granatstein, Patricia Roy, Masako Iino, and Hiroko Takamura produced a monograph that details the decision-making process from the federal government's perspective, and yet reveals the complexity of dual loyalty among the Japanese at the time of the crisis.[12] In addition to these scholarly works, many first-account recollections, which reveal Japanese IDPs' hardships, were published from the 1970s into the 1990s.[13]

Given the popularity among historians of the postwar developments of human rights and citizenship issues in recent years,[14] many historians have produced balanced studies of Japanese IDPs, regarding them as activists who stood up for their rights and for justice in Canada. Patricia Roy's study of the roads Japanese and Chinese took to achieve equal rights as citizens through political negotiations with federal and provincial governments, offers a thorough account of activists pushing for democracy in postwar Canada. It looks not only at the relations between the federal government and the Japanese

10. Franca Iacovetta, *Gatekeepers: Reshaping Immigrant Lives in Cold War Canada* (Toronto 2006).

11. Ann Sunahara, *The Politics of Racism: The Uprooting of the Japanese Canadians during the Second World War* (Toronto 1981).

12. Patricia E. Roy, J. L. Granatstein, Masako Ino, and Hiroko Takamura, *Mutual Hostages: Canadians and Japanese during the Second World War* (Toronto 1990).

13. For example, see Barry Broadfoot, *Years of Sorrow, Years of Shame: The Stories of Japanese Canadians in World War* II (Don Mills 1977); Keibo Oiwa, ed., *Stone Voices: Wartime Writings of Japanese Canadian Isseis* (Montreal 1991); and Takeo Ujo Nakano and Leatrice Nakano, *Within the Barbed Wire Fence: A Japanese Man's Account of His Internment in Canada* (Halifax 1980).

14. On the human rights movement after World War II, see also Carmela Patrias and Ruth A. Frager, "'This Is Our Country, These Are Our Rights': Minorities and the Origins of Ontario's Human Rights Campaign," *Canadian Historical Review,* 82 (March 2001), 1–35; and James W. Walker, "Human Rights in a Multicultural Framework: Defining Canadian Citizenship, 1945–1970," *Canadian Issues* (February 2002), 32–4.

IDPs, but it also incorporates Albertan perspectives.[15] Stephanie Bangarth compares the inputs of Japanese Canadians and Americans into the human rights movement, adding another dimension to Japanese-Canadian activism.[16] Ross Lambertson devotes one chapter to Japanese-Canadian activists involved in the Co-operative Committee on Japanese Canadians, a body that, together with non-Japanese sympathizers, fought against IDPs' deportation to Japan after the war. His comparison of the Japanese with the Jews indicates that the federal or provincial governments' discriminatory policies against particular groups triggered Toronto-based civil rights organizations, both ethnic and mainstream, to cooperate for the expansion of equal rights.[17] Read together, these studies suggest that political activism by various ethnic groups for different reasons shaped the urban-based human rights movement.

Roy Miki extends the history of Japanese-Canadian politics to the 1980s, when they were most active in a campaign for universal compensation for wartime losses. As one of the major activists in this movement, he provides an important Japanese-Canadian perspective. The redress, he suggests, to a greater or lesser degree united diverse and scattered Japanese Canadians behind one goal, situating them "inside the language of this nation's (Canada's) democratic values."[18] Focusing on the similar fight for redress, Maryka Omatsu's personal account suggests that it was a sense of justice that made the *nisei* (second generation) and *sansei* (third generation) more militant than the *issei* (first generation) and prompted them to lobby the federal government.[19]

This study builds on these scholarly works and adds other perspectives from both local and transnational contexts. As IDPs were an "internal" problem, the approaches that these studies take – looking at the state-activist political negotiations – are quite reasonable. IDPs in the Albertan sugar beet communities were under the control of the federal government both financially and legally. Yet conceptualizing internal displacement only within the framework of nation omits other living and spiritual spaces that IDPs created due to displacement. Locally, IDPs frequently had disputes over labour-related issues with the ASBGA, whose main concern was financial survival during the war. IDPs turned their status as the federal government's captives into negotiating power in demanding better labour conditions in the sugar beet-harvesting agricultural sector.

15. Patricia E. Roy, *The Triumph of Citizenship: The Japanese and Chinese in Canada, 1941–1967* (Vancouver 2007).

16. Stephanie Bangarth, *Voices Raised in Protest: Defending North American Citizens of Japanese Ancestry, 1942–49* (Vancouver 2009).

17. Ross Lambertson, *Repression and Resistance: Canadian Human Rights Activists, 1930–1960* (Toronto 2005).

18. Roy Miki, *Redress: Inside the Japanese Call for Justice* (Vancouver 2005), 11.

19. Maryka Omatsu, *Bittersweet Passage: Redress and the Japanese Canadian Experience* (Toronto 1992).

This study uses transnationalism as both its approach and the space that existed between the host society and an ethnic community. In terms of approach, Laura Briggs, Gladys McCormik, and J. T. Way argue that transnationalism is a means to find different analytical aspects in phenomena that "might be seen as the self-evidently national."[20] Applied to the Japanese-Canadian IDPs, it opens up another venue for examining Japanese resettlement. The state undoubtedly forced Japanese Canadians to migrate from the West Coast, confining them to specific geographical locations in southern Alberta. Yet the world of IDPs in this area during the period examined went beyond the confinement zone set by the state. They maintained and even expanded their ethno-religious space, which spread out beyond Canada, rather than losing it during the war. For the Japanese IDPs, religion was significant as "imagined" space. Marlene Epp's study of the postwar Mennonite refugees also provides a useful approach to the conditions of displacement and ethnic identity, arguing that "the combination of attachments to home, to places left behind, and the multiple identities that result," all shaped refugees' experiences.[21] The Japanese IDPs' identity was also a very complicated one, maintaining both personal and emotional ties with Japan and social networks and memories associated with British Columbia. Anne Doré's interesting case study on interwar Japanese-Canadian identity in the Fraser Valley in British Columbia, points to the fact that the immigrants developed a "distinct identity" that was based on their "sense of pride and moral superiority," which was largely associated with Buddhism.[22] At the same time, Buddhism was one of the rare means by which they could keep a sense of ethnic community among the IDPs, who lived in isolated sugar beet communities.

At the same time, transnationalism refers to the space in which the interactions between local Canadian and Japanese farmers took place. Royden Loewen and Gerald Friesen, in their study of immigrants in urban centres on the prairies, use the phrase "an imagined boundary zone," to describe the "transnational" space in which immigrants and mainstream Canadians influenced each other.[23] The sugar beet farming district in southern Alberta was part of such a zone, which exhibited a unique integration of Japanese Canadians.

20. Laura Briggs, Gladys McCormik, and J. T. Way, "Transnationalism: A Category of Analysis." *American Quarterly,* 60 (September 2008): 637.

21. Marlene Epp, "Pioneers, Refugees, Exiles, and Transnationals: Gendering Diaspora in an Ethno-Religious Context," *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association,* 12 (2001), 140.

22. Anne Doré, "Transnational Communities: Japanese Canadians of the Fraser Valley, 1904–1942," *BC Studies,* 134 (Summer 2009), 40.

23. Royden Loewen and Gerald Friesen, *Immigrants in Prairie Cities: Ethnic Diversity in Twentieth-Century Canada* (Toronto 2009), 4–5.

