



MASURO TAMASHIRO WITH A QUARTERMASTER SERGEANT
R.A.M.C. [ROYAL ARMY MEDICAL CORP], c.1916



TIM TAMASHIRO AT THE JAPANESE CANADIAN
WAR MEMORIAL. NOVEMBER 11, 2014



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Cover Photo: Tim Tamashiro Honours his Grandfather Masuro

Tim Tamashiro is best recognized as one of Canada's most endearing jazz vocalists with five albums and 25 years of performances from coast to coast. He is currently the host of Tonic on CBC Radio 2 six nights a week. Growing up as a skinny Japanese kid in Blackfalds, Alberta, Tim learned early that being different was something very special. Tim now lives in Calgary, Alberta with his wife and two children. Tim travels anywhere and everywhere he can to find a new adventure.

We were thrilled to have Tim visit Vancouver to join us as our Master of Ceremonies for a special 100th anniversary Remembrance Day ceremony at Stanley Park. Tim was asked to lay a wreath in honour of his grandfather's unit, the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry. His grandfather, Masuro Tamashiro, was born April 15, 1882 in Okinawa and worked as a labourer. He enlisted in Lethbridge on June 2, 1916 at the age of 34. He started as a Private in the 13th Canadian Mounted Rifles, later joined the PPCLI and after he was injured at the Somme, transferred to the 52nd Battalion.

A few years ago, Tim wrote:

...my grandfather was there with the Canadian Expeditionary Forces... and he wasn't the only Japanese man there either. I'm in awe of the fact that my own grandfather was [there] at a defining moment in Canadian history... In fact, over 222 Japanese men volunteered for service in the First World War. Of them, 54 were killed, 93 were wounded (including my granddad) and 49 returned home to Canada safely... How a 5 foot 3 inch man from Okinawa managed to survive, I'll never know. I doubt that he even knew how to speak English. But somehow he and many of his fellow Japanese Canadian soldiers came home. I didn't know him well but I still am thankful.

REMEMBERING

By Beth Carter, Director/Curator

Every November, hundreds of people gather at the Japanese Canadian War Memorial in Stanley Park to honour the over 222 men who answered the call of duty for Canada in the First World War, and the many soldiers since.

This year was a special centennial anniversary of the First World War, made more special by the large crowd and the newly refurbished cenotaph. Over the last year the Japanese Canadian War Memorial Committee, led by Linda Kawamoto Reid, has worked with the Nikkei National Museum & Cultural Centre and the Nikkei Place Foundation to raise funds to do much needed renovations to this important historical site.

The cenotaph was an initiative of the Canadian Japanese Association and was dedicated on April 2, 1920. As the last maintenance work was done 29 years ago, restoration was overdue. We benefited from the expert masonry work by Shaun Van den Kerkhof, of Van den Kerkhof and Son, Stonemasons and the assistance of heritage consultant Donald Luxton and Associates.

We would like to acknowledge our major sponsors for the project: Veteran's Affairs, The Vancouver Foundation, the Poppy Fund, the NAJC, Donald Luxton & Associates, the Howard C. Green Memorial Fund, the Cedar Springs Foundation, City of Vancouver, and Ethel Isomura.

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TEIKICHI SHICHI: The First to Die

by Kaye Kishibe

As we remember the hundredth anniversary of the Great War, we Japanese Canadians should be mindful of the over two hundred who fought in that war besides their Canadian comrades of the CEF (Canadian Expeditionary Force) and the fifty-four who lost their lives.

Although two hundred may seem a small number beside the astonishing number of those who fought in that war, the Canadian Japanese community was something under nine thousand (men, women, and children) at the time. This was a poor struggling immigrant community barely thirty years old, largely made up of fishermen and labourers. Conscription was not in effect at the time. Also, the volunteers were raised, housed and trained while in Vancouver by the donations from the community until they were recruited into the army units in Alberta.

Here, let us have a glimpse into the lives of these men through the experience of Teikichi Shichi, who was the first casualty among these men.



Shichi was born in Masaki-mura, Gifu Prefecture, on May 7, 1890. His early ambition was to attend a naval academy in Japan. He was not successful in this, since he could not meet the physical requirement. Instead, he became a sailor on a merchant ship, and saw various ports of East Asia. On November of 1906, he boarded an English sailing ship in Hong Kong and came to Vancouver. There he worked in various jobs, the main one being fishing.

On December 21, 1915, when the call for volunteers was announced in the community newspaper by the Canadian Japanese Association, Shichi was one of the two hundred and two who responded. The volunteers formed an organization and Shichi was elected to the executive as one of the auditors.

