

WHO BROKE THE PROMISE?

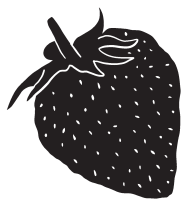
Large-scale injustice requires many hands

People made dispossession happen. Politicians signed it into law.
Senior officials decided the details. Local agents put policy into practice.
Imagine warehouses of furniture, clothing, musical instruments, and books.
The Custodian of Enemy Property, a federal office, controlled everything
Japanese Canadians were forced to leave behind. By 1942, 120 employees worked
in Vancouver's Royal Bank Building, filing documents and cataloguing belongings.
Real estate agents inspected houses. Government workers priced farms.
Auctioneers chanted bids to thousands of eager buyers.

WHO WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR DISPOSSESSION

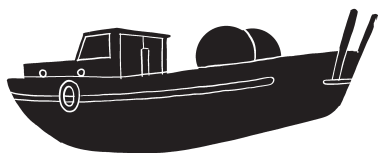
The policy targeted all “persons of the Japanese race.”
Yet, each policy maker had their own motives and ideas.

EXPLORE THIS CHART to learn who was responsible for the policies.



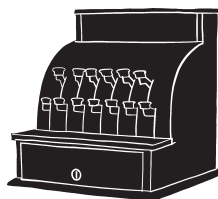
FARMS

Most Japanese Canadian farms were sold to the Director of the Veterans' Land Act in 1944. These 769 farmlands were deliberately underpriced by officials. They wanted the lands to benefit soldiers returning from war.



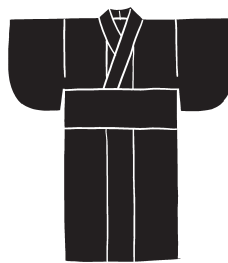
FISHING BOATS

In January 1942, the government formed a committee to encourage fishers to sell or lease their vessels. When some Japanese Canadians refused to sell, the Committee forced them. Years later, government lawyers publicly admitted that the sales were illegal, but buried the issue.



CITY REAL ESTATE

City of Vancouver officials saw an opportunity when the internment began: the historic Japanese Canadian neighbourhood on Powell Street could be demolished and replaced with modern housing. This plan helped to convince the federal government to sell. But the proposed redevelopment never happened.



FAMILY HEIRLOOMS

Some friends and neighbours saved the personal belongings of Japanese Canadians, returning them when they could. Most, however, looted and stole. Rather than stop the looting, the government decided to sell what remained. Between 1943 and 1946, it held 255 auctions and sold over 90,000 belongings.

GOVERNOR GENERAL of CANADA

PRIME MINISTER

WILLIAM LYON MACKENZIE KING

PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE

Assistant Private Secretary

PRIVY COUNCIL

Clerk of the privy council

CABINET

CABINET COMMITTEES

Cabinet Committee on Japanese Questions (Est. 1942),
Cabinet Committee on Repatriation and Relocation (Est. 1945)
Cabinet Committee on Japanese Problems (Est. 1946)

JOIN.....▶

**MINISTER OF JUSTICE
& ATTORNEY GENERAL**

THE MINISTRY OF JUSTICE

In 1942, government lawyers approved the seizure of Japanese Canadian property. Today, the Ministry of Justice continues to restrict access to the files that could explain this decision.