The Japanese in Sugar Beet Communities in Southern Alberta

The arrival of Japanese IDPs in southern Alberta from British Columbia in 1942 had a dramatic impact on the pre-war Japanese residents in the area. Under the War Measures Act, all Japanese, regardless of citizenship, became enemy aliens, yet the place of residency at the outbreak of the war divided their fates. The same policy of removal was applied to all people of Japanese descent, both Canadian and Japanese citizens, who resided on the west coast of British Columbia in December 1941. The 578 pre-war Japanese residents in Alberta, including 90 who remained Japanese citizens, however, did not lose their homes or properties.[24] Naturally, these pre-war Japanese residents did not experience the same trauma as IDPs. Both due to the communal lifestyle peculiar to frontier farming settlements on the prairies and the small population of Asians in the province, the pre-war Japanese residents, unlike their fellow countrymen in British Columbia, faced negligible racial discrimination. Their superior position was quite obvious as they possessed the provincial franchise and shared the same hard labour with the mainstream farmers.

The pre-war Japanese residents and IDPs also differed considerably in their familiarity with prairie life and farming. The former, through local families, often had knowledge the latter lacked. Nearly 75 per cent of pre-war Japanese residents lived in rural settlements, and approximately 65 per cent lived in sugar beet communities around Raymond in southern Alberta.[25] Most of them were early 20th-century immigrants who had been farmers in the southern parts of Japan. Some people even came from Salt Lake City in Utah, recruited by the Knight Sugar Factory that opened in Raymond in 1901.[26] Most of them were contracted sugar beet farmers when they arrived in Alberta, and received wages per acre or ton. Many of them owned lands by 1941.[27] For example, Harry Hironaka, one of the farmers who hosted an IDP family, grew sugar beets and other crops on his family farm.[28] As for the IDPs, less than half – 220 out of 528 families – identified their former occupation in British Columbia as farming.[29] The nature of prairie sugar beet farming was very different from the previous experience of these Japanese Canadians forced to relocate, especially in terms of the intensity of labour. Working conditions were severe and toiling in the

24. Dominion Bureau of Statistics, *Census of Canada* (Ottawa, 1941).

25. Dominion Bureaus of Statistics, *Census*, 1941.

26. Town of Raymond, *Raymond Remembered, Settlers, Sugar and Stampedes: A History of the Town and People of Raymond* (Raymond 1993), 11–134.

27. Town of Raymond, *Raymond Remembered*, 11–135.

28. Lethbridge and District Japanese Canadian Association, *Nishiki: Nikkei Tapestry, A History of Southern Alberta Japanese Canadians* (Lethbridge 2001), 190.

29. Library and Archives Canada (hereafter LAC), Alberta, Reports (hereafter AR), RG 36–27, vol. 30, file 1613, Alberta: Reports, Virtue and Russell, Barristers and Solicitors, Canadians of Japanese Origin, Summary of Facts, Lethbridge, Alberta, 1947.

Japanese working in sugar-beet field, southern Alberta (1946 or 1947)
Glenbow Archives, NA-3369-1

fields, was "tedious" and "back-aching stoop labour."[30] Joy Kogawa's *Obasan* describes the hardships that Japanese IDPs faced due to poor housing, hard jobs, and unfamiliar climatic condiitons on the sugar beet farms in southern Alberta.[31] At the same time, while sugar beet farming was the primary industry, many farms required other skills as they depended on mixed-farming, livestock raising, and cash crop cultivation.

Nonetheless, neither pre-war Japanese residents nor IDPs formed uniform groups. Religion separated both of them. While the majority of both groups remained Buddhists, some were Christians. As some Japanese regarded conversion to Christianity as a gesture of assimilation, religious faith often developed into a question of loyalty to Canada. Some pre-war Japanese residents were Mormons, and some IDPs were members of the United Church. They did not always agree with the Buddhist Japanese especially in terms of keeping Japanese traditional practices and language. While the exact number

30. John H. Thompson and Allen Seager, "Workers, Growers, and Monopolists: The "Labour Problem" in the Alberta Beet Sugar Industry During the 1930s," *Labour / Le Travailleur,* 3 (1978), 154. See also Jenny Kerber, "Pulling up Roots: Border-Crossing and Migrancy on Southern Alberta's Irrigation Frontier," *Dalhousie Review,* 90 (Spring 2010), 47–60.

31. Joy Kogawa, *Obasan* (Toronto 1981), 215–6. See also Kerber, "Pulling up Roots," 50.

	1941	1951
British Columbia	22,096	7,169
Alberta	578	3,336
Saskatchewan	105	225
Manitoba	50	1,161
Ontario	234	8,581
Quebec	48	1,137
Atlantic	5	19

Table 1: Japanese population by province/region, 1941–51.
Census Canada, 1941, 1951.

of Japanese Buddhists in the area is unclear, 619 people in the district that included sugar beet settlements in Raymond and Coaldale where the Japanese population was concentrated identified themselves as either Buddhists or Confucians in 1941.[32] Although, as noted, the first Japanese Buddhist Church in Raymond was established in 1929, its financial records suggest that its members had been active from the mid-1920s.[33] By 1951, as a result of the evacuation, the number of Buddhists or Confucians increased to 1,169 in the Raymond area; Taber upped this figure by an additional 341.[34]

In addition to religion, generational differences must be mentioned. The Japanese-Canadian community was well known for *issei* and *nisei* rivalries. The *issei*, who valued the Japanese language, cultural traditions and loyalty to Japan, hoped that the *nisei* would inherit such elements, while the *nisei*, who had birthrights as Canadians, often regarded them as the source of racial discrimination and hindrance to Canadianization. Such gaps, as Ken Adachi has argued, developed into intense competition over the representation of the Japanese-Canadian community in the 1930s due to the degree that both sides had their own organizations and presses.[35] But such intense rivalry did not emerge in southern Alberta during the period under examination. Obviously, the Canadian-born generation was the majority among both pre-war Japanese and IDP communities. They constituted 75 per cent of the pre-war Japanese-Canadian residents in Alberta in 1941,[36] and some 71 per cent of the IDP population in 1946.[37] Yet the IDPs who came to southern

32. Dominion Bureau of Statistics, *Census of Canada* (Ottawa, 1941).

33. Glenbow Archives (hereafter GA), Raymond Buddhist Temple Fonds (hereafter RBTF), M0903, Financial Records of the Raymond Buddhist Church, 1924.

34. Dominion Bureau of Statistics, Census of Canada (Ottawa, 1951).

35. Ken Adachi, *The Enemy That Never Was: An Account of the Deplorable Treatment Inflicted on Japanese Canadian during World War* II (Toronto 1976), 157–78.

36. Dominion Bureau of Statistics, Census of Canada (Ottawa, 1941).

37. LAC, AR, RG 36-27, vol. 30, file 1613, Canadians of Japanese Origin: Summary of Facts, 1946.

Alberta moved as family units, and thus it was inevitable that "family" became the core of these relocated lives.

The final complexity concerned the shifting membership of the pre-war Japanese residents and IDP communities, especially after 1946. In addition to the general postwar tendency of farmers to move from the rural areas to cities, IDPs' inflow and outflow constantly changed the members of the Japanese community in the district. During the war, the Japanese population in the sugar beet settlements increased by hundreds. The Department of Labour records indicate that 1,635 people had moved to the sugar beet fields in Alberta by May 1942. The evacuee population in the district was 2,839 in February 1944, and 3,315 in July 1946.[38] By 1951, the total Japanese population in the sugar beet district in southern Alberta had dropped to 2,320.[39] The figures indicate that after the end of the war in August 1945, many Japanese left the area and moved to urban centres or eastern provinces, while others remained. Yet this number included the newly arrived IDPs from internment camps in the interior of British Columbia.

