



Nikkei Images

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Newsletter of the Japanese Canadian National Museum & Archives Society, Vancouver, British Columbia

Focus on Volunteers



JCNMAS volunteers at the reception table, Open House, Jan. 28, 1996. From left: Dr. Wesley Fujiwara (Board member); his wife, Dr. Misao Yoneyama (Committee member); and Judy Inouye (Board member and Recording Secretary). *Photograph by Ineke Dijks.*

National Volunteer Week (April 21-27, 1996) served as a reminder of the role played by volunteers in almost every facet of Canadian community life. The contributions of volunteers have become essential in such vital areas as fundraising, education, administration, and planning. These diverse contributions are so vital, in fact, that we should not wait to be reminded of them on a once-yearly basis. The efforts of volunteers are to be

celebrated and applauded all year long, and the Japanese Canadian National Museum & Archives Society is pleased to acknowledge its debt.

The JCNMAS was built through the efforts of volunteers, who continue to play central roles on the Society's board of directors and committees, as well as on special projects. Coming from varied educational and occupational backgrounds, they have brought a mosaic of skills and insights to the society.

It is a myth that volunteers are, by definition, "amateurs" with limited qualifications and less competence than professionals. In fact, their tasks require much in terms of experience and skills. We have been even more fortunate in that many of our volunteers have taken the initiative to acquire additional specialized training through workshops, field trips, and individual study. In a real sense, volunteers significantly extend the capabilities of our salaried staff.

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From the editor

Warm greetings again to our readers. The second issue of *Nikkei Images* provides a welcome opportunity to introduce members of the JCNMAS team — a pleasant task that will continue over the next few issues. The list of Founding Members is now more than 75 and continues to grow in what is still our first year as a society. There is still time to become listed as a Founding Member before the construction of our permanent facility at Nikkei Place.

I am pleased with the feedback we have received about the first issue of *Nikkei Images*, and look forward to contributions from as many authors as possible. In addition, we welcome information from readers that helps us to increase our understanding of the photographs that we publish, and the events that are described in these pages and in issues to come. You can become a part of our team by contributing information, even from afar — but if you are not already a member, we especially hope that you will go that extra step. We need your support!

Special thanks are offered to Rick Garvin for his article about the Nass River discovery.

The Japanese Canadian National Museum & Archives Society gratefully acknowledges the support and financial assistance of members, donors, volunteers, the Japanese Canadian Redress Foundation, the National Association of Japanese Canadians, the Japanese Canadian Citizens Association of Greater Vancouver, the British Columbia Community Archives Assistance Program, and the B.C. Heritage Trust.

The Japanese Canadian National Museum & Archives Society is a non-profit society dedicated to the creation and direction of the Japanese Canadian National Museum & Archives. The Society has a board of directors (see page 1) and four working committees. The committee membership is as follows:

- (1) **Advocacy:** Yosh Kariatsumari and Suzi Nitta Petersen (co-chairs), Minnie Hattori, Eric Sokugawa, Mary Seki, Norm Tsuyuki, and Frank Kamiya;
- (2) **Program:** Eric Sokugawa (chair), Frank Kamiya, Lana Panko, Minnie Hattori, Bev Inouye, Naomi Sawada, Judy Inouye, Susan Sirovyak, and Pearl Williams;
- (3) **Human Resources:** Wes Fujiwara and Norm Tsuyuki (co-chairs), Naomi Sawada, Mary Seki, Pearl Williams, Minnie Hattori, David Yamaura, and Frank Kamiya;
- (4) **Finance:** Ray Ota (chair), Norm Tsuyuki, Judy Inouye, Suzi Nitta Petersen, and Frank Kamiya.

The Society has three employees:

Michael C. Wilson, Project Director
Shane A. Foster, Archivist and Archives Program Coordinator
Minnie Hattori, Office Assistant

(from p. 1)

Through volunteers, we receive the message that the public, and especially the Japanese Canadian community, care about and are committed to the museum and archives project. Through them, in return, we have roots in the community and a way to spread our message directly. In all of our activities and events, they have been there — at the Powell Street Festival booth, at the Flea Market, at the Open House, at the Spring Dance, at conferences, and at the Heritage Week display in Richmond.