**SECRETARY for
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS**

JOHN ERSKINE

MINISTER of FISHERIES

**JAPANESE FISHING VESSEL
DISPOSAL COMMITTEE**

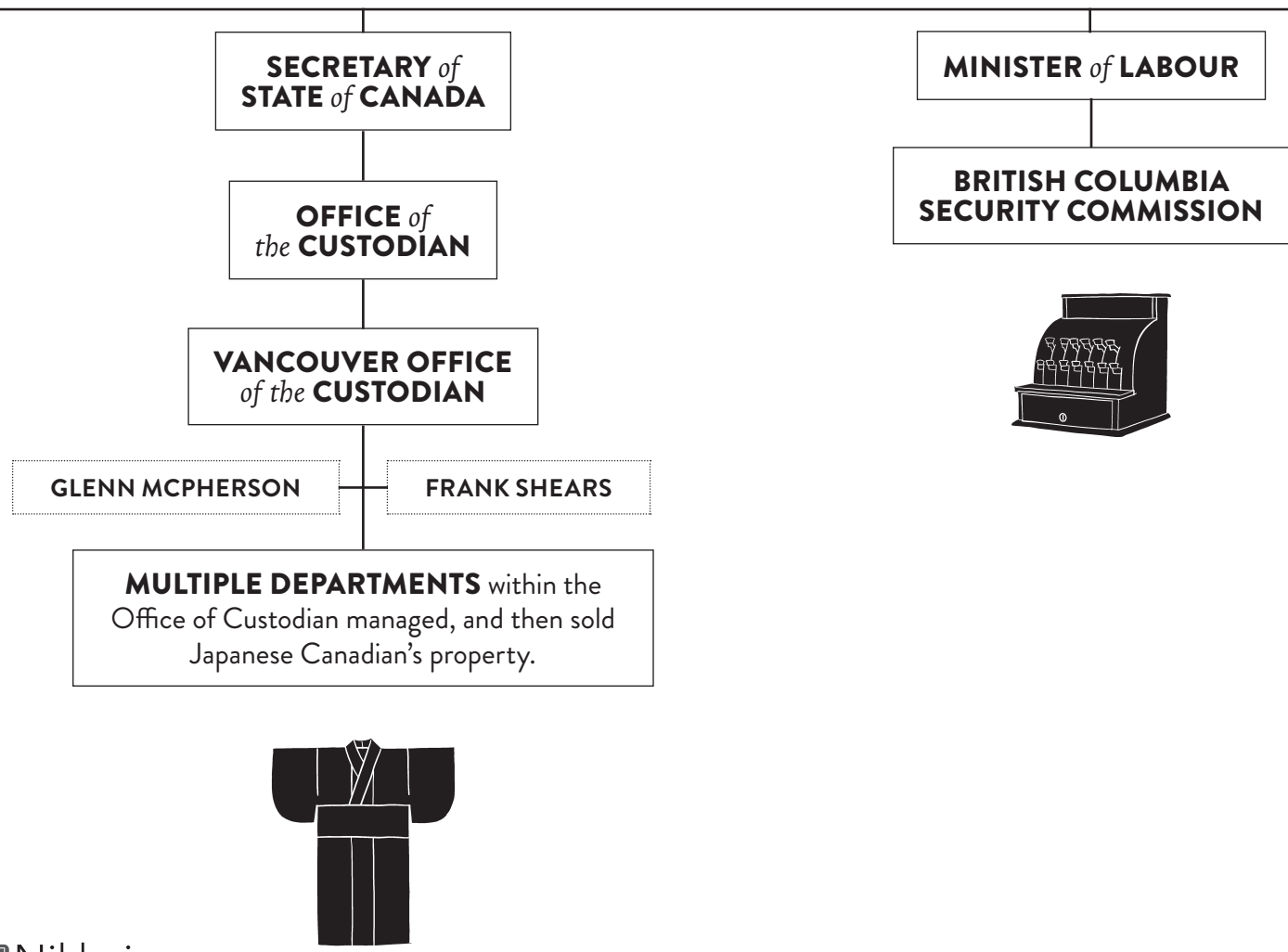
KISHIZO KIMURA



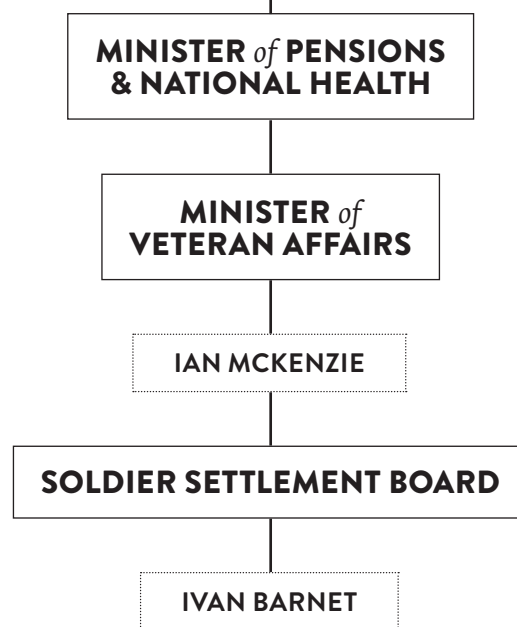
CITY OF VANCOUVER

VANCOUVER CITY PLANNERS





◀.....JOIN





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WILLIAM LYON MACKENZIE KING

PRIME MINISTER

ROLE:

King was the war-time prime minister of Canada. He was responsible for all the cabinet committees that sat under him. King would get memos from cabinet meetings, but it is difficult to say how much of the dispossession he personally oversaw.