He was among the original volunteers who began drilling in Vancouver in Cordova Hall on January 17, 1916, under the direction of Lieutenant Robert E. Colquhoun, Canadian Army Service Corps. The expenses for this such as pay for the volunteers, food and necessities, and rent for the drill hall were borne by the Canadian Japanese Association and donations from the community. Men from outside Vancouver were billeted in homes.

The training was halted and the group disbanded on May 11, 1916, when the Canadian government refused to give authorization on the grounds that to field an all-Japanese unit of company strength (approximately 200 fighting men) will not be practical. This was a great disappointment to all. However, the executives of the Canadian Japanese Association breathed a sigh of relief, when they were successful in persuading the government in reimbursing the expenses they have incurred.

Although an “all Japanese” unit was not authorized, the army units in Alberta which were having severe difficulties in recruiting volunteers were willing to enlist the Japanese as individuals. Shichi and his comrades left Vancouver to enlist in Calgary and Medicine Hat. The Canadian Japanese Association and Robert Colquhoun (now Captain) helped by securing transportation. By December 4, one hundred and seventy one had signed up for service overseas.

Shichi enlisted in Calgary on May 20, two weeks after the group was disbanded. He was 27 years old, single, and stood five-foot four with a chest measure of 32 inches. He gave his occupation as labourer and religion as Buddhism. On his upper left arm was a tattoo depicting the Union Jack and the flag of Japan.

Shichi was assigned to the 13th Mounted Rifle Battalion of Medicine Hat, Alberta. He was one of the forty-one of the battalion who had drilled together in Cordova Hall. They were the first Japanese to go abroad as part of the Canadian Expeditionary Force.

After six weeks of basic training at Sarcee Camp near Calgary, he and his unit left Medicine Hat on June 22nd for Halifax where they boarded the troop transport, SS Olympic, which sailed on June 28th and sailed across the Atlantic. After disembarking at Liverpool on July 6th, they were given further training at Shorncliffe, a military camp in southern England. On August 27th, the men sailed to France as members of the Princess Patricia Canadian Light Infantry to be engaged in the Battle of the Somme from August 28th to October 1st.

On October 2nd, Shichi and his comrades were transferred out of Princess Patricia to be taken on by the 52nd Battalion. This coincides with the Canadian assault on the Regina Trenches. The first assault on October 1st failed. The second, on October 8th was also with very high casualties without results. Although the 52nd Battalion was not involved in the frontal attack, it was during this time that Shichi lost his life. Here is a report of this incident found in a letter to the Canadian Japanese Association.

On the 7th we reached the front at night and were about to enter trenches when an enemy shell exploded wounding Niichi Ikeda on the left hand by shrapnel. On the 8th we were working at night in the trenches 300 feet from the enemy. On the 9th we approached the point 150 feet from the enemy. As we completed our tasks and were evacuating from the place, enemy shrapnel hit Teikichi Shichi who died on the spot.

This report was received in Vancouver on November 9th. It was a shock to the community. It was not expected to be this way. In the minds of the people, the soldiers were seen returning home after contributing to the war effort with bravery and sacrifice. Returning home in triumph, they were to prove that they were worthy of full citizenship in Canada.

But the reality with Teikichi Shichi was so far from what people had imagined. His death had come so suddenly, it seemed. It was only ten months ago when he joined the volunteers and began drilling in Cordova Hall. It was almost to the day of his twenty-seventh birthday in May when he enlisted in Calgary and signed on for overseas assignment. It was only three months ago, when he with great excitement joined the battle in France with his comrades. On November 19, a solemn funeral service was held at the Vancouver Buddhist Church.

The Canadian Japanese Association took notice of the changed reality. The letter quoted above continues that of the 41 soldiers who were with the unit at the beginning “... now, because of death, injury and sickness, only thirty-one are battle worthy.” The Association now had to face a wider and deeper set of responsibilities which were not imagined before.

To this end, it struck a “Support Committee for the Volunteer Soldiers” or *Giyuhei Koenkai*, in Japanese. This organization was to have six objectives. First, it was to visit and comfort the people who participated in the Expeditionary Army. Secondly, it was to act as advocates for the soldiers and their families in their dealings with the Canadian government. Thirdly, it was to provide significant amount of aid to those soldiers who have returned wounded or incapacitated by illness. Fourthly, it was to provide aid to the families of fallen soldiers.

