

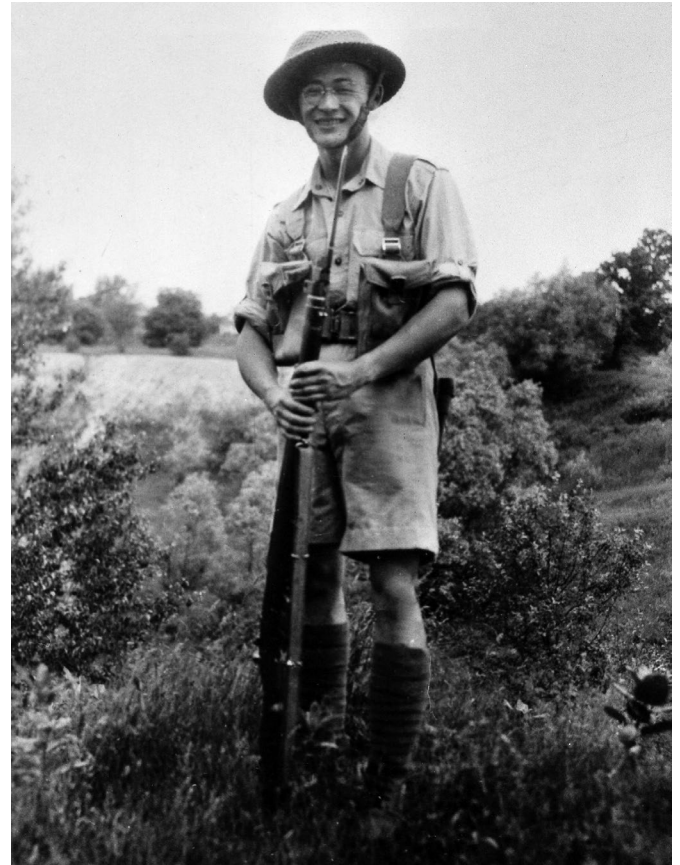


**SUPPLY  
LINE**

# Thomas Kunito “Tommy” Shoyama

## Japanese Canadian Journalist and Canadian Army

Although interned as Japanese Canadian detainee, Tommy had skills needed for military intelligence, and was eventually allowed to enlist.



Thomas Shoyama at basic training camp in 1945.  
George Metcalf Archival Collection  
Canadian War Museum 19830626-001\_61

### Early Years

Tommy was born in Kamloops, British Columbia, on September 24, 1916. The son of a baker and retailer, he completed Bachelor's degrees in both Economics and Commerce at the University of British Columbia.

Although he hoped to become an accountant, racial prejudice prevented him from finding that type of work in British Columbia during the 1930s. Instead, he became the reporter and editor of a small Japanese Canadian newspaper called *The New Canadian*.

## Military Service Despite Restrictions

In 1942, Tommy's life was upended. He and thousands of other Japanese Canadians were removed from their homes along the Pacific Coast, and relocated inland to camps and **internment** facilities. This was what is often referred to as Japanese Canadian internment. Other terms are also used. They include uprooting, forced relocation, and incarceration.

Tommy was interned in the remote mining town of Kaslo, British Columbia, where he continued to publish *The New Canadian*. Through the paper, Tommy became an important voice for the Japanese-Canadian community in wartime.

As the war against Japan progressed, the Allies began to look for Japanese-speaking

soldiers to assist with intelligence, translation and interpretation. Under pressure from Britain and Australia, in 1945 the Canadian government agreed to allow a limited number of Japanese Canadians to enlist in the army for this purpose. Tommy Shoyama, who had unsuccessfully tried to enlist in the Air Force before he was interned, joined the Canadian Army's Intelligence Corps in 1945. After basic training, he was sent to the S-20 Japanese Language Training School in Vancouver.

He was not sent overseas, as the war ended while he was still in training. Tommy served in the army until 1946.

## Life After the War

After the war, Tommy went to Saskatchewan and took a position with the provincial government as an economist. He worked with Premier Tommy Douglas on the implementation of provincial healthcare.

He later joined the federal civil service, rising to the rank of Deputy Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. He finished his career as Deputy Minister of Finance.

In 1978, he was named an Officer of the Order of Canada. He died in 2006, at the age of 90.

## Vocabulary

### Internment

The imprisonment of people, including enemy nationals, usually without criminal charges, in wartime. It is often used to describe the treatment of Japanese Canadians during the Second World War, even though it is not strictly speaking correct for almost all of them, but other terms are also used. They include uprooting, forced relocation, and incarceration.