



October 5, 2012

To: Vancouver Senate

From: Tributes Committee

Re: Report on Honorary Degree Ceremony for Japanese Canadian Students  
(information)<sup>1</sup>

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As you are aware, in November 2011, the UBC Senate unanimously approved three measures to recognize and understand what happened to Japanese Canadian UBC students in 1942, when, under a provincial internment policy, they were uprooted and exiled from the B.C. coast, and thereby many were prevented from completing their studies. These measures include recognizing the students with a new Honorary Degree of “*Honoris Causa Inter Silvas Academi Restituere Iustitiam*”, abbreviated to D.hc and meaning “*to restore justice among the groves of the academy*”, preserving and bringing to life the historical record of that time, and developing initiatives to educate future students about this period in history.

During spring congregation, the University paid tribute to these UBC students with a ceremony on May 30, 2012 at the Chan Centre for the Performing Arts. The feeling amongst those in attendance, including upward of 43 faculty members and 33 members of the Chancellor’s Party, was that this was one of the University’s most moving and profound ceremonies. Students and their families came to UBC from all over Canada and the U.S., and as far as Japan, to participate in this historic event. Through interviews with the media and the ceremony itself, there was an overwhelming sense of joy and excitement as they were formally welcomed as UBC alumni.

The University conferred Honorary Degrees on 61 students whose studies at UBC were abruptly terminated due to the internment of early 1942, and who were unable to complete their degree programs. The regalia colours for the honorees’ hoods were chosen especially for this event. An additional 15 former students, who were able to complete their degrees in 1942 despite the internment, had their original degrees re-conferred.

At the ceremony, Elder Larry Grant welcomed the congregation on behalf of the Musqueam people. In addition to the conferral of the Honorary Degrees and the re-

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<sup>1</sup> The majority of the information in this report comes from UBC’s “Japanese Canadian Student Tribute” website (<http://japanese-canadian-student-tribute.ubc.ca/>). Please visit the website for more detail.



conferral of degrees, the program included a screening of “Welcome Home: A Tribute to the Japanese Canadian Students of 1942”, and an address by special guest speaker Mr. Arthur Miki, an active leader in the Japanese Canadian community and a recipient of the Order of Canada. An extract from Act 2 of *Shadow Catch*, a libretto strongly influenced by Noh theatre, one of the earliest and still-living forms of Japanese classical theatre, and a musical performance entitled “Songs from the ‘40s” were also performed. Attendees, who included a number of UBC alumni and members of the Japanese Canadian community, were invited to a reception following the ceremony. The event afforded UBC a wonderful opportunity not only to redress a historical injustice, but also to foster new and stronger bonds with these students, their families, and the Japanese Canadian community as a whole.

In addition to the May ceremony, other measures are being taken to mark this period in UBC’s history. In March, the University held a symposium entitled *Addressing injustice: UBC’s Response to the internment of Japanese Canadian Students*. The symposium sought to address UBC’s responsibility in relation to the internment of Japanese Canadian students, and to examine related ethical issues that still resonate today. As well, the Library undertook a project to collect and archive stories from individual students, in order to document how their lives were forever altered. The Library was involved in recording the students’ oral histories, which will be added to the holdings at University Archives. The Library will also digitize a national Japanese Canadian newspaper from the time.

Finally, UBC’s Faculty of Arts will soon be launching an interdisciplinary Asian Canadian Studies program. Donations to the newly-created 1942 Japanese Canadian UBC Students Fund will be used to support the community-based research of the Asian Canadian Studies program, as part of UBC’s commitment to educating future students about the injustices of the Second World War. Courses will explore the importance of Japanese Canadians and other Asian Canadians in this country’s history and highlight their contributions, and will examine the role played by anti-Asian racism in producing events such as the Japanese Canadian internment. Once details for the proposed program have been settled, the appropriate Committees will present them to the UBC Senate for final approval.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Sally Thorne, Chair  
Senate Tributes Committee