

Minidoka Relocation Center
Hunt, Idaho

Report of the Meeting of the Committee to Promote the Use of the
English Language and American Customs

January 3, 1944

The meeting was called to order at 1:30 p.m. by Mr. J. T. Light, chairman. Those members present were Chester Mink, relocation officer, Twin Falls; Joseph Beeson, relocation officer, John de Young, community analyst, Norman Braden, statistician, John Bigelow, reports officer and Mr. Light, high school principal.

The 15 recommendations of the meeting on June 5 were read and discussed. One of the main points covered was how to make the Japanese outside the relocation center aware of the efforts being made to promote the use of the English language and American customs. It was decided that the residents of the project should be approached first. Some of the ways to reach the residents are; through the school children by having poster contests; through adult education classes in English for men only; through forums; through the shibai sponsored by the C. A. and through the Irrigator.

It was also planned to carry out an earlier suggestion to print on the back of day passes and attach to leave cards a brief message.

It was suggested that through Mr. Pomeroy the block managers could be encouraged to use the English language more in making announcements and in bulletins. Also the Coop would be approached on the matter of having clerks in the stores speak more English.

A discussion as to who should sponsor these different campaigns was held and it was not decided which would be better, the evacuees themselves or the committee of appointed personnel. The Community council was suggested as one group that could be a sponsor.

MIN IDOKA RELOCATION PROJECT

Hunt, Idaho
June 5, 1943

MEETING OF COMMITTEE TO CONSIDER USE OF JAPANESE LANGUAGE IN TWIN
FALLS AND OTHER MATTERS OF CONDUCT OF EVACUEES OUTSIDE THE RELOCATION
CENTER

Members present; Jerome T. Light, chairman, Hunt High School, principal
John DeYoung, Social Analyst
T. B. Williamson, Leaves Officer
(Chester Mink, Relocation Officer at Twin Falls,
attended a preliminary meeting held on May 31.)
John Bigelow, Reports Officer

In view of the Twin Falls Kiwanis Club's resolution adopted May 27 condemning the speaking of foreign language in Twin Falls streets and stores and from personal observations of staff members, the committee concluded that conspicuous speaking of Japanese, especially by younger people, is damaging public relations in Twin Falls, Jerome, and probably in other communities in which there are Japanese-Americans.

The committee believes that these Japanese-Americans speak Japanese in public for two reasons; (1) Their inability to speak English well; (2) their desire not to be overheard.

The older people speak Japanese because they cannot express themselves adequately in English, and to speak English to someone not knowing English well would be impolite. Their inability to speak English well is due to their being schooled in Japan and to their residence in Japanese-speaking communities on the West Coast. Principally through business contacts, many of the men have picked up a conversational knowledge of English, but the women, as a whole, in their more secluded position do not speak English as well as the men.

When they speak Japanese in order not to be overheard by a person unfamiliar with the Japanese language, the Japanese-American probably does not have a sinister or dishonest motive. It has been noticed in stores in Twin Falls and Jerome that an evacuee, after conversing with the clerk in English will turn to other evacuees and discuss the prospective purchase in Japanese. They wish to cover up their inability to speak English well; they do not want the clerk to hear them discuss the merchandise and price in candid terms, and they want to express themselves clearly to each other, which they would find hard to do in English.

The speaking of Japanese by the younger people, especially by those educated in American schools, would appear inexcusable to the public. Some of this is done by smart elects, who take this

means of showing off. They may not speak entirely in Japanese, but an occasional Japanese word or phrase coupled with their accent when speaking English leads a person nearby to believe that they were speaking entirely in Japanese. An additional factor is that some of the young people are obliged to speak Japanese when conversing with their parents, both in private and in public.

The principal points of irritation seem to be: (1) the speaking of Japanese in the presence of a person who does not understand the language; (2) the loud "jabber" of groups of Japanese-speaking people in stores, cafes, bus depot, on the street, and in other public places; (3) the overbearing attitude of young persons of Japanese ancestry--walking along the streets in large groups, talking in loud voices, being inconsiderate of the public.

It should be noted that the offenders among the younger people are almost all boys. The girls have been observed to be quiet, self-effacing, and generally well-behaved in public.