The Local Sphere: Labour Conflicts in Sugar Beet Farming Communities

As Patricia Roy points out, Albertans in general were not enthusiastic about accepting Japanese IDPs. Eventually, however, she argues, they agreed to receive them as "a source of labour" out of a sense of responsibility for Canada, despite opposition from urban centres and divided opinions in rural districts.[40] Ann Sunahara also argues that sugar beet growers regarded them as "ideal" labourers because they were guaranteed to remain at least until the end of the war.[41] In a similar example in Ontario, Stephanie Bangarth has shown that sugar beet farmers accepted Japanese labourers to offset a labour shortage.[42] Indeed, the serious labour shortage that sugar beet farmers were facing was well illustrated by the ASBGA when it wrote, "had it not been for the Japanese moved from British Columbia" their situation "would have been disastrous."[43]

38. LAC, AR, RG 36-27, vol. 30, file 1613, Ministry of Labour, Conditions – among Japanese – Alberta, 17 July 1946.

39. Dominion Bureau of Statistics, Census of Canada (Ottawa, 1951).

40. Roy, *The Triumph of Citizenship*, 81–4.

41. Sunahara, *Politics of Racism*, 69.

42. Bangarth, "The Long, Wet Summer of 1942," 44. In the United States, Japanese Canadians worked on sugar beet farms to fill up a labour shortage. See Louis Fiset, "Thinning, Topping, and Loading: Japanese Americans and Beet Sugar in World War II," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly*, 90 (Summer 1999), 123.

43. GA, Alberta Sugar Beet Growers' Marketing Board Fonds (hereafter ASBGMBF), M7474-18, Philip Baker et al, "Canadian Sugar Beet Producers' Association Submission for Early Immigration of Experienced Agricultural Labour," Annual Report of Alberta Sugar Beet

1942	2,500
1943	2,729
1944	2,839
1946	3,315
1951	2,800

Table 2: Japanese IDP population in Alberta, 1942–1951.
Library and Archives Canada, Department of Labour, RG36 vol.30.

In addition, there were other reasons why the ASBGA did not hesitate to bring in IDPs. First, local hosts would be given subsidies for the accommodation of the IDPs, which they could not get when they hired other labourers. The agreement between the federal and Alberta governments clearly stated that the former would cover all necessary costs for the settlement of IDPs. Second, the Japanese, as enemy aliens, were under the close surveillance of the BCSC. Local communities thus thought that their activities were under control, and free from foreign ideological influences. Finally, the IDPs were considered short-term but more stable labourers than ordinary contracted farmers.

The ASBGA in general was thus very enthusiastic about accepting Japanese labourers from British Columbia. Since its establishment as Alberta Cooperative Sugar Beet Growers in Lethbridge in 1925 (renamed as Alberta Sugar Beet Growers in 1941), the organization advocated for local sugar beet farmers in various ways. Its main concern was to secure enough labourers for the industry. While individual farmers could withdraw from membership, sugar beet farmers usually belonged to the association. The records indicate that some Japanese pre-war residents were also members.[44] In 1942, the ASBGA promised to assist a local representative of the BCSC, providing "full cooperation" to deal with various problems linked to IDPs.[45] In 1943, it sent a delegation to British Columbia to recruit more IDPs to the area. It reported that living conditions, water supply, and housing had to be improved to give "a favourable impression" to the BCSC.[46]

Yet available evidence suggests that labour tensions between the ASBGA and IDPs appeared during the war. A major controversy occurred because Japanese IDPs were dissatisfied with the working and living conditions on the farms

Growers Association, January 1947, 15.

44. While the list of growers is not extensive during the war years, in 1926, seven farmers were registered as members of the ASBGA. See GA, ASBGMBF, M7474-1, Minutes of Alberta Sugar Beet Growers' Association, 13 March 1925.

45. GA, Sugar Beet Industry Research Project Collection (hereafter SBIRPC), M3774-3, file 9, W. F. Russell, Secretary for the Alberta Sugar Beet Growers Association. Letter to Austin Taylor, Commissioner of the BCSC, 24 March 1942.

46. GA, ASBGMBF, M8646, file 35, Alberta Sugar Beet Growers Association, minutes of annual meeting, 4 March 1943.

they had been assigned to when they arrived in Alberta. The labour dispute was complicated by a different understanding of the wartime relocation on the part of the IDPs and the ASBGA. The former, on the one hand, saw relocation to Alberta as one step in the long-term economic and cultural "reestablishment" and "integration" into Canadian society that had not succeeded in British Columbia. The latter, on the other hand, rarely envisioned long-term rehabilitation for Japanese IDPs and took no responsibility for furthering this, regarding such matters as the duty of governments. Sugar beet farmers had their own interests, such as the increase of agricultural productivity and the acquisition of labour. They regarded IDPs as temporary but fixed labourers guaranteed by the federal government until the end of the war.

Yet, the IDPs were not necessarily the stable labourers that the ASBGA expected. Initially, the temporary relocation to Alberta was rigidly planned by the BCSC. IDPs had to sign contracts to live with and work for certain farmers before they moved to the province. They needed a permit issued by the BCSC to move within and from the area. The 1942 agreement between the BCSC and the Government of Alberta stated, "The Commission further agrees to maintain supervision over such Japanese in order to insure that they will remain resident on the farms to which they are allocated and will not move into or reside in any city in Alberta or become a charge on any municipality in the said Province."[47] In reality, there were a number of cases where IDPs obtained permission from the BCSC to switch their employers after 1942. Philip Baker, president of the ASBGA, wanted more direct control over labour transfers within the district. For local farmers, federal government intervention on behalf of IDPs complicated the labour relations in the sugar beet sector, possibly worsening the situation of employers. Baker thus demanded of the BCSC and the Ministry of Labour that the Investigation Committee made up of representatives from the Canadian Sugar Factories Ltd. (established in 1925 in Raymond) and the ASBGA review the applications for moving submitted by IDPs.[48]

The representatives of the IDPs, however, never accepted such power for the ASBGA and the sugar factories, and appealed openly to the BCSC. They were especially concerned about the press announcement issued after the ASBGA's convention in late-March 1944 that the BCSC agreed that the ASBGA and the sugar factories would have "the power to approve or disapprove" IDP applications to move within the district. They situated the issue in a broad national context of displacement and democracy. For IDP representatives, the problem could not be examined only in economic terms as in ordinary labour disputes. They believed that in order to reestablish themselves financially and socially, they had to be able to take up better opportunities, secure new employment and move to better farms. They requested that the BCSC allow "freedom of

47. LAC, Ministry of Labour Lacelle Files (thereafter MLLF), RG 27, vol. 170, The Agreement between the BCSC and the Province of Alberta, May 1942.

