



From the National Film Board of Canada

**Minoru**  
memory of exile

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**VHS**

113 C  
9192 095

an animation film by  
**Michael Fukushima**



National  
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# Minoru

## memory of exile

### Japanese Canadians: A Historical Perspective

- Immigration from Japan to Canada began in the latter part of the 19th century.
- By 1941, there were approximately 23,000 persons of Japanese ancestry in Canada, about 22,000 of them in British Columbia.
- Most Japanese Canadians worked in fishing, lumbering, farming or small businesses. "Orientals" did not have the right to vote or to work in certain professions, such as law or pharmacy.
- The attack on Pearl Harbour in December 1941, and the subsequent attack on Hong Kong brought Canada into the war against Japan and resulted in open antagonism against Japanese Canadians.
- On December 7, 1941, Japanese nationals were required to register with the RCMP. On December 16, 1941, the registration of all persons of Japanese race in Canada was required, regardless of citizenship.
- As of December 16, 1941, operation of vessels by Japanese Canadians in west coast waters was not allowed, and as of January 13, 1942, no person of Japanese descent was allowed to serve on west coast fishing vessels or hold fishing licences.
- An amendment to the Defence of Canada regulations required every person of the Japanese race to leave the "protected area"-- a 100-mile wide strip of Canada's west coast.
- Evacuation of the protected area began on February 24, 1942, supervised by the British Columbia Security Commission which eventually evacuated 21,079 people.
- Of approximately 22,000 persons affected by the government's actions of relocation, internment, property seizure, and/or deportation/repatriation, over 17,000 were Canadian citizens.
- Proceeds from the sale of property were used to pay for the internment of Japanese Canadians.
- Following the war, Orders-in-Council for deportation/repatriation of people of Japanese ancestry in Canada were passed on December 17, 1945.
- 3,964 persons of Japanese ancestry were deported/repatriated: 1,989 Canadian-born, 636 naturalized Canadians and 1,339 Japanese before the Order was repealed on January 24, 1947.
- No Japanese Canadians were allowed to buy back their property.
- Justice Henry Bird was appointed on July 18, 1947 to examine cases where Japanese Canadian property was sold for less than market value or was lost, stolen or destroyed while in the hands of the Custodian of Enemy Property.
- Full rights of citizenship were denied Japanese Canadians until March 31, 1949.
- During the war years, people of Japanese origin were regarded as possible threats to Canada's domestic security. Their actions were monitored; their rights suspended. Yet no hearings or trials were ever held and no charges of treason were ever laid.
- In 1984, a special Parliamentary Committee Report *Equality Now!* recommended that the Parliament of Canada should officially acknowledge the mistreatment accorded to the Japanese in Canada during and after World War II and the Government of Canada should undertake negotiations to redress these wrongs.
- During the 1984 election campaign, Opposition Leader Brian Mulroney pledged to resolve the issue of Japanese Canadians redress if elected.
- In May 1986, the National Association of Japanese Canadians submitted its redress proposal to the federal government.
- In September 1988, the federal government announced the terms of the agreement resolving the issue of Japanese Canadian redress.

— Adapted from a paper provided by Multiculturalism and Citizenship Canada



Pull out  
for more information

direction, design,  
animation

**Michael Fukushima**

told by

**Minoru Fukushima**

animation assistance,  
colour rendering

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**Colette Brière**

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**Jacques Avoine**

**Ray Dumas**

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producer

**Bill Pettigrew**

executive producers

**Barrie Angus McLean**

**Douglas MacDonald**

Produced by the National  
Film Board of Canada  
with the participation of  
the Japanese Canadian  
Redress Secretariat and  
Multiculturalism and  
Citizenship Canada

Distributed by National  
Film Board of Canada

Colour

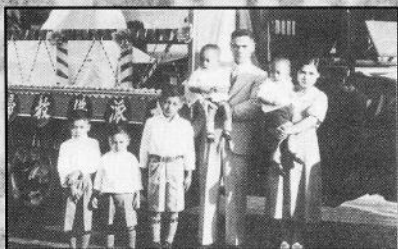
18 minutes 53 seconds

Order numbers:

C 0192 095 (Film)

C 0192 095 (Video)

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Board of Canada  
P.O. Box 6100, Station A  
Montreal, Quebec  
H3C 3H5



1937—The Fukushima family poses proudly with their brand-new delivery truck.

Born in Toronto in 1961, director Michael Fukushima was an itinerant army brat for his first dozen and a half years. A brief foray as an engineering student gave way to the animation program at Sheridan College in Ontario, where he produced his first film, *Tako (Kite)*, in 1985.

*Tako*, having won several awards and honours, attracted the attention of producers at the National Film Board's Montreal Animation Studio. Since 1985, Fukushima has directed several animation films, but *Minoru: Memory of Exile* is his first film for the NFB. He currently calls Montreal home, adding it to the dozen or more cities and towns he has called home in his life.

## A Workshop Program in Anti-Racist Education

**Activity:** Group processing of *Minoru* and examination of various manifestations of racism: systemic discrimination, exclusion, prejudice and stereotyping.

**Objective:** To increase awareness of the historical roots of racism in Canada. To explore differing ways in which racism is manifested: systemic discrimination, exclusion, prejudice and stereotyping.

**Method:** Ask for any feelings/reactions to the film. Encourage participants to think about what the experience of forced relocation and concentration camps must have been like for young Canadians of Japanese descent after being uprooted from homes, schools, friends, communities.