In the belief that with the proper effort the situation can be alleviated, the committee recommends that a program of education be started immediately to augment the work already being done. The sentiments of the surrounding communities (as exemplified by the Kiwanis Club resolution) should be conveyed to the residents of the center to afford them an opportunity to inaugurate corrective measures of their own accord. Furthermore, their efforts already in this direction are recognized. These recommendations are offered as an outline of an overall program since it is realized that many points covered in the recommendations have been or are being done. This program would be twofold; (1) Informing the Kiwanis Club, other groups, and the public in general of the efforts being made to correct the situation, and also informing them of the necessity for some use of the Japanese language; incidentally continuing our campaign to educate the public to distinguish between Americans of Japanese ancestry and residents of Japan; (2) To acquaint the center residents with the facts of the situation, to secure their cooperation for better conduct when outside the center, especially in discretion in the use of the Japanese language. The program should bring strongly to the attention of the evacuee residents, especially the older people, that the schools, adult education classes, the association with English-speaking Japanese-Americans and other aspects of their present situation give them an opportunity to improve their uses and understanding of the language of this country.

The committee recommends; (1) that both written and personal contacts be made through the Project Director and the Reports Officer with the Kiwanis Club and other groups in the nearby communities to give them facts about the status of the Americans of Japanese ancestry and the efforts being made to improve the conduct of the evacuees when they are outside the center.

(2) that persons of Japanese ancestry living outside the relocation center and in this area be informed of the situation and advised as to proper conduct. (This would apply especially to evacuees now residing in labor camps.)

(3) that the ways and means of carrying this campaign to the center residents include the project newspaper, ministers, priests and religious workers, block managers, schools, adult education forums, shibai, posters, bulletin boards, recreation bulletins, special meetings and other methods.

(4) that the chief of Community Services, the Reports Officer, and the Relocation Officer in Twin Falls contact downtown churches in Twin Falls and try to arrange for a place or places where center residents could rest. The Episcopal church at Shoshone is now providing a room with hot plate, easy chairs, and toilet facilities for the use of evacuees waiting for the train.

(5) that the center residents be informed about places in Twin Falls where they are welcome to rest, such as the homes of religious workers, the city park, etc.

(6) that the chief of Community Services prepare and display in the center posters carrying brief, effective, but not insulting or antagonizing, messages pointing out to the residents the right and wrong things to do in public.

(7) that the Reports Officer with the assistance of the project newspaper staff publish a series of articles, editorials and cartoons both in the English and Japanese sections urging the use of the English language whenever possible and at other times discretion in the use of the Japanese language in public and conduct showing consideration of the public.

(8) that the Reports Officer prepare a simple, direct message urging discretion in the use of the Japanese language, proper conduct, etc., to be printed on the back of the day passes, this to be written both in English and Japanese.

(9) that those leaving the center on indefinite, seasonal work or short-term leave be referred to the Travel Counselor to receive oral advice and written material (already available).

(10) that interest in Adult English language classes be stimulated through school groups, the newspaper, through posters and through personal efforts of block managers and church groups.

(11) that Japanese entertainment, shibai, include some English translations so that center residents will have a better opportunity to learn English words and phrases. Furthermore, that the shibai include skits, preferably in a humorous vein, of incidents of bad

and impolite conduct (such as blocking the sidewalk, leaving the sales clerk out of a conversation, etc.) to illustrate common offenses.

(12) that the residents be encouraged by signs, announcements of block managers, The Irrigator, etc., to speak English in offices, shops and stores in the center. The Chief of Community Services, the Reports Officer and the Business Enterprises' superintendent could cooperate in carrying out this.

(13) that through all the media listed in Paragraph 3 be employed to try to convince the center residents, principally the elderly people, that many of their customs, such as repeated bowing, are out-moded and that since they choose to live in the United States it would be desirable for them to adopt American manners. This would include an attempt to convince them that contrary to the prevailing idea speaking English to an elderly or first generation person would not be impolite.

(14) that the block managers and ministers make it a regular practice to call to the attention of their people matters of conduct and use of the Japanese language.

(15) that this entire program be carried out with good judgment and respect for the customs and habits of the center residents. Complete success is not believed possible, but if conducted properly this campaign should result in a greater degree of Americanization of the center residents, better acceptance of them by the rest of the American public and better relations with the residents of nearby communities.

/s/ Jerome T. Light
Chairman