

## War Memories across Canada Conversation Kit:

# Coast Defence Fort Rodd Hill & Fisgard Lighthouse National Historic Site Victoria, BC



Parcs Canada – Parks Canada

During the Second World War Fort Rodd Hill in Victoria, BC became a significant point of national defence. Built by Britain's Royal Navy in the 1890s, Fort Rodd Hill was updated in the early 1940s to defend the coast against air strikes and torpedo attacks.

After the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor in December 1941, Canada's west coast defence was further heightened. Today, Fort Rodd Hill is a Parks Canada National Historic Site.

### Discussion Questions:

There are buildings, bunkers, and gun batteries at Fort Rodd Hill. Visitors to the site will also see other remnants of history - pieces of structures and equipment used during wartime. Because these are incomplete artifacts their roles may not be initially obvious. Why is it important to preserve such remnants? What can we learn from parts of artifacts such as torpedo nets?

After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, defence measures were increased in and around Victoria. Anti-aircraft guns were placed in public parks, blackouts were enforced and citizens participated in air raid drills. What would it have been like to live in Victoria at that time? How might the changes around the city have altered residents' experience of war?

The Canadian government spent a lot of money and mobilized military personnel to prepare Fort Rodd Hill for an attack that never happened. Did this create unnecessary fear among local residents? Was the level of concern and the high cost warranted?

What are the best ways for a nation to protect itself from international hostilities today? What is the role of diplomacy, international aid, and peacekeeping organizations in maintaining peace in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?

### Activities:

Visit the Fort Rodd Hill National Historic Site or one of the [other sites](#) near your home. Explore the history of the site and learn about its importance to Canada today.

Visit a site in your community where partial artifacts or hidden historic relics can be seen if you look closely. What do they tell you about your local heritage?



Parcs Canada – Parks Canada

## Resources:

### Websites

CFB Esquimalt Naval and Military Museum

<http://www.navalandmilitarymuseum.org/>

Photos and a collection of articles about the defence of the west coast.

FortRoddHill.com

<http://www.fortroddhill.com/>

Maps, photos and historical information about the Fort Rodd Hill site.

Fort Rodd Hill and Fisgard Lighthouse National Historic Sites – Parks Canada

<http://www.pc.gc.ca/eng/lhn-nhs/bc/fortroddhill/index.aspx>

Available in [French](#).

### Videos

Warclouds in the Pacific, directed by Stuart Legg. National Film Board, 1941.

[https://www.nfb.ca/film/warclouds\\_in\\_the\\_pacific/](https://www.nfb.ca/film/warclouds_in_the_pacific/)

A 20-minute documentary focusing on Canadian and American efforts to prepare and protect the west coast.

Yorke Island. (Canada Over the Edge). Campbell River Museum, 2013.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y9S215KJHbs>

During the Second World War Yorke Island was the site of a gun battery and tiny fort.

### Books and articles

Canada's road to the Pacific War: Intelligence, strategy, and the Far East crisis, by Timothy Wilford. UBC Press, 2011.

Coast defence in British Columbia, 1939-1941: attitudes and realities, by T. Murray Hunter. BC Studies (Winter 1975/76)

<http://ojs.library.ubc.ca/index.php/bcstudies/article/viewFile/855/895>

Shoot, shoot, shoot: a history of the Victoria-Esquimalt coast artillery defences, 1878-1956, by Ronald Lovatt. Rodd Hill Friends Society, 1993.

Yorke Island and the uncertain war: defending Canada's western coast during WWII, by Catherine Gilbert. Ptarmigan Press, 2012.

# Canada



Royal Roads  
UNIVERSITY

War Heritage Research Initiative |  
Initiative de recherche du patrimoine de la guerre  
[warheritage.royalroads.ca](http://warheritage.royalroads.ca)