48. LAC, MLLF, RG 27, vol. 170, Philip Baker, a letter to A. MacNamara, 4 April, 1944.

movement from one employer to another" in the district if IDPs experienced a lack of "the proper housing, adequate water supply, and fair wages."[49] According to some IDPs, living conditions on some farms were particularly deplorable.[50] At the same time, IDPs stressed the fact that situations had changed for some families since their initial contract, increasing or decreasing "working capacity."[51] For example, some domestic units changed because of aging or death, while others gained workers as children grew up. They rejected direct control by the ASBGA, arguing that: "the freezing policy of the ASBGA is a return to serfdom." They also regarded the BCSC's endorsement of augmenting such power to local farmers as "a brazen act of betrayal," arguing that a "forced labour" policy would violate "the ideal of Canadian democracy and culture for which Canada is fighting."[52]

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) further reported a somewhat heated exchange between the ASBGA and Japanese representatives at a meeting in late March 1944. Baker, frustrated with this issue, suggested that every IDP could move out of the district, should they oppose his policy. In response, Japanese IDPs reminded him that they had been displaced by the state, arguing that they "did not want to come here particularly in the first place and would be pleased to be returned to their homes in BC." IDPs resented Baker's comments but at the same time maneuvered them to their advantage, demanding that the BCSC find different locations for them. Their tactic was to portray the ASBGA as dictatorial and mercenary. In their letter to BCSC Commissioner George Collins, they accused Baker and the ASBGA of seeing "only financial gains through the exploitation of the evacuees," and "in a policy of re-settlement such an attitude is intolerable." They continued, "From the sum result of all these problems we cannot help but believe that resettlement in southern Alberta is impossible. Thus it is the desire of the entire evacuees that we be moved to another district where we can be relocated satisfactorily."[53] The use of collective power obviously had an effect on labour negotiations as IDPs were aware that they constituted a significant part of the work force.

49. LAC, MLLF, RG 27, vol. 170, The North and South Japanese Committee, letter to George Collins, 28 March 1944.

50. GA, Japanese Albertans Oral History Project Collection (hereafter JAOHPC), RCT 127, Ruriko Yamashita, interview by G.A. Dunsmore, Vauxhall, Alberta, 3 May 1973, and RCT 959–24, Glenbow Museum Childhood Exhibit "Growing Up and Away" Oral History Project. Aki Moryama, interview by Pauline Dempsey, Lethbridge, Alberta, 10 June 1993.

51. LAC, MLLF, RG 27, vol. 170, The North and South Japanese Committee, letter to George Collins, 28 March 1944.

52. LAC, MLLF, RG 27, vol. 170, the Japanese evacuees in Southern Alberta, letter to George Collins, 28 March 1944.

53. LAC, MLLF, RG 27, vol. 170, delegates for evacuees in Southern Alberta, letter to George Collins from delegates for evacuees in Southern Alberta, 11 April 1944.

In reality, not all IDPs wished for a second relocation. Indeed, when the war was over, their representatives asked the ASBGA for assistance so that they could remain in the area. This does not necessarily mean that these IDPs wanted to stay in southern Alberta. Yet the option to stay appeared better than returning to war-torn Japan. During the war, 550 IDPs in the district, under pressure from the BCSC, chose to sign an agreement of deportation to Japan.[54] But they tried to cancel the agreement after the war. In 1946, thirteen Japanese representatives attended a meeting with sugar company delegates and the executive members of the ASBGA, arguing that deportation issues should be regarded not only as the IDP's problem, but also as an issue growers needed to address. A Japanese representative, Sam Sakamoto, emphasized the inhumane aspect of the policy, stating that: "80 % of the 3500 Japanese in the area are Canadian born or naturalized."[55] Minutes of the ASBGA's annual meeting in March 1947 documented a short presentation made by Sakamoto, who again pressured the ASBGA. According to the record, he "asked for our (the ASBGA's) support in order for them to be allowed to remain" in Alberta. At the same time, he never attributed the postwar out-migration of Japanese IDPs to the ASBGA and local farmers. He argued that "Premier Manning's unfriendly attitude" towards IDPs was the main reason for such movement. Yet he added that the ASBGA should "assist" IDPs so that they could "live as Canadian citizens."[56] The message implied that IDPs would stay in the province as sugar beet labourers as long as the ASBGA protected their rights in terms of labour conditions. A collective mass exodus became a negotiating tool for IDPs with the ASBGA, whose labour shortage issues remained serious after the war. According to the Growers' labour survey in January 1946, Japanese IDPs had cultivated and harvested 65 per cent of the entire acreage of sugar beet farms in the area.[57] At a meeting in 1947, the ASBGA estimated that the removal of both POWs and Japanese from the area would reduce "the production of sugar beets and canning crops" by 50 per cent.[58] A year later, a survey indicated that an additional 114 families (approximately 456 workers) were needed in the areas of Raymond, Taber, Lethbridge, and Coaldale.[59]

54. GA, ASBGMBF, M8646, file 8, minutes of the special meeting held in the boardroom of the Alberta Sugar Beet Growers Association, 8 March 1946.

55. GA, ASBGMBF, M8646, file 8, minutes of the special meeting held in the boardroom of the Alberta Sugar Beet Growers Association, 8 March 1946.

56. GA, ASBGMBF, M8646, file 35, minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Alberta Sugar Beet Growers' Association held in the Marquis Hotel, 12 March 1947.

57. GA, ASBGMBF, M8646, file 8, minutes of the special meeting of the labour committee held in the board room, 14 January 1946.

58. GA, ASBGMBF, M8646, file 35, minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Alberta Sugar Beet Growers' Association held in the Marquis Hotel, 12 March 1947.

59. GA, ASBGMBF, M8646, file 8, minutes of the Labour Meeting held in the office of Albert Sugar Beet Growers Office, 14 September 1948.

While the ASBGA hardly shifted its stance regarding the maintenance of labourers and agricultural productivity as a top priority, the postwar expansion of citizenship slightly altered its tone. The ASBGA passed a resolution to provide IDPs with "moral support" in their effort "to work out a deal with the Alberta government to remain in Alberta" and gain full rights as citizens.[60] A further change occurred in 1951, when Malcolm Fukami submitted a resolution to the ASBGA at its annual meeting. Canada's immigration laws, which still prohibited Asians from entering Canada, it argued, would "jeopardize the realization of a world society based on the fundamental freedoms as expressed by the United Nations Organization." At the same time, it pointed out "a very great necessity in Southern Alberta for such immigrants especially from the country of Japan." The ASBGA passed a resolution that it would "object to the deplorable situation" and "go on record as urging the Government to repeal or amend the said Order In Council to allow entry of immigrants from the said countries."[61]

By the early 1950s, Japanese in southern Alberta were incorporated into a much larger national Japanese movement for human rights and anti-racism initiated by the Toronto-based Japanese-Canadian Citizens' Association (JCCA) established in 1947. IDPs' local efforts to secure better treatment, including improved working and living conditions, then developed into calls for other forms of justice. For example, the local Japanese representatives now formed an Alberta chapter of the JCCA and submitted a brief to the ASBGA requesting its cooperation to bring back their fellow Japanese who had been repatriated to Japan after the war. Intriguingly, its contents reflected both national and local political discourses, but it tended to focus on the local economy and supply of labourers. On the one hand, it focused on the IDPs' economic integration into the local community, expressing its appreciation to the ASBGA. It wrote, for example, "We have received with many commendations" from the ASBGA information that the IDPs "have contributed generally to the agricultural and associated industries and particularly to the sugar-beet industry of southern Alberta." On the other hand, it adopted national political discourses, praising the ASBGA for "keeping with the high principles of the United Nations Declaration of Human rights." At the same time, it asked for the ASBGA's support in pressuring the federal government to abolish racial discrimination in selecting immigrants. In this appeal, the IDP representatives successfully combined local economic needs into a larger ethnic politic, arguing that allowing Asian immigrants to Canada would not only prove the

60. GA, ASBGMBF, M8646, file 35, minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Alberta Sugar Beet Growers' Association held in the Marquis Hotel, 12 March 1947.