Also, the Association now turned its eye to the end of the war and began to think of how to recognize the contribution of those who participated in the war. Among the last two objectives were, “To provide appropriate form of recognition to the soldiers returning with injury, sickness, or victory” and, a new idea, “To build a monument of remembrance when peace is restored.”

CANADIAN JAPANESE ASSOCIATION (*Kanada Nipponjin Kai*) AND THE WAR MEMORIAL

By Kaye Kishibe

On November 17, 1916, the Canadian Japanese Association issued a letter appealing to the wider Japanese immigrant community to support the Japanese Canadian soldiers so that the burden will not fall entirely on the Association. To this end, it struck a "Support Committee for the Volunteers" [*Giyuhei koenkai*] and published a constitution for this committee.

The Constitution for the Canadian Japanese Support Committee for the Japanese Canadian Volunteers in the Expeditionary Army

Article 1

This organization will be known as "Canadian Japanese Support Committee for the Japanese Canadian Volunteers in the Canadian Expeditionary Army".



Canadian Japanese Association at a banquet, possibly in the hall above Fuji Chop Suey on Powell Street.
NNM 1994.41.9



Article 2

The office of this organization will be situated in the premise of the Canadian Japanese Association.

Article 3

The objectives of this organization are:

- To appropriately visit and comfort the Japanese in Canada who have participated in the Expeditionary Army.
- To act as advocate for such soldiers and their families in view of the laws and regulations of Canada.
- To give significant amount of aid to those soldiers who have returned wounded or incapacitated by illness. Also, in case of death, aid would be provided to the families.
- To provide appropriate form of recognition to the soldiers returning with injury, sickness, or victory.
- To build a monument of remembrance when peace is restored.

Article 4

This organization will consist of the executives of the main body and branches of the Canadian Japanese Association and the following organizations:

- the merchants' association
- volunteer soldiers association
- fishermen's association
- various newspapers and journals
- the Mio Village association
- the Anglican Church
- the Methodist Church
- the Buddhist Church
- the Consulate
- the fish processors' association.

The number of representatives from each of these organizations will be determined by the Implementation Committee.

Article 5

Groups not included above (article 4) may be allowed to join by the Implementation Committee.



Yasushi Yamazaki in honorary uniform: President of Canadian Japanese Association and leader of the Japanese Canadian Volunteer Corps 1916.
JCWMC photo

..... Continued on next page



After the Great War: After 1918

These men are likely members of the Canadian Japanese Association. They are holding a large flag which appears to be the BC crest. A caption included with the photo reads:

Front row L-R: Matsunoshin Abe, [unidentified], Uyeda, [unidentified], [unidentified], Consul - Ukita Ryoji, Shuichi Sasaki, Mohei Sato, [unidentified], [unidentified], [unidentified], Saburo Shinobu.

Back row L-R: Matsumoto, Yaju Fukui, [unidentified], Motoji Yanagisawa, [unidentified].

Matsunoshin Abe was president of the Canadian Japanese Association during this period, when the Association built and unveiled the Japanese Canadian War Memorial in Stanley Park in April 1920.

Consul General Satotsuga Ukita was in office from 1916-1921.

NNM 1994.70.27

Article 6

The financial resources of the organization will be by donation of money.

Article 7

The executives of this organization will consist of:

- One president
- Ten members of the Implementation Committee
- One Treasurer
- Three Auditors

Article 8

The president will administer the affairs of the organization and be its representative.

Article 9

The president will also be the president of the Canadian Japanese Association.

Article 10

The Implementation Committee will carry out the affairs of the organization

Article 11

Members of the Implementation Committee and two of the auditors shall be elected at these Annual General Meeting.

One of the auditors shall be a staff of the Imperial consulate.

Article 12

The treasurer will be responsible for all the revenue and disbursements of the organization.

Article 13

The auditor shall audit the finances of the organization.

Article 14

The terms of all executives shall be one year.

Article 15

The president and the Implementation Committee may hire an unspecified number of secretaries as the need arises.

Article 16

The Annual General Meeting shall be held on January of each year.



