

# Internment and Resilience: Researching the Lives of Japanese Canadian High School Graduates

## **WORKSHEET 5.1** What historical yearbooks tell us about society, gender roles, & cultural stereotypes

**What do the words used to describe graduates say about how Canadians viewed people in 1942? We will look at this in terms of gender and race.**

- Graduation write ups were generally complimentary and looked at the good qualities a person would have, ones that were ideal for the time for that person's identity (male, female, Euro-Canadian, Japanese-Canadian).
- Please note that some words have different meanings in today's world. For example, "gay" means "happy" and "dark" means colour of their hair (tall, dark, and handsome was the ideal.) Check with your teachers if you're confused about the meaning of a word in 1940's Canada.
- Look at the below word clouds drawn from yearbook descriptions of graduates from Richmond High's 1942 graduates.

### **Definitions:**

- **Word clouds** are visual organizers that take data and make repeated words larger than other words. We can see patterns by the size of the word; the more that words are mentioned, the larger they are.
- **Stereotypes** are sometimes harmful or racist beliefs that all people belonging to a particular group have the same qualities (for example that teenaged boys are more likely to be shoplifters.)

## Gender analysis (male words versus female words used)



All men's descriptions



All women's descriptions

### Questions:

What are the most popular (larger) words describing the graduating men?

What are the most popular (larger) words for women?

Which gender has the most superficial words?

Which gender is described with active words?

What does this say about the "ideal" male or female of the time?

What does it say about the expected roles of males and females of the time?

## Cultural analysis – Male (European Canadian male words versus Japanese Canadian male words)



European Canadian males



Japanese Canadian males

### Questions:

What are the top (larger) words describing all Euro-Canadian men?

What are the top (larger) words for Japanese-Canadian men?

What culture has the most powerful words?

Which culture has words that are more passive?

What might this say about cultural expectations of the time?

## Cultural analysis – Female (European Canadian female words versus Japanese Canadian female words)



European Canadian females



Japanese Canadian females

### Questions:

What are the top (larger) words describing all Euro-Canadian females?

What are the top words for Japanese-Canadian females?

Which group is seen as more quiet / shy?

How might this fit in with cultural stereotypes, for example of the passive Asian woman?