Society volunteers over the past several months have included not only members of the Japanese Canadian community, but also students from Japan enrolled in colleges and language schools. For example, students from Canadian International College, North Vancouver, come to the Archives on a continuing basis as part of the college's outreach program.

We cherish the volunteers who have so wholeheartedly joined our ranks, and we offer them our sincere thanks. We need more volunteers — not only in the Lower Mainland area of British Columbia, but across Canada — to expand and strengthen these linkages with the community.

Society now has Charitable Status

The JCNMAS is pleased to announce that we have received our charitable status designation from Revenue Canada. This means that donations to the Society are now tax-deductible, and we can issue receipts for that purpose. The status is retroactive to our date of incorporation (June 19, 1995), so we will be issuing new receipts (with our charitable number) for past donations.

We thank Robert Banno and Donald R.M. Bell, of Davis & Company, Vancouver, for their valuable assistance in arranging this status. In particular, their efforts helped to ensure the rapid acceptance of the application.



Board members Ray Ota (Treasurer) and Yosh Kariatsumari with JCNMAS member, Mrs. Kassie Sanmiya Nakamura (London, Ontario), at Open House, Jan. 28, 1996, Vancouver. *Photograph by Minnie Hattori.*

Would You Like to be a Volunteer?

The Japanese Canadian National Museum & Archives Society is looking for enthusiastic volunteers. You can assist in the development of our program and facilities, as we look forward to the construction of our permanent home in the National Nikkei Heritage Centre, in Burnaby. The Museum and Archives will build upon collections of photographs, documents, oral history tapes, and artifacts to produce exhibits, publications, and other projects relating to Japanese Canadian cultural heritage.

As a volunteer, you could help to organize fund-raising activities, undertake archival work, translate documents, catalogue and describe artifacts, assist with office operations, help to plan and set up exhibits, or perform other duties.

Help us to continue toward our target of an important public facility. A time commitment of just a few hours can make a big difference!

For further information, please contact us at (604) 874-8090 in Vancouver.

Grant Received for “Unearthed from the Silence” Exhibit

by Michael C. Wilson,
JCNMAS

Funding of \$19,500 has been awarded by the B.C. Heritage Trust in support of the project, “Unearthed from the Silence,” to interpret Japanese Canadian artifacts excavated at Steveston (Richmond), B.C. The funds have been provided to the JCNMAS and its two partners in the project, the Richmond Museum and the Britannia Heritage Shipyard. Planning is well under way, and work on the project will start this summer.

This project is the outcome of exploratory archaeological excavations that were conducted in 1994 by Deva Heritage Consulting (archaeologists, Sandra Zacharias and Gail Wada) at the request of the City of Richmond. At that time, utility trenches were being excavated at Britannia Heritage Shipyard and it was felt that there was a strong likelihood for the discovery of artifacts. Steveston, and especially the Shipyard area, near the mouth of the South Arm of the Fraser River, was the site of an important Japanese Canadian community from before the turn of the century until Second World War internment.

As reported by Deva, 6583 artifacts were recovered, most of them from a “wet site” environment where even perishable materials were preserved. The majority of the material is of early 20th century origin and relates to the Japanese Canadian community. Included are materials that may have been broken or worn out and discarded (or simply lost) in the normal course of daily life — a wooden bucket, kettle, bottles, ceramic fragments, lamp parts, leather shoes, a doll’s head, gaming pieces, and even a baseball glove. These materials were associated with

structural features of former houses of Japanese Canadian residents, as well as the Tomoto Boatworks. But there are also other materials, such as pieces from a household altar or shrine, that appear to have been buried intentionally at the time of internment.

This collection of materials will provide some of the basis for the interpretive exhibit, which will also feature photographs, maps, and other graphics relating to the development of the community. Although the material itself is from Steveston, the story it tells is for all Japanese Canadians. The discarded or lost materials are physical evidence telling about the establishment and growth of the community in the early 20th century. The intentionally buried artifacts tell of the displacement of these people at the time of internment; but even more, they tell of the expectation that people would return to reclaim their houses and possessions. They tell of the suddenness of departure, and of the fact that so few possessions could be carried to the internment camps. They tell of the postwar disillusionment, for there was no return to former homes, and no return of property. Although the Steveston area today has a Japanese Canadian community, it is not a return to the one that existed before the war. A new community has grown, with its own distinctive geography.