Canadian Japanese Association founding members at Cenotaph, c.1920
NNM 1994.41.14

Article 17

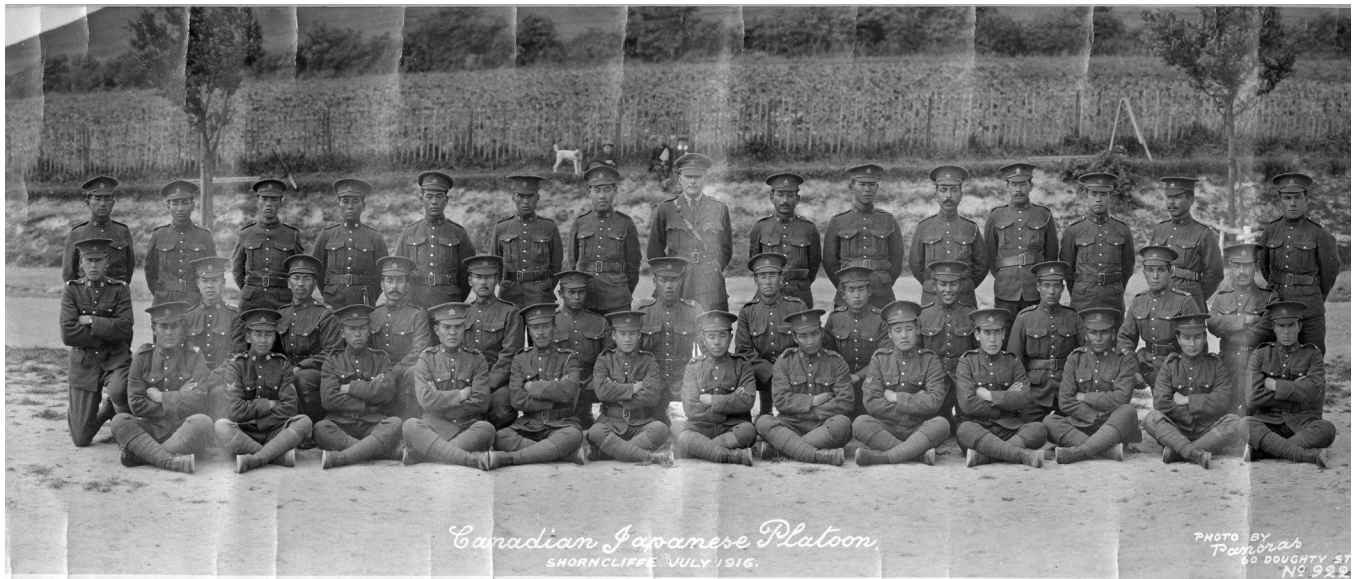
Whenever the Implementation Committee deems it necessary, an un-scheduled general meeting may be called. This may be held concurrently with the Annual General Meeting.

Article 18

Limited to this year [1916], the executives' term will end at the next Annual General Meeting. (i.e., not limited to a year. KK)

November 17, 1916.

..... Continued on next page



1. Canadian Japanese Platoon, Shorncliffe, July 1916. NNM TD 960



2. First World War Veterans gathered for the Royal Visit to Vancouver 1939
 (From left back row: Masumi Mitsui - third position, Iizuka - fourth position, Sgt. Kubota - sixth position. From left front row: Sentaro Omoto - second position).
 NNM 2010.23.2.4.380



3. Veteran's Picnic, Vancouver Island Beach, c.1919. NNM 2010.23.2.4.561



4. 28th Battalion at Bonn Germany 1918. NNM TD 1038 Uegama collection

LEST WE FORGET 1914-2014

RECORDING FIRST WORLD WAR STORIES

by Linda Kawamoto Reid

The Japanese Canadian War Memorial Committee (JCWMC) is undertaking a book project to commemorate the centenary of the First World War volunteers. Most of them enlisted in Alberta in 1916 after the platoon was not accepted by the Canadian Prime Minister Borden. He succumbed to pressure from the BC politicians for fear that the franchise issue would arise again after the men served Canada.

In preparation for the book, the JCWMC is looking for stories, photos and possibly artefacts from the families of the First World War soldiers. Here are some brief examples of the stories we could tell with community support and assistance:



Daitaro Araki was an early immigrant from Hiroshima-ken who arrived in Canada on August of 1895 at the age of 18. When he enlisted in the 175th Battalion in Calgary August 10, 1916, he was living at a South Vancouver Cannery in the community of Eburne (now Marpole). He joined the 50th Battalion in France and served on the front line. He had recurring conditions of myalgia and rheumatism which led to his admittance in a number of hospitals including Hastings, the Canadian Military hospital in Bramshott, Eastbourne, and Buxton in Derbyshire. After the war, he lived in the Powell Street area and he died April 10, 1942 before internment.

Daitaro Araki with medals, Vancouver 1919
NNM 1992.20.34

Tsuenkichi Kitagawa immigrated to Vancouver in August 1907 from Kumamoto-ken and lived in the Powell Street area of Vancouver. He worked as a farmer, labourer, and later a fisherman. He enlisted in Calgary to the Sarcee camp on Sept 1, 1916 at the age of 29. Starting off in the 192nd Overseas Battalion, he soon joined the fearless Fighting 10th Battalion with fellow Japanese Canadians, and was subsequently wounded in combat. He was interned in Greenwood and remained there for many years. He died in Richmond General Hospital in 1969 and is buried in Mountainview.

