

## British Columbia School for the Deaf

Like other Canadian schools for deaf students, the British Columbia School went through drastic changes during the Second World War. Enrolment decreased as many of the older deaf boys left school to take jobs vacated by hearing men eligible for military service. Pearl Harbor was attacked by Japan on December 7, 1941; two months later, the Canadian government ordered that all persons of Japanese descent be removed from the coastal regions of British Columbia. Citing "security reasons," the government sent these people to internment camps in the interior of the province for the duration of the war. The deaf children of Japanese descent who attended the British Columbia School were not exempt from this wartime measure; they were removed from the school and sent to the camps as well.[77] The remaining students dug trenches around the main school building in preparation for a possible Japanese invasion. They also learned how to put on gas masks, practiced air-raid drills, participated in black-outs, and received instruction in handling small incendiary bombs.[78]

Due to the school's close proximity to the Royal Canadian Air Force Station on Jericho Beach and the threat of Japanese bombs in early 1942, it seemed prudent to move to a safer location. The provincial Department of Education found an unoccupied site at the Borstal Institution (later known as New Haven Borstal Home for Boys) on Southeast Marine Drive in Burnaby, some 20 kilometres away. That summer, carpenters and painters quickly renovated the building in time to move the equipment in and be ready for occupancy in September. The industrial arts classes were discontinued due to lack of space in the new location. The rationing of gasoline during that time made it difficult for some day students to get transportation to and from the Burnaby site, so a temporary classroom for 10 of them was set up in Vancouver's Lord Tennyson School at 10th Avenue and Cypress Street. In the spring of 1945, the first program for deaf preschoolers was opened by the British Columbia School. Nine deaf children and their parents attended this day-nursery when it opened on April 18th.

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77 Years later, the Canadian government apologized to all those interred in the camps (including the deaf detainees) and gave each one a tax-exempt \$21,000 cheque under the 1988 Japanese Canadian Redress Agreement.

78 "Instructions Re Handling Small Incendiary Bombs," *The Totem Pole* 7 (no. 3) (Feb. 1942): 1.