61. GA, ASBGMBF, M8646, file 90, minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Alberta Sugar Beet Growers' Association held in the Civic Centre, Lethbridge, 26 March 1951.

ASBGA's "democratic spirit," but it would also address "the needs in the sugar beet industry."[62]

Ironically, however, as "human rights" entered the local vocabulary, Japanese IDP's negotiating power declined in postwar Alberta because of new immigrants from Europe taking up jobs in the sugar beet industry. The ASBGA's record suggests that it remained hesitant in terms of negotiating with the federal and provincial governments to keep IDPs permanently. It reported the association's decision to "petition the federal government to postpone the repatriation of all Japanese," but only "until after the beet harvest of 1946."[63] Indeed, the ASBGA, already anticipating the end of the war and a postwar shortage of labour as early as 1944, had been searching for sources of labour other than the Japanese. For example, George Collins, investigating the farmers' conditions, wrote that the ASBGA did not regard Japanese as "useful in caring for livestock" and "would prefer to have the central European type of labour."[64] Despite the fact that local farmers had lived with Japanese IDPs for a couple of years, no humanitarian concerns were expressed at this meeting. The ASBGA increasingly turned its eyes to other immigrants, implying that it was not interested in Japanese postwar resettlement. For example, at the ASBGA's annual meeting in February 1948, it expected to receive "family type of labour from Holland."[65] The acceptance of Dutch families continued to be the main agenda at a labour meeting attended by the directors of the ASBGA, the Canadian Sugar Factory, and the federal government in 1950, at which the issues of immigrant training and housing were discussed.[66] In 1953, Baker expressed his gratitude to approximately 3,000 Japanese-Canadian internally displaced persons in southern Alberta, writing, "We owe a great deal to these loyal people for the way that they responded to our requirements at a time of great need," and "Thank you for a job well done."[67] This remark can be understood as an expression of gratitude. More precisely, it was a farewell message.

62. GA, ASBGMBF, M7474-113, Alberta Japanese Canadian Citizens' Association, "A brief to the Alberta Sugar Beet Growers' Association and its Affiliated Locals in Alberta in the Matter of Reentry and Immigration of Those of Japanese Ancestry to Assist the Sugar Beet Industry in Southern Alberta," February 1952.

63. GA, ASBGMBF, M8646, file 35, minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Alberta Sugar Beet Growers' Association held in the Marquis Hotel, 27 February 1946.

64. LAC, MLLF, RG 27, vol 170, George Collins, a letter to Arthur Macnamara, 8 March 1944.

65. GA, ASBGMBF, M8646, file 35, minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Alberta Sugar Beet Growers' Association held in the Marquis Hotel, 25 February 1948.

66. GA, ASBGMBF, M8646, file 8, minutes of the Joint-Labour meeting held in the Civic Centre, Lethbridge, 21 December 1950.

67. GA, ASBGMBF, M7474, file 18, Philip Baker, "President Report," Twenty Ninth Annual Report, Alberta Sugar Beet Growers Association, 1953.

National Intentions: Reinforcing Human Rights

The BCSC officer in charge of the district and representing the federal government was always caught between IDPs and the sugar beet growers. While the BCSC representatives bestowed upon the ASBGA the right to administer the labour transfer during the war, federal officers leaned towards the freedom of labourers' movement, advocated by Japanese IDPs. Arthur MacNamara, Deputy Minister of Labour, advocated such freedom of the IDPs. Douglas C. Archibald, acting supervisor for the BCSC, also indicated his leniency, writing in his letter to MacNamara, "I am fully in accord with your sentiments that families in this district who cannot make a living at beet work, or who are unsuited for this type of work, should be permitted to engage in other agricultural pursuits, where they would be assured of a living."[68] A. E. Russell, representative for the BCSC, produced a report that criticized the ASBGA for its "non-cooperation." Despite the agreement signed in early March 1944 between the ASBGA and the BCSC on the labour transfer policy, he pointed out that the association had not submitted detailed information on how to assess labour movement applications. As a result, 42 requests for movement remained unprocessed as of 21 March.[69]

The ASBGA's resentment of such comments was often directed at individual officers like Archibald and Russell rather than the federal government as a whole. Unlike Japanese IDPs, who always tried to see the issue nationally, appealing to democratic values, Baker regarded it as a local problem. As far as labour relations were concerned, he did not welcome state intervention, as he knew too well that the federal government was concerned about IDPs' welfare and rarely listened to farmers' problems. Baker wrote to MacNamara, asking him to replace Archibald and Russell and "place a fair minded man in charge who knows something about [the] farmer's problems."[70] Russell was particularly known for his sympathetic attitude to IDPs.

The BCSC was mainly concerned about a balance between the two conflicting policies – the protection of human rights and displacement. Since the mass evacuation, its officers had monitored labour and living conditions of IDPs carefully. A report that they produced illustrates the dilemma well. Ironically, these officers, who were serving the federal government that had displaced the Japanese from the West Coast, regarded themselves as guardians who should protect the IDPs from local farmers. George Collins, in his letter to MacNamara, wrote that "the general situation in this area is not good" in terms of living conditions in Picture Butte. He attributed this problem to the lack of local farmers' support, stating:

68. LAC, MLLF, RG 27, vol 170, letter from D. C. Archibald, to A. MacNamara, 8 May 1944.

69. LAC, MLLF, RG 27, vol. 170, A, E. Russell, letter to George Collins, 31 March 1944.

70. LAC, MLLF, RG 27, vol. 170, Philip Baker, letter to Arthur MacNamara, 4 April 1944.

In a number of instances the Japanese have made the excavation (to build their houses) but the farmer has apparently not supplied the materials to crib the cistern nor has he given the Japanese any advice or assistance on how to go about building this type of water supply.

Yet he also praised the farmers who provided necessary guidance to IDPs. In his observation of the Coaldale-Taber area, Collins wrote:

In this area the farmers are fortunate in having two or three outstanding men on the sugar-beet Growers' Association. They have taken the lead in educating the Japanese to handle the irrigation which is considered to be quite a specialized job and due to the fact that the Japanese are responding to a fair and reasonable treatment everybody seemed quite happy and perfectly willing to take a number of additional families.[71]

Such comment suggests Collins's intention to shift part of the BCSC's responsibility to local farmers for their livelihood.

The BCSC rarely discussed IDPs' civil rights questions with the ASBGA. The federal agent was well aware that their negotiations had to focus on labour issues. When IDPs' deportation problems entered the picture after the war, the BCSC pointed out to the ASBGA that due to the time required for the Privy Council's decision, local farmers should be able to keep Japanese labourers at least until the fall harvest of 1946.[72] At the same time, the BCSC distanced itself from humanitarian debates arising out of the second relocation. The representatives of sugar companies and local farmers also had a meeting at which the BCSC suggested that most IDPs were "satisfied to remain here," but the problem was "the relationship between the Alberta Government and the Japanese."[73] Indeed, Alberta continued to insist that the IDPs could stay in the province only during the war.

