

# Could That Ever Happen in Alberta?

Using Personal Stories to Study the Moral and Ethical Issue of Internment in Alberta

## Introduction

Students need to recognize how individuals, groups and governments interact and bring about change, recognize and respect the democratic rights of all citizens in Canada, and recognize the influence of historical events and legislation on democratic decision-making in our country. How can we critically analyze a time in Canadian history where the rights of citizens were taken away for the good of the nation? What was the internment of enemy aliens? What was done to them? How did they react? Did the government do the right thing? Will we ever face this issue again in the future?

## Project Explanation

In this project, students will develop skills of critical and creative thinking as they analyze a significant historical event from different perspectives. A major factor in the development of Alberta and Canada was the immigration of people from many different regions of the world. Students will research and discuss the internment of people from certain nationalities during World War I and II. Students will analyze the pros and cons of the issue, then participating in critical group discussion about internment. Finally, they will write about their opinions and feelings on the issue in a format of their choice.

## Materials and Resources Needed

- [Mavericks: An Incorrigible History of Alberta](#)
- Glenbow Library and Archives Digital Collection  
<https://digitalcollections.ucalgary.ca/asset-management/2R340826N9XM?WS=PackagePres&Flat=1&FR=1&W=947&H=499>
- Google Images  
<https://www.google.ca/imghp?hl=en&tab=ri&authuser=0&ogbl>
- Canadian Heritage Minute: Vancouver Asahi  
<https://www.historicacanada.ca/content/heritage-minutes/vancouver-asahi>
- Japanese Canadian Internment: Prisoners in their own Country  
<https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/japanese-internment-banished-and-beyond-tears-feature>
- CBC Archives: Relocation to Redress: The Internment of Japanese Canadians  
<https://www.cbc.ca/archives/topic/relocation-to-redress-the-internment-of-the-japanese-canadians>

- Internment of Ukrainians in Canada 1914 - 1920  
<http://www.infoukes.com/history/internment/>
- World War II and Italian Internment in Alberta  
[http://wayback.archive-it.org/2217/20101215220931/http://www.albertasource.ca/abitalian/lifeways/excerpt\\_carbone\\_internment.html](http://wayback.archive-it.org/2217/20101215220931/http://www.albertasource.ca/abitalian/lifeways/excerpt_carbone_internment.html)

## Procedures

Students will examine the issue of racism and prejudice through a study and discussion of the internments during the First and Second World Wars. They will research the history of internment in Alberta, discuss the pros and cons surrounding the issue, and write about their own personal opinion as to what should have happened during these times.

Begin by introducing the terms “prejudice” and “racism,” asking the students to share thoughts and ideas that they have when they hear the words. Explain that they will be looking at some Canadian historical situations and assessing whether the actions taken were justified or racist. Define the concept of the “internment of enemy aliens” and that it was used by both the U.S. and Canadian Governments during the First and Second World Wars on people of German, Ukrainian, Italian and Japanese descent, members of communist or fascist organizations, and even members of religious groups like the Jehovah’s Witnesses.

Using the “War and the Homefront” section of the *Mavericks: An Incorrigible History of Alberta* site, as well as the other Internet resources above, students will research about the internment of enemy nationals during the First and Second World Wars. How did the people deal with prejudice and life in the camps? What was life like living in an internment camp? What was done to people who were interned? What kinds of prejudice did they have to deal with at the time?

On their own, students will now create a chart where they list the benefits and challenges of the Canadian Government’s decision to use internment on its own citizens. Then students may share their ideas with the class during a critical discussion about the ethical issues of the use of internment during the World Wars.

### Questions such as the following may be discussed:

- Why did Canada have internment camps during the Second World War?
- Did Canada have the right to imprison innocent immigrants during the Second World War?
- How should the situation have been handled by Canada?
- What are the alternatives to internment?
- How would you feel living in these people’s place?

- Should internees or their families receive compensation from the Federal Government?
- What about if we enter into war now? Could internment still be justified?

Have the students write a journal entry about the issue of internment. Somehow, they should answer how they feel about the question “Was the internment of possible enemies during the First and Second World Wars a correct and justified government action or was it a racist act against our fellow Canadians?” They may write their response as a narrative, a personal reflection, an essay, or even as a poem.

### **Assessment and Evaluation**

- In groups or as a class, students may conference and debrief each other after they have presented their projects. Students should be encouraged to share their personal reflections about how it felt to speak in front of their audience.
- Students may use their rubric as a guide for writing a self-assessment of their project work. They will determine their level for each of the categories and use the criteria specified in their rubric to justify them.
- Students should use their journal to demonstrate their journey through the problem solving process. This will allow the teacher to evaluate whether they looked at all content and possibilities, their brainstorming, the pros and cons they examined for their solution, and why they settled on the solution they did.

### **Ideas to Enrich this Project**

- The examination of this issue could be turned into a formal debate where students take one side of the issue and attempt to persuade others to agree with them.
- Photographs from the [Glenbow Library and Archives Digital Collection](#) as well as [Google Images](#) may be used to by students to gain an idea of what an internment camps looked like in Canada and how people who were interned lived everyday life.