Tsuenkichi Kitagawa in uniform Vancouver 1917
 NNM 2010.23.2.4.559



HELP the JCWMC identify these soldiers!

The Nikkei National Museum (www.nikkeimuseum.org) has a searchable database with many photos donated over the years. The following photos are fabulous but we are not quite sure who they are.

Does anyone know who this soldier is?

Soldier in uniform 1916
 NNM 1992.20.33

..... Continued on next page

Does anyone recognize this Matsumoto?

There were three Matsumotos that enlisted in the First World War.

- 1) Matsumoto, Kazue or Fred from Hiroshima, who lived in Victoria when he enlisted after being drafted in the Yukon Territories.
- 2) Matsumoto, Kingo from Nagasaki, who enlisted in Medicine Hat into the 13th CMR, the PPCLI and the 52nd Battalion, he lived at 240 Alexander Street prior to enlistment and returned to Powell Street after the war. He is buried at Mountainview Cemetery.
- 3) Matsumoto, Zenkichi from Wakayama enlisted in Red Deer Alberta and lived in Vancouver. He too is buried in Mountainview Cemetery.

*Matsumoto 1916
NNM 2010.23.2.4.557*



We would like to put a name to this soldier. According to Roy Ito's book, "We Went to War", there were 56 soldiers who enlisted into the 175th Battalion, but we are not sure who this soldier is.



THE JAP "ENTENTE," AFTER THE BIG PUSH.

Canadian Official.

Help us honour these soldiers!

This photo was likely taken by the Department of Defence, and may be kept in the Library and Archives Canada, but as yet, we have not been able to identify the Japanese Canadian soldier. The photo was likely taken in 1917, which is the year the Japanese Canadians saw heavy combat action. The photo has been circulated worldwide on a postcard.

Wounded soldiers in casualty station in France, c.1917

NNM 2010.23.2.4.553

Can you help?

If you have any clues to the identity of these soldiers, please contact Linda Kawamoto Reid, Chair of the Japanese Canadian War Memorial Committee, Ireid@nikkeiplace.org

Additionally, we are seeking any photos, stories, or artefacts of Japanese Canadian soldiers of the First World War, Second World War, Korean War, Afghan War or Peacetime corps. The Nikkei National Museum is interested in preserving these precious items and we wish to honour these soldiers and their stories.

然らば SARABA...FAREWELL



Before leaving Medicine Hat for overseas on June 22, 1916, the volunteers in the 13th Canadian Militia Rifles sent a farewell message to Vancouver: “To our beloved Japanese Canadian people: This is the eve of our departure for overseas. For the betterment of all Japanese in Canada and for the future of our people we head for the battlefield. As the petals of the cherry blossoms eventually fall, we are prepared to give our lives. *Saraba...farewell.*”

The Honour Rolls of the First World War soldiers have been an icon of remembrance on display in the Vancouver Japanese Language School & Japanese Hall.



In 1977, Sergeant Kubota, a First World War veteran, returned the Honour Rolls to the School, after safekeeping them in Toronto during WWII and the Internment. One panel lists the men who volunteered for the First World War and the other panel shows rare photos of the 54 men who sacrificed their lives. The handsomely framed name and photograph panels are also fitting in size, standing 36 x 47 in. and 39 x 49 in. respectively. This year, as part of the cenotaph renewal project, funds went towards restoring the Honour Rolls and the photos of the soldiers. We wish to thank Veterans Affairs Canada for their generous support, Audrey Nishi of Master Framers who lovingly restored both pieces, and the Vancouver Japanese Language School & Japanese Hall for carefully preserving these valuable items.



Canadian Japanese Volunteer Corps at Cordova Hall, Vancouver 1916
NNM 1994.70.26

PRIVATE IIZUKA: THE UNION JACK WANTS YOU...

by Linda Kawamoto Reid

Private Kiyoji Iizuka was a familiar face on Powell Street both before and after the Second World War. After his tour in France with the Canadian Expeditionary Force of the First World War, he lived at 522 Powell Street. He later returned there in 1969 after being interned in Greenwood. Kiyoji was oft to be heard talking of his heroic deeds.