For many years, Japanese Canadian memories and feelings about the past were held close to the heart, in silence. Joy Kogawa has written eloquently about the silence; in *Obasan* she tells how the feelings of people — pain, disillusionment, confusion of identity, anger at betrayal, and so much more — were sublimated for so many years. The Redress movement began to bring these memories into the open, back from the silence. Each recaptured memory brought forth another, and then another.

Old photographs were brought out from safe storage. Stories were told, and recorded. Across Canada efforts are under way to document this information in museums and archives, and the Japanese Canadian National Museum & Archives project is gathering momentum.

The archaeologists have unearthed artifacts from the rich, moist delta soil of Steveston. Water — and fish and boats — once brought life to this vibrant community; water in the soil helped to ensure that its artifacts would not be destroyed. All across Canada, memories, too, are being “unearthed from the silence.” Our project will explore these parallel themes, each a metaphor for the other. There will be a travelling exhibit, a video presentation, and an educational kit. The exhibit will be one of the first to be displayed in the new Japanese Canadian National Museum & Archives, when it opens in the National Nikkei Heritage Centre, at Nikkei Place in Burnaby, B.C.

The grant proposal was the outcome of a series of committee meetings involving the three partner institutions, and was written by Mary Gazetas (City of Richmond), Lana Panko (Richmond Museum), and Michael Wilson (JCNMAS). We thank Wes Fujiwara, Misao Yoneyama Fujiwara, Suzi Nitta Petersen and Mary Seki (JCNMAS), and Paul Schipper and Meg Stanley (Britannia Heritage Shipyard Society) for their contributions as committee members and advisors, and look forward to an exciting time as the project unfolds.

We would be happy to hear from persons who have information relating to the prewar development of the Steveston community, or who have interest in the project. Can you help us?

Japanese Canadian War Memorial Monument Found on B.C. North Coast

by **Richard Garvin,**

Department of Social and Environmental Studies (Anthropology),
University College of the Cariboo,
Kamloops, B.C. V2C 5N3.

In September, 1995, I was engaged in an archaeological overview assessment of the lower Nass River region for the Nisga'a Tribal Council and the British Columbia Ministry of Transportation and Highways. During the course of the investigation, near the modern town of Kincolith, 75 km north of Prince Rupert, B.C., I was directed to an area known as "Fort Point," or "The Old Cemetery." It was common knowledge that the town of Kincolith, near Mill Bay, had used this area as the local cemetery for many years. However, after an initial investigation it became evident that there were several factors which made the Kincolith Cemetery significant and unique, both in terms of local Kincolith history, and with regard to the history of British Columbia in general.

Of particular interest to the Japanese Canadian community was the discovery of a 1.5-metre-high granite obelisk, with engraved Japanese characters. This, in itself, was not surprising. No fewer than eight salmon canneries were located at the mouth of the Nass River from about 1880 to 1950. It was also known that families from Steveston, at the mouth of the Fraser River, would travel up to the Nass River canneries for temporary summer employment. However, a translation of the three engraved faces of the obelisk revealed something quite

unexpected. The translation reads as follows:

West side

"A Monument to the Victims of Drowning and the Brave Soldiers who Died in the War. Nass River."

East side

"Dedicated by the Nass River Branch of the Japanese Association. Erected in Taishō, Year Seven, June."

South side

"Namu Amida Butsu" (a prayer in Buddha's name).

Taishō, Year Seven, would correspond to the year 1918.

The monument, or cenotaph, makes reference to the victims of drowning, and the Nass River is well known for its treacherous winds and tidal currents. The reference to the "Brave Soldiers who Died in the War" could be in regard to World War I but the dedication date, before armistice, suggests that the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905) is also a possibility.