“No matter how honourable they might appear to be,” he wrote in 1941, “every one of them ... would be saboteurs and would help Japan when the moment came.”



COURTESY OF EDMUND T. KIMURA / GRACIEUSETÉ DE EDMUND T. KIMURA

KISHIZO KIMURA

JAPANESE FISHING VESSEL DISPOSAL COMMITTEE

ROLE:

Kimura was appointed by the government to represent Japanese Canadians on committees that oversaw the dispossession. He was an established businessman in the fishing industry. The government wanted a token Japanese Canadian who was trusted in the community to encourage Japanese Canadian cooperation with government policies.

Years later, he reflected that, “from the current perspective ... when protests and demonstrations are the trend, there might be some who laugh at ... silence and obedience.”



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JOHN ERSKINE READ **SECRETARY** *for* **EXTERNAL AFFAIRS**

ROLE:

John Erskine Read was a legal Advisor for the Department of External Affairs within King's office. He drafted and reviewed orders-in-council, a type of government leg. He wrote powerful memos to the Prime Minister conveying his outrage about the unjust treatment of Japanese Canadians.

"The taking of the property away from these men has nothing whatever to do with security." He felt that the government was "abandoning completely the principle ... of fairness."



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GLEN MCPHERSON **VANCOUVER OFFICE** *of the* **CUSTODIAN**

ROLE:

Glen McPherson was the head of the Custodian of Enemy Property, the office responsible for protecting Japanese Canadians' property. He was responsible for the direction of the office. Initially created to protect property, ultimately the office sold tens of thousands of belongings without consent. McPherson eventually burned out and Frank Shears became the director.



COURTESY OF LESLIE BARNWELL / GRACIEUSE TÉ DE LESLIE BARNWELL

FRANK SHEARS

VANCOUVER OFFICE *of the* CUSTODIAN

ROLE:

Frank Shears was initially the manager of the Custodian of Enemy Property, and was responsible for administering the forced property sales. He eventually became the director. For over 10 years, it was his job to directly oversee the sale of Japanese Canadian property.

Shears felt he had no choice: his role was “carrying out ... Government policy ... not making or suggesting what the policy should be.”

BC SECURITY COMMISSION

ROLE:

The Commission oversaw the internment. Money from the forced property sales went to accounts the Commission controlled. Japanese Canadians had to use these funds to pay for basic needs. It is important to note that a different department managed the sale of property.

“We are quite within our rights in refusing” provisions in the camps, said one official.

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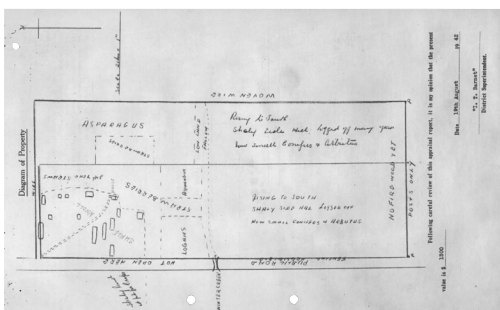
IAN MACKENZIE

MINISTER OF VETERAN AFFAIRS

ROLE:

Ian MacKenzie was an elected BC cabinet minister. He was elected on promises that included calls for Asian exclusion, and had long standing political commitments to Veterans. He argued that Japanese Canadian property should be given to veterans.

“Their country should never have been Canada,” he said, “I do not believe the Japanese are an assimilable race.”



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IVAN BARNET

SOLDIER SETTLEMENT BOARD

ROLE:

Ivan Barnet was a Superintendent for the Soldier Settlement Board. He supported giving Japanese Canadians farmland to returning white veterans. As a low level official, he mapped and appraised Japanese Canadian farms for sale in summer 1942, before there was explicit policy to do so.

“We must maintain the Pacific Coast as a white man’s country,” he said, “and ... educate the white man to realize that he can make a comfortable living” by farming.