Heroic they were indeed. He was wounded three times and went back into the field of war twice. For his heroism he was awarded one of twelve Military Medals won by Japanese. He had enlisted on Aug 5, 1916 and was honorably discharged on Feb 7, 1919. His oral history lies in the BC Archives, and the Japanese Canadian War Memorial Committee (JCWMC) had it digitized so that it could be translated. Professor Hiroko Takamura from Tokyo kindly translated the document for the JCWMC. Here are some excerpts:

"We trained for 3 months in bush where houses now stand. On a rainy day we had indoor drills in the Cordova Hall, learning how to operate guns, turning left, turning right and so on. We trained all day long and completed the training in three months. After we were trained, we proposed the 'Japanese Army' to the Government, but were refused. We took a photo in front of Cordova Hall to commemorate the effort, but we all went back to work."

"But only a week later, a Japanese soldier from Alberta came with a recruiter to find us. There was a newspaper article 'Men of all nationalities please support the Union Jack'. I went to Alberta by train to enlist."

"Yasushi Yamazaki was a great man, he founded the Tairiku Nippo newspaper and organized a fisherman's union, headed the Canadian Japanese Association (CJA) who trained the Japanese Canadian Volunteer Corps. But there was another newspaper called Kanada Shinbun, that which organized the Kakushin Domei

Kai (the alliance for reform) that opposed the CJA. The newspaper offices were attacked and destroyed, the streets were unsafe, street cars stopped and the police came. It was difficult to resolve as over 300 people were involved. A dozen were arrested, and three were jailed. We had to pay one yen each for them for daily allowances."

"I went to Halifax after training one month in Calgary. Japanese Canadians were arranged in a platoon of 70 that exceeded the usual number of 50 in Canada. We sailed on a troop ship from Halifax to Liverpool and entered the Canadian Camp for a month. It was called Seaford. In December of 1916, we arrived in Le Havre, Normandy, France and marched 7 miles to a base camp at the foot of a hill. There, we had ball cartridge exercises again. We were there for about 2 - 3 months. On April 10, 1917 we went into the Battle of Vimy where we lost the most soldiers. It was like a seesaw, the French forces failed 7 times to win the hill, the British forces failed 3 times, but finally our Canadian forces of 4 divisions captured it. It took only two weeks."

"I was wounded on May 5th; a splinter glanced off the edge of my eye. I went to hospital in England, and was allowed 10 days of leave in London. Then I returned to Shornecliffe about 30 miles from London where there was a mixed brigade. So I went back to

the front, and fought at Hill 70."

"In Dec 1917, we went to Lippel in Belgium where the Canadian Forces were stationed in 1915, many of them from Vancouver had suffered poison gas attacks from the Germans. When we got there, there were bones everywhere, the ground was covered with bones, and you could not tell which were German or which were Canadian."

"A total of 18 divisions, French, Australian and Canadian, delivered an all out attack called the Battle of the Somme. We were there for two weeks but won. In 1917 the rules changed about our postings, until then we knew where we would be the next day, but since there were so many spies amongst us, the orders were not given until the day of posting. "

"I was wounded by a splinter shell in the hand the morning of September 2nd, 1918 and the war was over by September 29th. I did not see the last battle of Cambrai where the Germans raised a white flag and visited the French front for peace negotiations. Armistice was finally signed on the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month of 1918."

Kiyoji Iizuka died in 1979 at the age of 92 and his ashes are buried at one of our oldest cemeteries in Vancouver, Mountainview.



Left - Right: Mr. Harada, Masumi Mitsui, Kiyoji Iizuka, and Mr. Nagao
NNM TD 960

THE FIGHTING TENTH

By Momoko Ito

The 10th Battalion was a Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF) field unit assembled out of Valcartier in Quebec and served in the 1st Canadian Division from 1914-1919. Referred to as *The Fighting Tenth* by fellow units, the famed battalion saw action in every major battle in WWI. Noted as one of the few military formations to accept Japanese Canadian recruits, the 10th Battalion would see up to 25% of the total 222 Japanese Canadian men who would go on to serve in the Great War.

With sponsorship from the Canadian Japanese Association, the initial wave of would-be Japanese Canadian servicemen was assembled in Vancouver by Issei, Yasushi Yamazaki in Cordova Hall, December 1915. Motivated by hopes of gaining the voting franchise and to defend their king and country, Yamazaki and some 200 other recruits trained independently under the command of Captain Robert Colqhoun and Sergeant Major A.J. Hall. No amount of dedication and training, however, could overcome the racialized notions present in British Columbia at the time.

After four months of readying, the volunteer corps were denied enlistment in their home province. Disbanded but undaunted, many of the men chose to go to Alberta on an individual basis where Japanese Canadians recruits could enlist to fill enrollment quotas.