The Nass River Branch of the Japanese Association no longer exists, but their organization and resources in 1918 must have been more than modest in order to permit them to erect such an impressive monument.

In historical terms, the 1918 dedication date of the cenotaph makes this one of only a few standing and intact Japanese Canadian monuments in B.C. that predate World War II. In

addition, this may be only the second Japanese Canadian war memorial monument located in B.C. The other, built shortly after World War I, is located in Stanley Park, Vancouver. It was dedicated on April 9, 1920, and is still the site of annual Remembrance Day observances under the direction of the Japanese Canadian War Memorial Committee of the National Association of Japanese Canadians. These observances honor Japanese Canadians who died in active service during World Wars I and II and the Korean War.

There are also two, or possibly three, Japanese Canadian graves at the Kincolith cemetery; however, the undergrowth was so thick that this could not be conclusively determined during the 1995 archaeological survey. Because of the overall historical significance of the Kincolith Cemetery, I have received funds from the B.C. Heritage Trust to begin a full recording and conservation project at the cemetery during the summer of 1996. The Japanese Canadian cenotaph and graves have been included in the proposed conservation project. It is my hope that this project will bring to light the long-standing contributions, both culturally and economically, made by the Japanese Canadian community along the North Coast of B.C. since the late 19th century.

Dr. Richard Garvin is an archaeologist with extensive experience in western Canada and Belize. He is especially interested in processes of social change and in the mechanisms and impacts of culture contact.

Japanese Canadian Places Project

by Michael C. Wilson,
JCNMAS

At the 1996 National Nikkei Heritage Centre Society annual meeting in Vancouver, Bob Nimi told of the strong tendency for Japanese Canadians to want to return to their place of origin in Canada. As he observed, this is a crucially important factor to be remembered in the planning of senior care facilities. For Japanese Canadian seniors, a return to the place of origin could help to counteract some of the psychological damage of internment and relocation. Added to this is the fact that many people, with age, become more sentimental about places and about memories from times long past. Linkages with the past take on added meaning.

But there is more to the issue of place than age and politics. In Japan, attachment to place has always been a strong cultural motif. This can readily be seen in family names, many of which describe geographical features such as mountains (yama), villages (mura), beaches (hama), or forests (mori). In contrast, English family names just as often signify professions (e.g., Baker or Miller) or one's lineage (e.g., Johnson or Wilson).

Japanese Canadians have resided in Canada for more than a century — enough time for place names of Japanese origin to become “coded” into the Canadian landscape. We are readily aware of some of them: Oyama, for example, is a town in southern B.C., and Togo (a name from the Russo-Japanese War) is in Saskatchewan. In conjunction with the Japanese Canadian centennial, Mt. Manzo Nagano, at the head of Rivers Inlet, B.C., was named in honor of Canada's



Hiroshima Kenjinkai Picnic, Powell Street, Vancouver, ca. 1920. Photograph by Shokichi Akatsuka; JCNMAS 92/20.008.

first documented Japanese immigrant. Recently, Okano Creek, on Saltspring Island, was named in honor of the Okano family. There are street names in various cities and towns. But Richmond's Minoru Park and Minoru Boulevard were actually named after a famous racehorse. How many more places can you name?

While names are being added, others are being replaced, forgotten, or even officially removed. Lion and Don Islands, on the Fraser River in Richmond, B.C., were once Oikawa and Sato Islands. Politically incorrect names like “Japtown #1” and “Japtown #2,” near Cumberland on Vancouver Island, have been eradicated for clear enough reasons. However, the loss of such names also means a possible loss of information about the locations in which Japanese Canadians formerly lived or worked. The new names are unlikely to reflect this heritage. If a “Jap Bay” were to become “Smith Bay,” the linkage would be lost, and we would lose another fragment of Japanese Canadian history. This is not,

of course, to say that such names should be retained. They should be recorded, and it may be possible in some cases for a Japanese Canadian linkage to be made in the new name.

Names can be added to the landscape in many ways. Streets in new subdivisions, new schools, and new parks can be named to commemorate people of historical importance. There are still many unnamed mountains, and the B.C. Geographical Board has an ongoing program to name peaks in honor of members of the Canadian Armed Forces who died in action in the First and Second World Wars.

