



# ARCHAEOLOGY OF A JAPANESE CAMP IN WESTERN CANADA

[June 28, 2012](#) [Bob Muckle](#) [Community Archaeology](#), [Day of Archaeology](#), [Day of Archaeology 2012](#), [Education](#), [Excavation](#), [FindsAnthropology](#), [Archaeology,Argentina](#), [Canada](#), [Japanese camp](#), [North America](#), [Vancouver](#), [zimbabwe](#)

One week as passed since the seven week fieldwork portion of an archaeology project I direct has passed, and for at least part of the day I am trying to make sense of it, and put the highlights into a report for the principal stakeholders. The fieldwork focussed on an early 20th century Japanese camp in the forests of western Canada, and the work was undertaken primarily by those enrolled in a university field school. Those interested in the project may want to take a look at a [blog](#) one of the students maintained. During the course

of the field school, the blog had more than 3,000 hits from 20 countries, ranging alphabetically from Argentina to Zimbabwe. The blog includes daily posts, with multiple photos each day and several video clips.

The site is unique, perhaps the only of its kind in North America, with a bathhouse, gardens, considerable evidence of women, and at least several cabins (rather than a typical bunkhouse and central mess hall). The peak period of occupation was clearly as a logging camp for a few years around 1920 and was probably exclusively Japanese. The focus of the 2012 excavations was to get a good idea about the camp layout, with a view to making it an interpretive stop along a nearby trailway, and to test the hypothesis that after its initial use as a logging camp a small group of Japanese continued to secretly occupy the camp until the early 1940s.

The report I am writing includes a section on the primary objectives of the project, which include training university students in field archaeology, documenting heritage resources in this heavily-forested area, making scholarly contributions to the archaeology of logging camps and Asian-American sites, and public education about archaeology and local history.



*Now a heavily forested area near Vancouver, Canada, several decades ago this was a Japanese camp, with several cabins, gardens, and a bathhouse.*

In order to write the report, I have been reviewing the artifact catalog, about 600 pages of field notes, and student reports which include maps and analytical reports. My tentative interpretation is that there were at least several cabins located along two wooden plank roads, the site was unique insofar as it was laid out with many typical Japanese features, and that it probably did continue to be occupied secretly by Japanese from the mid 1920s to the early 1940s. I only have circumstantial evidence so far though. I hope to find evidence of a post 1920s occupation in the several hundred artifacts collected.