All three parties – the ASBGA, the BCSC, and IDPs – saw the labour transfer issue differently. IDPs regarded it as a necessary process for their long-term resettlement. At the same time, they particularly opposed the ASBGA's direct control over their free movement because, as a voluntary organization for farmers, it had no authority over them. The association indeed was interested only in farmers' survival and securing a labour force throughout the war. The BCSC's main concern was to carry out the relocation project as smoothly as possible, avoiding any major conflicts with and frustrations for both local farmers and IDPs. Thus, it tried to find a middle ground to satisfy all three interests.

Transnational Sphere: Buddhism and Ethnicity

ETHNICITY AND RELIGION, by uniting pre-war Japanese residents and IDPs, were significant factors that facilitated the latter's resettlement in the area. The

71. LAC, MLLF, RG 27, vol. 170, George Collins, report to Arthur MacNamara, 12 May 1943.

72. GA, ASBGMBF, M8646, file 8, minutes of meeting held in the board room, 15 March 1946.

73. GA, ASBGMBF, M8646, file 8, minutes of the special board, 18 March 1946.

fact that Japanese ethno-religious identity was openly expressed suggests that racism was not a primary cause of social tensions in the sugar beet district. As in the case of the labour transfer issue, the BCSC took a lenient approach toward IDPs' ethno-religious activities. Pure Land Buddhism, which had strong ties with Nishi Honganji in Kyoto, was a most powerful medium that transferred Japanese homeland politics and wartime nationalism to Canada. At the same time, as Terry Watada, Ken Adachi, and Masako Iino have all pointed out, it was a focal point of the *issei*'s ethno-religious identity since the early 20th century, and Pure Land Buddhism was the sole non-Christian church in Canada.[74] The fact that Buddhist churches were usually constructed in remote villages and city centres by groups of local Japanese indicates the significance of religious faith to the turn-of-the-century Japanese immigrants. As Nishi Honganji expanded its activities overseas, these churches were gradually incorporated into a transnational Buddhist world associated with the idea that they were part of the racial family. Although the majority of Buddhists in Canada were *issei*, many *nisei* inherited the religious faith. In rural settlements like Raymond, many ethno-racial activities focused on the Buddhist Church, which produced *nisei* priests and followers.[75]

Under circumstances in which any political activities relating to enemy nations from the mainstream point of view could be seen as disloyalty to Canada, a ban on Buddhist practices throughout the entire country would not have been surprising in wartime. Instead, freedom of religion was granted and Pure Land Buddhism expanded its influence in southern Alberta after the outbreak of World War II. Akira Ichikawa, a political scientist and Buddhist minister, called the federal government policy "an ironic twist of priorities."[76] His insightful study stressed the federal government's concern about the

74. Terry Watada, *Bukkyo Tozen: A History of Jodo Shinshu Buddhism in Canada* (Toronto 1996); Masako Iino, "Bukkyôkai and the Japanese Canadian Community in British Columbia," in Duncan Ryûken Willams and Tomoe Moriya, eds., *Issei Buddhism in the Americas* (Champaign 2010), 27–40; and Adachi, *The Enemy That Never Was*, 112–3. On Japanese Buddhism in Canada, see also Yasuo Izumi, "Buddhists in British Columbia," in Charles Anderson, ed., *Circle of Voices: A History of the Religious Communities of British Columbia* (Fernie 1982), 27–33; James Placzek and Larry Devries, "Buddhism in British Columbia," in Bruce Matthew, ed., *Buddhism in Canada* (New York 2005), 1–29; and John S. Harding, Victor Sōgen Hori, and Alexander Soucy, eds., *Wild Geese: Buddhism in Canada* (Montreal and Kingston 2010). For Buddhism during World War II, see Akira Ichikawa, "A Test of Religious Tolerance: Canadian Government and Jodo Shinshu Buddhism During the Pacific War, 1941–1945," *Canadian Ethnic Studies,* 26, 2 (1994), 46–69.

75. Two influential *nisei* priests were from Raymond. See John S. Harding, "Jodo Shinshu in Southern Alberta," in John S. Harding, Victor Sōgen Hori, and Alexander Soucy, eds., *Wild Geese*, 144. For *nisei* Buddhists in the United States, see "Enlightened Identities: Buddhism and Japanese Americans of California, 1924–1941," *Western Historical Quarterly,* 27 (Autumn 1996), 281–301.

76. Ichikawa, "A Test of Religious Tolerance," 61.

international human rights movement.[77] While Ichikawa's argument is sound, the federal government's religious tolerance alone does not explain why Buddhism as an enemy alien's religion survived and even strengthened its influence during the war. Both pre-war Japanese residents and IDPs were the ones who took advantage of the opportunity to promote ethno-religious identity. A study by Stephan S. Fugita and Marilyn Fernandez, which compares the views of Christian and Buddhist Japanese Americans on wartime confinement, argues that Pure Land Buddhism "de-emphasizes the self and stresses a more transitory, interconnected existential ethos." This view might explain IDPs' efforts to make the most of the status quo.[78]

This study thus identifies some other factors that might have promoted Buddhism in the district, taking into account a transnational Japanese Buddhist identity that connected Japanese in Alberta and their homeland. First, the infusion between religion and homeland expansionism, endorsed by Nishi Honganji's strong support of Imperial Japan's war effort, was key. For Japanese IDPs, who had confronted intense anti-Japanese feeling in British Columbia, the idea of the Japanese as an expansive race became a means to overcome a sense of racial inferiority. Displacement, as a psychological state, made Buddhism one of the few elements that connected their current place, Alberta, to British Columbia and Japan. Second, while the pre-war Japanese residents no doubt assisted IDPs on humanitarian grounds, they also expected that these newcomers would strengthen ethno-religious identity based on Buddhism in the district. While their economic interests might have coincided with those of the ASBGAS, the pre-war Japanese did not regard IDPs simply as labourers. The Albertan Japanese, as fellow Buddhists whose loyalty belonged to the same racial "family" led by the Emperor, thought that they were responsible for IDPs. Like any other ethnic groups that championed the entry of refugees to Canada, the old Japanese community valued connections of kinship, ethnicity, and religion. Buddhist teachings that emphasized peace and respect for religious figures affected their attitudes. Finally, IDPs' investment in Buddhist activities in the district indicated the significance of religious faith to them. As IDPs, they were guaranteed both employment and access to government funds. Thus they tried to recreate the religious sphere that they had established in British Columbia before the war.

The church was also a significant political space. Pure Land Buddhism was strongly tied to Japanese nationalism during the war. The fact that Japanese Canadians could not openly express their loyalty and support for Imperial Japan at this time made it difficult to document their internal dilemma. However, pre-war sources point to the extent to which Japan had tried to mobilize Japanese Canadians for the national cause endorsed by Tokyo and Nishi

77. Ichikawa, "A Test of Religious Tolerance," 52–3.

78. Stephen Fugita, and Marilyn Fernandez, "Religion and Japanese Americans' Views of Their World War II Incarceration," *Journal of Asian American Studies,* 5 (June 2002), 112.