Draw out various aspects of the experience discussed in the movie and write them on a flip chart. These include:

- the forced removal of a whole group of Canadians from homes, schools, businesses and farms because of their race (exclusion),
- the denial of the vote to Canadians of Japanese descent, denial of employment opportunities in various occupations, restriction of Japanese immigration to Canada, and other forms of discrimination experienced by Japanese Canadians prior to World War II (systemic discrimination),
- pre-judging all Japanese Canadians as threats to Canada's security (prejudice),
- seeing every person of Japanese descent and indeed every Asian person as part of a "yellow peril" that threatened white Canadian culture and society. Chinese Canadians took to wearing badges proclaiming that they were not Japanese (stereotyping).



Minoru Fukushima was born in Vancouver in 1932, the third son in a family of six children. His parents immigrated to Canada in the early 1920's, establishing a small confectionary and grocery store in the Little Tokyo area of Vancouver. In 1946, after the war and after their internment in New Denver, in the Kootenay Mountains of British Columbia, his family was deported to Japan. First arriving in Fukui, they eventually settled in Kobe, near Osaka. In 1950, he learned about Canadian Army efforts to recruit expatriate Japanese Canadians for the Korean War. He enlisted, and at the end of the conflict in 1953, returned with his unit to Canada, a place he hadn't seen since his deportation in 1946. In fact, only he and his brother Shig ever returned to Canada. He remained in the Armed Forces for thirty years, and has retired with his wife to British Columbia's Lake Okanagan area.

## Discussion Questions

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The treatment of Japanese Canadians during WWII was not an aberration, but reflected a long history of exclusion, discrimination, prejudice and stereotyping of ethnic groups, especially Asians, by white Canadians. Discuss.

Canada was also at war with Germany and Italy and there were fears of a German invasion or infiltration on the East Coast, yet not all German and Italian Canadians were forcibly relocated, although some people in each group who were thought to be empathetic to Germany and Italy were incarcerated. The treatment of Japanese Canadians as a racial group of Asians was quite different from that accorded whites of German and Italian descent. Discuss.

Racial discrimination involves more than just some individuals not liking individuals from another racial group, but involves the power of one racial group to impose its interest, its will and its prejudice on another racial group. How was that power of white Canadian society (control of government, control of military, control of the press, control of economic institutions) evident in the film?

— Prepared with the assistance of Terry Watada,  
teacher, writer and community worker

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Sunahara, Ann G. *The Politics of Racism: The Uprooting of Japanese Canadians During the Second World War*. Toronto: James Lorimer & Company, 1981.

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**Minoru: Memory of Exile** is the story of the Fukushima family, as seen through the eyes of nine-year-old Minoru Fukushima. Their history is traced from 1941 to 1953, years that saw Japanese Canadians become victims of a racist policy of the government of war-time Prime Minister Mackenzie King. Following the declaration of war against Japan, King's government launched the dispossession, forced relocation and internment of some 22,000 Canadians of Japanese origin, most of whom lived in British Columbia.

In the eyes of the authorities, Canadian Japanese were possible threats to Canada's domestic security. It is now clear that no real threat existed, but the Allied propagandists had done their job remarkably well: most Canadians supported Mackenzie King's policies. Mounting tension had been demonstrated in the months preceding the attack on Pearl Harbour over the issue of Japanese and Chinese-Canadian enlistment in the armed forces. British Columbian politicians had put in motion a very strong campaign to prevent enlistment of men of Japanese ancestry. Fingerprinting, special registration, and even deportation, had been campaigned for, and the possibility of hostilities in the Pacific had been used as justification for these demands. Against this background, racism far exceeded military necessity in attempting to justify subsequent events.

The suspension of civil rights for Japanese nationals and Japanese Canadians left deep scars on Canada's human rights record. More than 40 years would pass before the Canadian government acknowledged the wrong done to its own citizens. In 1984, a special Parliamentary Committee Report recommended a formal acknowledgement. On September 22, 1988, in Order-in-Council, in an historic agreement with the Japanese Canadian community, the government passed legislation to pay symbolic compensation to the survivors and their community.

*My father came home and rebuilt his life. In the process,  
many things were left, best forgotten and unspoken.  
Those silences are a large part of my identity. My other heritage.  
But my Canadian-ness is complete,  
totally natural, immutable. My father affirmed his  
in the face of hatred and oppression....I am a Canadian  
because he struggled to remain a Canadian.*

— Michael Fukushima



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*In the fall of 1987, at the age of 26,  
I asked my father, Minoru Fukushima,  
for the first time about his childhood.*

*This is his story...*

— Michael Fukushima

December 7, 1941. The day that forever changed the Japanese community in Canada was barely noticed by nine-year-old Minoru Fukushima. But the bombing of the American naval base at Pearl Harbour by a nation he knew only by name would thrust the youngster into a world of racism so malevolent he would be forced to leave Canada, the land of his birth. Like thousands of other Japanese Canadians, Minoru and his family were branded as enemies of Canada, forced from their home, dispatched to internment camps in the interior of British Columbia, and finally deported to Japan.

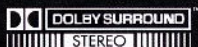
Directed by Michael Fukushima, Minoru's son, the film artfully combines classical animation with archival material. The memories of the father are interspersed with the voice of the son, weaving a tale of suffering and survival, of a birthright lost and recovered.



A National Film Board of Canada production  
with the participation of the Japanese Canadian Redress Secretariat  
and Multiculturalism and Citizenship Canada.

Director: Michael Fukushima  
Producer: Bill Pettigrew

Order number: C 9192 095  
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Closed captioned for the deaf and hard of hearing.  
A decoder is required.



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