The first group of several Japanese Canadian CEF soldiers to join the 10th Battalion arrived in December 1916 as reinforcements from other consolidated formations, and consisting of a mere 10 men out of 142. A letter from one young private named Masaji Nakauchi of the 10th Battalion speaks to the experiences of war:

During the last two months, I have been involved in a number of battles in France. As I reflect on my battlefield experience, I realize that as a novice soldier, I was afraid of going into my first battle...However, as days passed, I became used to the conditions and now I am on my way to becoming a seasoned soldier; that is, one who is brave, calm in adversity and yet quick in reacting. I have reached a special level of understanding, one might call it a soldier's state of mind. I also do not feel the hardships or cold as before.

There are also number of accounts describing the heroics of The Fighting Tenth, one such notable example by a Japanese Canadian soldier comes from Daniel G. Dancock's *Gallant Canadians* describing the infamous battle at Hill 70, "Private Masumi Mitsui, seeing a Lewis-gun crew wiped out, grabbed the gun and put it back into action, inflicting heavy losses on the enemy troops fleeing...". The battalion's success at Hill 70 earned them the record for most decorations from a single battle, of which Mitsui was awarded a Military Medal.

Fighting continued for another two years after the first involvement of Japanese Canadian soldiers, followed by an armistice in 1918 bringing an end to the Great War. The 10th Battalion returned to Canada in 1919 and remained in existence until 1920, whereafter the unit was perpetuated by the Calgary Highlanders and the Winnipeg Light Infantry.

Today, the contributions of *The Fighting Tenth* are honoured in a gallery at the Military Museum of Calgary which displays artifacts from the First World War. In the centre is a separate column paying tribute to the Japanese Canadian battalion members who, in spite of all the challenges they faced as racial minorities, fought valiantly alongside their fellow countrymen.



The image shows eleven Japanese-Canadian soldiers dressed in World War One Canadian military uniforms and hats, seated and standing in three rows outside of a light-coloured building in France. The two men seated on the ground from left are Tsunejiro Kuroda and Kumakichi Oura. Seated in the second row from the left are Masumi Mitsui, Chikara Fujita, Masaru Nishijima, Toraki Matsumura and Masajiro Shishido. In the top row, standing from the left are Otokichi Onishi, unknown, Nuinosuke Okawa, and Tsunekichi Kitagawa.
NNM 2010.23.2.4.551

Momoko Ito is currently at the Nikkei National Museum on a BC Arts Council Early Career Development grant and has spent the past two years managing the Nikkei Internment Memorial Centre in New Denver, BC.

MEDICINE HAT'S JAPANESE CANADIAN SOLDIERS

by Robert Bruce Shepard

One of the things I enjoy the most about being a museum curator is learning something new about the community I serve and the country in which I live. Several years ago my colleagues and I decided that we would develop an exhibit about the First World War. Our community has a long and distinguished military heritage and, after much intense debate, we decided that it would be called "Medicine Hat's War, 1914-1918" and would focus on this community's involvement with the conflict.

We knew that we would have to do a considerable amount of research because, while there are a great many books and articles on the First World War, none of them have much to say about a community three hundred kilometers east of Calgary. We started locally, but soon found that one path led to Ottawa and the official records. We eventually had copies made of the files of the more than eighteen hundred men who enlisted here or in one of our regiments. This was from a population of between 9,000 and 10,000 at the time which has grown to 62,000 today.

We also soon realized that not all of them were from Medicine Hat. We also recognized that "Hatters" had gone to other centres to enlist. One particular group of about fifty names had us mystified.

The names were clearly Japanese and some of the next-of-kin were listed as being in Japan. We quickly checked other sources, such as directories, and were able to determine that there were few Japanese Canadians living in Medicine Hat and district at the time. So, who were these men and how did they come to enlist in the 175th Regiment which called themselves "The Dollar Six-Bits" (Twenty-five cents being known colloquially as 'two-bits') and was celebrated as "Medicine Hat's Own"?

A call to the Nikkei National Museum and Cultural Centre in Burnaby, British Columbia helped to solve our mystery. Japan was an ally of Great Britain in 1914 and Canada at the time was very much a proud part of the British Empire. Young Japanese Canadian men living in British Columbia wanted to do their duty and organized themselves. Apparently, they hired drill

sergeants to teach them commands and procedures, eventually presenting themselves at recruiting stations. They were turned down, whether because of racial prejudice or the fact that Canada did not want "ethnic" regiments in its army.