Honganji before 1941. *Tairiku nippo*, a pre-war newspaper banned in 1941 often carried articles that expressed full support for Imperial Japan's war effort.[79] Although no obvious record of correspondence between Nishi Honganji and Alberta churches during the war exists, Nishi Honganji urged its priests and followers to cooperate for Japan's victory, regarding them as belonging to their sphere of influence. It promoted war propaganda, enshrining the emperor as a god and justifying Japan's expansionism.[80] Nishi Honganji's organ, appearing in Japan, published numerous articles throughout the war that preached the significance of religion in the reinforcement of nationalism. One article, for example, argued in 1944 that "religious faith" should be "the foundation of Japan's war effort."[81] Another article indicated the merger between politics and religion, reporting on "the committee for religious enlightenment" established by the Japanese government. It argued that while "religion has been separated from education and politics" since the Meiji period, Pure Land Buddhism now plays a significant role "in eliminating people's spiritual anxiety" and would contribute to "the completion of the holy war."[82] It listed Rev. Ikuta as one of the ministers who were "fulfilling their duties" by offering "comfort" and "encouragement" to Japanese Canadians in Alberta.[83]

Displacement and the ban on Buddhist churches in British Columbia fueled such sentiment among Japanese IDPs in Alberta. They never tried to collaborate with Imperial Japan for its aggressions, but religious faith imbued with nationalism provided them with psychological strength. Two priests, Rev. Shinjô Ikuta and Rev. Yutetsu Kawamura, who became significant prophets whose goal was to guide IDPs to "the Promised Land," evacuated from the West Coast to Raymond as sugar beet labourers. "Exile," Anthony D. Smith argues, "is the nursery of nationalism."[84] Indeed, the RCMP reported in March 1944 that "sources" had indicated nationalistic activities among Japanese Buddhists in Raymond. It had not found any "organized" efforts for "setting up strong pro-Japanese groups," but the Japanese were listening to short-wave radio together

79. Norio Tamura and Mitsuru Shinpo, "Senzen kanadajin no nikkeishi (ge): issei no shinbunto nisei no shinbun," *The Journal of Tokyo Keizai University,* 136 (June 1984), 229.

80. On 24 May 2004, Nishi Honganji officially recognized their support for Japan in World War II as wrong, invalidating all letters that had been issued by the head of the temple between 1931 and 1941. On the relationship between wartime nationalism and Pure Land Buddhism in Japan, see, for example, Gyôshin Ikeda, *Senjikyôgaku no riron kôzô – Shinshû kyôdan no shisô to kôdô* (Kyoto: Hôzôkan, 1997); and Senji kyôgaku kenkyûkai, ed., *Senjikyôgaku to shinshû* (Kyoto: Nagata Bunshodô, 1991), volumes 1–2.

81. "Shinkô koso senryoku no kiban, geika renshi jintô ni zenkoku ni tokubetsu hukyô," *Nishi honganji shinpô*, 25 December 1944, 1. See also "Kyoshû ittai honmatsu kyowa motte mukyoku no kôon ni hôtô seyo," *Nishi honganji shinpo*, 15 January 1944, 1.

82. "Kôkoku shûkyô no masugata kengen," *Nishi honganji shinpo*, 15 May 1944, 1.

83. "Zaitekikoku kôryû no kaikyôshi shimei," *Nishi honganji shinpo*, 5 December 1943, 2.

84. Anthony D. Smith, *Chosen Peoples: Sacred Sources of National Identity* (Oxford 2003), 19.

to find out how Japan was faring in the war. The report continued that the radio carried a message from Tokyo: "Be full of hope and of strong conviction Japan will win this war sooner or later."[85] Rev. Kawamura also writes in his memoirs that he sometimes listened to messages from Japan on his short-wave radio. According to these reports, "Japan was always winning." The nationalistic sentiment that he embraced during the war was obvious, because he continued that "he believed that Tokyo would never lie," and the next day when Japan had lost the war, "most Buddhist followers were crying."[86] One of the IDPs, who had attended a Japanese language class in Raymond where a Buddhist priest had taught, also recalled that he had received ideological messages from Japan. For example, on New Years' Day, he remembered, they had listened to a speech in a Buddhist hall where people posted "the Emperor's picture on the wall," and were "cheering it." "My impression is that," he continued, "more than people realize, they were leaning towards Japanese nationalists."[87] Another IDP who moved to Coaldale also pointed out that many elderly Japanese saw Hideki Tôjô, General of the Imperial Japanese Army, as a "prophet" or a "king."[88]

Yet forced labour posed a problem in maintaining the services of the priests. As Rev. Ikuta and Rev. Kawamura both came as sugar beet labourers initially, their religious activities were kept unofficial initially. Nonetheless, pre-war residents and IDPs collaborated to keep Buddhism alive in this district. Evidence suggests that Albertan Japanese offered assistance and accommodations without any economic benefit. For them, the consolidation of Japanese ethno-religious identity in the district was as significant as the gains from agricultural labour. The aid that pre-war Japanese residents provided Rev. Kawamura illustrates this point. In 1940, after six years as a resident priest, Rev. Kawamura had moved to British Columbia on his way to Japan. When the war began, he wrote to Kichizo Takaguchi, President of the Raymond Japanese Association and one of the pre-war Japanese settlers, asking if the Japanese community there could accommodate him as a Buddhist priest.[89] In his memoir, Rev. Kawamura also stresses the assistance that he received from an old timer, Yoichi Hironaka, in the process of evacuation.[90] Although he entered the area as a sugar beet farmer, pre-war Japanese residents in the district provided him a home in the city, not on the farm to which he had been assigned to work by the BCSC. Their respect for Rev. Kawamura was

85. LAC, MLLF, RG 27, vol. 170, RCMP, Japanese conditions, 31 March 1944.

86. Yûtetsu Kawamura, *Kanada Arubata shu kaubôisongu no sato* (Raymond 1988), 159.

87. GA, JAOHPC, RCT 125, Mitsuo Iwaasa, interview by G.A. Dunsmore, Brooks, Alberta, 24 April 1973.

88. GA, JAOHPC, RCT 127, Tatsuo Yamashita, interview by G. A. Dunsmore, Vauxhall, Alberta, 3 May 1973.

89. LAC, MLLF, RG 27, vol 170, RCMP, Japanese Conditions, 27 May 1942.

90. Kawamura, *Kanada Arubata shu kaubôisongu no sato,* 22.

illustrated by the fact that during 1942, the Raymond Buddhist Church paid him a salary and provided benefits to his family.[91] This signaled the view of the local Buddhist community that he should not be treated as an ordinary IDP who was under the federal government's welfare and control.

Obviously, providing special accommodation for Rev. Kawamura violated the rules set by the BCSC. The RCMP report to the BCSC pointed out that Rev. Kawamura was "acting as priest" and "spent only one night at the farm of Harry Hirokana" where he should remain.[92] Pre-war Japanese residents reacted to the issue before the BCSC could offer a response, mainly because they did not want close scrutiny over their sacred sphere of Buddhism. Such government intervention could have lead to suspicions regarding Japanese-Canadian loyalty to Canada, and in the worst scenario, the removal of both Buddhist ministers from the area. The RCMP cited a confidential conversation with Takaguchi, representing pre-war residents, in which he revealed his association "desired to retain the services of S. Ikuta only and would be pleased if it could be arranged to have Y. Kawamura moved somewhere else."[93] The comments indicate a serious dilemma among Japanese Buddhists in the district. They could not accept the idea of a Buddhist minister working as a sugar beet labourer, but decided to avoid any conflicts with the BCSC. Takaguchi thus tried to bridge the two sides. By explaining to the RCMP officer that Japanese people were "not anxious to retain the services of Y. Kawamura" but they could not "lose face by allowing him to do menial labour," Takaguchi was trying to get the best deal from the government. He suggested therefore that Rev. Kawamura "act as a travelling minister for the whole area."[94] Japanese Canadians seem to have succeeded in this negotiation. Rev. Kawamura did move out of Raymond, but remained in the nearby district of Picture Butte, from where he practiced services in the surrounding area, thereby contributing to the expansion of the religious sphere. Thus a common religious faith was a factor that separated pre-war Japanese and other members of the ASBGA.

