

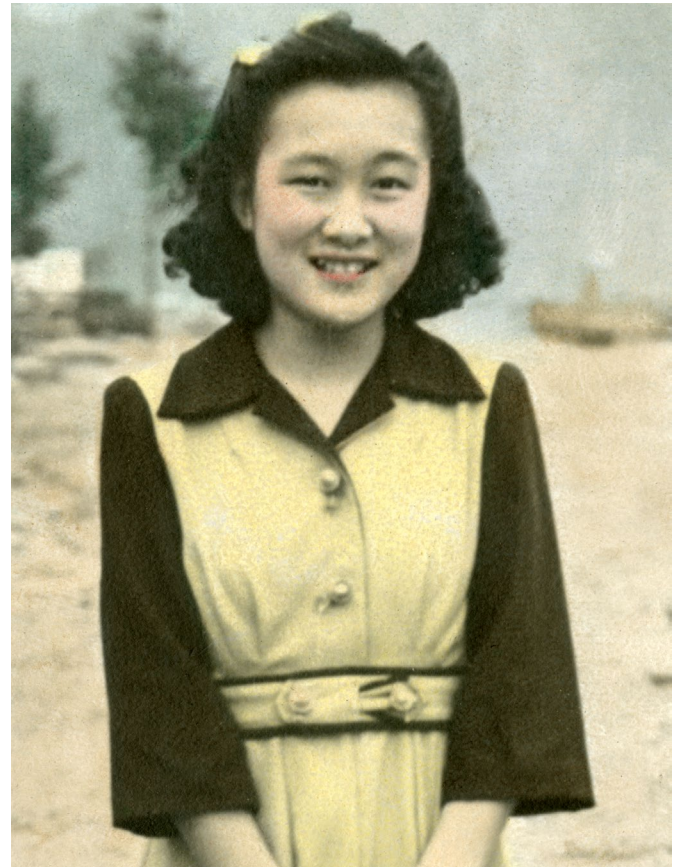


**SUPPLY
LINE**

Michiko Ishii Ayukawa

Japanese Canadian Student

Only 12 when she was forced to leave her home during the war, Michiko and her family had to rebuild their lives from scratch.



Snapshot of Michiko “Midge” Ishii in the Lemon Creek internment camp as a girl.
George Metcalf Archival Collection
Canadian War Museum 20150279-001_43

Early Years

Michiko Ishii was born in June, 1930, in Vancouver, British Columbia. Life with her parents and three brothers was thrown into

chaos in 1942, when the family was forcibly removed from their home and sent to a relocation camp.

Life in the Lemon Creek Camp

In 1942, Michiko's father Kenji and oldest brother Hideo were sent to a work camp at Lemon Creek in the British Columbia interior. In September that same year, 12-year old Michiko, her mother Misayo, and her two youngest brothers Yoshio and Kazuo, were given 24 hours to pack what they could carry. They, too, were being forcibly removed from their home.

She and her family were caught up in what is often called Japanese Canadian internment. Other terms are also used. They include uprooting, forced relocation, and incarceration.

The Ishii family was reunited in Lemon Creek. The ramshackle community in the Slocan Valley was built specifically to house Japanese Canadians.

At first, Michiko's family lived in a tent. Later, they moved to an uninsulated wooden shack. Conditions were difficult, but Michiko later recalled that she was "young enough to think

that everything was an adventure. I often shudder when I think of how my mother must have reacted. But she never showed it."

Michiko's photo album from those years is now in the collection of the Canadian War Museum. It shows Michiko and other young people trying to live as normal a life as possible at Lemon Creek, under difficult circumstances.

The Ishii family lived at Lemon Creek until 1946. Although the war was over, relocated Japanese Canadians were not allowed to return to their homes on the West Coast. They could either go to Japan (where many had never been) or to Eastern Canada. The Ishiis chose to head east, living for a time in an abandoned prisoner-of-war camp in Neys, Ontario.

The Ishiis rebuilt their lives in Hamilton, Ontario, where the Japanese Canadian community was expanding. Michiko, still only 16, arrived in time to begin Grade 12.

Building a Life after the War

After high school, Michiko attended McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario, earning undergraduate and graduate degrees in Chemistry. In 1955, she married Kaoru (Karl) Ayukawa who had also been interned with his family during the war.

The couple moved to Ottawa, Ontario, where Michiko took a job as a research scientist with

the National Research Council. She later taught Chemistry at Carleton University, and raised five children.

In 1997, at the age of 67, she obtained a PhD in History, specializing in the experiences of Japanese Canadian women. She died in 2013, in Victoria, British Columbia.