The Japanese Canadian National Museum & Archives Society invites all readers to submit information about Japanese Canadian place names. Already, society volunteers (starting when it was still the History Preservation Committee of the JCCA) have produced a detailed map of the Powell Street (Japantown, or Nihon Machi) area of Vancouver, naming residents and businesses that were there

Preliminary Powell Street maps were produced by Dan Tokawa and Minnie Hattori. Ray Ota assembled information from interviews and a variety of sources, while Bev Inouye tabulated records from the Vancouver City Archives. A new map was designed by Ray and drawn by Shoji Nishihata. Ray and Yosh Kariatsumari are continuing to collect information so that the map can be updated and improved, and Seishi Matsuno is assisting with translations to and from Kanji.

The latest version of the Powell Street map is available from the JCNMAS for \$15.00 (for members, \$12.75), plus shipping and handling as applicable. The map measures 80 x 110 cm (31 x 43") and is shipped in a mailing tube.

We should strive to record all of the place names in the Japanese Canadian landscape, before names are lost forever. The JCNMAS will gather the information together so that it can be available on a computerized database.

We should also endeavor to create new place names or to bring back old names wherever appropriate and feasible. The effect of internment and relocation was to change the Japanese Canadian landscape, but place names can have a life of their own, standing as reminders about the past for those who would otherwise forget.

266 268 270

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Those Photographs!

It seemed like such a simple idea to supplement Audrey Kobayashi's article (*NI*, vol 1, no. 1) with photographs from our collection. But, as a few readers have pointed out, the identifications can be debated. We will revisit these photos as more information becomes available, but it must be emphasized here that the photos were

chosen by the editor. Audrey is not in any way responsible for errors or omissions in regard to the photographs. For the moment, it seems that the "Lemon Creek" tents were likely at nearby Popoff, and the "prospective brides," if picture brides, would have been already married. More about this next time — we welcome your input because it contributes directly to the better understanding of our archival photograph collection.

Events Calendar

June 15-18. Canadian Museums Association Conference, Robson Square Conference Centre, Vancouver, BC. For details: CMA 1996 Annual Conference, 280 Metcalfe St., Suite 400, Ottawa, ON K2P 1R7. Internet: <http://www.scienceworld.bc.ca/cma.html>

July 12-14. National Association of Japanese Canadians, Annual General Meeting, Vancouver, BC. For details: NAJC, 404 Webb Place, Winnipeg, MB R3B 3J4. ph. (204) 943-2910.

August 3-4. Powell Street Festival, Oppenheimer Park (Powell Street Grounds), Vancouver, B.C. For details: PSF Society, #450 - 1050 Alberni St.,

Vancouver, BC V6E 1A3. ph. (604) 682-4335.

August 23-25. Rendezvous '96, Manitoba JCCA 50th Anniversary Reunion, Winnipeg, MB. For details: MJCCA, 180 McPhillips St., Winnipeg, MB R3E 2J8. ph. (204) 774-5909.

Sept. 14-15. Japanese Canadian National Museum & Archives Society, Annual General Meeting. Details TBA.

If you are planning an event related to the history or culture of Japanese Canadians, or to the development and betterment of museums and archives, please send us the details!

Request for Assistance

We are researching men's, women's, and children's fashions during the pre-war and wartime years, and the hand-sewing of such clothing at this time, particularly in the internment camps. Do you have any items or photographs relating to clothing during this period? Or do you have any information about wartime fashions and the sewing (or mending) of clothing during this time period? We'd love to hear from you!

Please contact us (Susan Sirovyak, Minnie Hattori, Suzi Petersen, and Rosemarie Takeuchi) c/o the JCNMAS office.

Telephone (604) 874-8090

Fax (604) 874-8164

(Left) Reproduction of a small portion of the map of the Powell Street (Japantown) area, Vancouver, 1941, available from the JCNMAS.

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* Victor Shimizu, of Winnipeg, one of our earliest founding members, passed away on March 10, 1996.

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We have also received generous donations-in-kind (of equipment and materials) and will list those donors in our next issue.