According to Roy Ito, in his book We Went to War on the Japanese Canadian soldiers of the First World War, word reached the men in British Columbia that units in Alberta were understaffed and seeking recruits. One of Medicine Hat's cavalry units, the 13th Canadian Mounted Rifles, had already accepted several local Japanese Canadians. Twenty-five Japanese Canadian recruits, with enough money to pay the fare, took the CPR east and were quickly enrolled in that Medicine Hat unit.

This development spurred others to action and, again according to Mr. Ito, 23 men from Vancouver and 29 from other fishing communities were recruited for Medicine Hat's 175th. They arrived in Calgary by train and were quickly added to the regiment's rolls. After training at Sarcee Camp in Calgary, they

left for Medicine Hat, arriving on September 26, 1916. According to the local newspaper, the regiment paraded through the town and was presented with new “colours” – the regiment’s flags. After what must have been an all too brief visit with their families and friends, the locally recruited men formed ranks with their new Japanese Canadian comrades and marched back to the train. The first Honour Guard of the new “colours” were members of the Japanese Canadian contingent; a rare honour.

Neither the 13th CMR, nor the 175th served together in combat. Both were “broken up” once they arrived in Europe and the men assigned as replacements to other Alberta regiments; the fighting already having taken

a dreadful toll. We know for certain that one of Medicine Hat’s Japanese Canadian soldiers was killed in action. Takakichi Fukui (#228508) joined the 13th CMR in Medicine Hat on June 21, 1916. He transferred to the Royal Canadian Rifles – Princes Patricia’s Canadian Light Infantry on August 27, 1916 and then to the 52nd Battalion on October 4, 1916. He was killed in action on September 2, 1917 and is buried in Aix-Noulette Communal Cemetery which is 4.5 miles west of Lens, France. According to Mr. Ito, Takakichi Fukui was one of 54 Japanese Canadian soldiers killed in combat out of a total of 118 who volunteered to serve, while only 12 of that number escaped with no injuries.

Our exhibit is designed to honour all of the Medicine Hatters who

served whether on the battlefield, in hospitals or on the home front. The Japanese Canadians who served in our community’s units are duly noted thanks to the assistance we received from our sister institution in Burnaby. We came to realize that those who served Canada during the First World War only asked that they be remembered; and we are privileged to do that with our modest exhibit.

Robert Bruce Shepard is the Museum Curator at the Esplanade Arts and Heritage Centre in Medicine Hat, Alberta. Medicine Hat’s War, 1914-1918 will be on display until April 12, 2015. For more information, visit www.esplanade.ca



Japanese Canadians of the 175th Battalion, Sarcee Camp, Calgary.
Esplanade Archives Image
0705.0001

TREASURES FROM THE COLLECTION

Legion Flag, c.1926

Donated by the Japanese Canadian War Memorial Committee

In 1920, Japanese Canadian veterans started a campaign for the right to vote by sending a letter to the premier of British Columbia, John Oliver. They were supported by some veteran's organizations, but opposed by others and the members of Legislative Assembly of British Columbia.

In 1925, after veterans groups amalgamated into the Royal Canadian Legion of the British Empire Service League (B.E.S.L), Branch No. 9 of the Royal Canadian Legion was formed as the Japanese branch. It was formally accepted as a branch in 1926 in British Columbia.

Unlike other branches, most of which operated based on geographic location, Branch No. 9 was intended to serve all Japanese Canadians, most of whom were in British Columbia. One of the

main purposes for the creation of the branch was a continuation of pursuing the right to vote of Japanese Canadians, as well as to campaign against legal restrictions placed on Japanese Canadians such as the limits on fishing licences imposed in 1919 in British Columbia.

By the late 1920s, the branch was sending delegates to provincial legion conventions to gain support from other branches for voting rights. This culminated in unanimous support for the right of Japanese Canadian veterans by other legion branches in 1930. In 1931, when it was put to a vote in the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia, Japanese Canadian veterans were granted the right to vote. The decision passed by a slim majority. While this was a major accomplishment for the branch,

they were unable to secure voting rights for all Japanese Canadians.

The charter of the branch was revoked, a decision which dismantled the branch, as a result of the restrictions placed on Japanese Canadians by the Canadian government during the Second World War.

The flag was created circa 1926 and was the official flag of the branch. It is a standard Royal Canadian Legion branch flag and features a Union Jack. The flag was recently replicated for outdoor use, and the fragile original flag will be preserved in the museum.

Scott Owens is the Collections Manager at the Nikkei National Museum. He recently graduated with an MLAS from the University of British Columbia.