IDPs, in turn, brought economic resources and members that the Church needed for its activities through their paid labour and the funds available to them. The Raymond Buddhist Church was a small institution founded by a group of local farmers in the rural settlement. Its operation entirely depended on its annual fees and donations from its members. According to the financial records, the membership fee was between $1–$2 per person during the 1930s, but local farmers donated to the church based on the salary they made from agricultural output in the year. During the period between 16 November 1940 and 12 November 1941, before the influx of Japanese IDPs, the church collected

91. GA, RBTF, M9303, financial records of Buddhist Church, 1941–2.

92. LAC, MLLF, RG 27, vol. 170, RCMP report, 4 June 1942.

93. LAC, MLLF, RG 27, vol. 170, RCMP report, 4 June 1942.

94. LAC, MLLF, RG 27, vol. 170, RCMP report, 4 June 1942.

a total membership fee of $56.75.[95] But between 12 November 1941 and 11 November 1942 the amount rose to $335.[96] IDPs' investment in Buddhism is also well illustrated by their decision to organize new Buddhist churches in the area. During a short period, four new churches – Coaldale (1943), Picture Butte (1943), Taber (1947), and Lethbridge (1948) – appeared in the district. For the erection of the Coaldale church, for example, five Buddhist Japanese in the district donated between $50 and $100.[97] From the financial records of the Raymond Church, it is also clear that a number of people donated to the church in return for private ceremonies administrated by Rev. Ikuta. Such practices were common in Buddhism at the passages of life or on anniversaries of someone's death. That the IDPs had access to cash through the federal government's fund might have facilitated the management of the Church, as previously it had been entirely dependent on proceeds from the farmers' harvest. The local representatives of the BCSC provided a detailed report on financial issues:

> During the first four months of this year, our relief shows a reduction of ($)12,257 as against the expenditures for similar period last year. At first glance this would appear that the Japanese located in this area have become more self-supporting and settled in their work, but on the other hand, on checking over the record here of funds withdrawn from the Custodian, we find that in the latter part of 1943, Japanese families in this area withdrew 39,922 from funds held by the Custodian, and in the first four months of this year, they have withdrawn 23,452. In other words, during the last nine months, 63,274 has been withdrawn from Custodian funds by the Japanese people in this area. It is a well known fact that these people, when they have the money are real spenders, and from the number of cars that are running around, and from the way they are living, it would indicate that they have purposely withdrawn this money, and spent it, in fear that the Government may seize it.[98]

The remaining financial records of the Raymond Buddhist Church are not extensive, but point to the significance of Buddhism not just as a focal point of Japanese activities, but also as a sacred space in which no one could intervene. A close examination of expenditures suggests that the institution provided people a place in which to practice their homeland rituals. For example, on special occasions, they purchased flowers and candles, which were placed near *butsudan*, a small wooden shrine, which commemorated ancestors in the church. These occasions included *higan* (a ritual that worships ancestors around the spring vernal equinox holiday), *hanamatsuri* (a flower festival that commemorates Buddha's birthday), and *bon* (a ceremony that commemorates ancestors) for which many followers donated to the church.[99] Reyko Nishiyama, a pre-war resident, recalled that wartime was the busiest time

95. GA, RBTF, M9303, financial records of Buddhist Church, 1941–2.

96. GA, RBTF, M9303, financial records of Buddhist Church, 1941–2.

97. LAC, MLLF, RG 27, vol. 170, RCMP report, 31 March 1944.

98. LAC, MLLF, RG 27, vol 170, J.N Lister, a letter to George Collins, 15 May 1944.

99. GA, RBTF, M 9303, financial record, 1946.

Shrine in Buddhist Church, Raymond, Alberta (1950s)
Glenbow Archives, NA-5720-8

for the Raymond Buddhist Church.[100] A new organization, the Young Men's and Women's Buddhist Association, was established in 1945 and, she recalled, "this enthusiastic new group became very active with over 40 members and conducted bazaars, carnivals and concerts for moneymaking purposes."[101] Such occasions served social purposes for IDPs, who had lost their old community life.

Conclusion

THE SUGAR BEET FARMING DISTRICT was a unique space, influenced by transnational, national, and local interests during the period between 1941 and 1953. Japanese-Canadian IDPs, as sugar beet farm labourers, initiated their negotiation with the ASBGA, the BCSC, and the pre-war Japanese-Canadian

100. GA, RBTF, M 9303, Reiko Nishiyama, *Our Beloved Otera: Memoirs of Raymond Buddhist Temple* (visual). See also, The Raymond Buddhist Church, *First 50 Years: Raymond Buddhist Church 1929–1979* (Raymond 1979).

101. Reyko Nishiyama, "History of the Raymond Buddhist Church," in LDJCA History Book Committee, *Nishik*, 99.

community based on their own sense of justice and freedom. Their major concern was to obtain the economic and ethno-religious basis for the reconstruction of their ordinary life as quickly as possible. The various negotiations in which they were involved to maximize their economic opportunities and expand the religious sphere within the confined territory indicate that they viewed their status as temporary, part of the process of reconstructing the past and preparing for the future.

Locally, the tensions focused on labour transfer issues, as IDPs refused to stay with allocated farmers when living and working conditions were not adequate. Forced labour was one source of their complaints. The ASBGA in southern Alberta saw the influx of the IDPs as a short-term phenomenon, and did not regard their welfare, human rights, and resettlement as their concern. Yet for IDPs, it was the beginning of their economic recovery. Their activism certainly betrayed the ASBGA's image of passive prisoners who would take any sort of jobs and housing. Indeed, the IDP's stance that they were not ordinary contract labourers to some extent provided them with negotiating power with the federal government during the war. Consequently, they brought problems such as the lack of proper housing and low wages to the BCSC's attention. The IDPs were clearly affected by the nation-wide expansion of human rights discourses after the war. Increasingly, Japanese Canadians in general began lobbying against the postwar repatriation of Japanese IDPs. However, whenever Albertan IDPs expressed their demands openly regarding the repeal of deportation of the IDPs, they linked them to the local concern about the lack of labourers.

Transnationally, the IDPs tried to keep Buddhist priests away from farm labour, and the pre-war Japanese residents endorsed their efforts. IDPs, in return, invested significantly in the consolidation of ethno-religious identity in the district, adding members and financial resources. Religion and ethnicity, which served as the network of assistance between the pre-war Japanese community and IDPs, were fundamental in the integration of the IDPs into the rural community and in the establishment of various deals with the BCSC. The BCSC as the agent of the federal government had to deal with a number of conflicting problems – farmers' interests in labour, IDPs' welfare, the rising awareness of human rights, and persistent racist wartime politics. As a result of the activism of the IDPs, the government agency eased its policies against the Japanese Canadians, allowing Buddhist activities and supporting their free movement.

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