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NIKKEI IMAGES



THE CONSULATE OF JAPAN IN VANCOUVER
3351 THE CRESCENT, VANCOUVER, BC, c.1930
NNM 1994.70.11



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THE CONSULATE OF JAPAN IN VANCOUVER

3351 THE CRESCENT
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This summer marks the 125th anniversary of the Japanese Consulate in Vancouver. As it opened in 1889, shortly after the start of official immigration from Japan, it became the first Japanese government mission in all of Canada. With increasing amounts of Japanese immigrants coming to British Columbia, the Consulate was established to be a bridge between the Japanese and local governments in regards to international trade, economics, and culture while also assisting in the well-being of Japanese citizens.

Our cover image shows the Consul and a collection of guests on the steps of his home, the Shaughnessy property that remains the official residence of the Consul General today. The Consul, who is seated at the centre in military dress, hosted a welcoming event for members of a Japanese naval training ship. He was joined by members of the Japanese Canadian community such as Tsutae Sato from the Japanese Language School, Eikichi Kagetsu, Sentaro Uchida, and other prominent business men. This grouping shows the intersections between Japanese diplomacy and Nikkei heritage. While the Consulate was largely focused on international affairs and business, relations with the greater Nikkei community were also important due to the web of interconnections between the Japanese nationals, naturalized Canadians, and Canadian-born Nikkei.

Rachael Nakamura is a summer student at the Nikkei National Museum, courtesy of the Canada Summer Jobs program. She recently graduated from Communications and Cultural Studies at Simon Fraser University, and is now pursuing a post baccalaureate diploma in Art History at UBC.



SUMMER STUDENTS HELP US GET THE JOB DONE!

By Beth Carter

Each summer, the Nikkei National Museum applies for several summer student positions through the federal government. We are pleased to have three fantastic students with us this summer – Brett Hyska is working as a Collections Assistant, Rachael Nakamura is our Programs Assistant, and Emiko Newman is helping with our huge end of summer festival, Nikkei Matsuri.

I think the summer student programs are a win-win situation – for everyone! We love having young, enthusiastic and energetic students working with us over 12 weeks. They are excited to learn about the museum and its programs, and often have tons of great ideas. The museum is also able to offer challenging tasks and diverse activities for the students which will help them with their future career goals. So far, the students have helped to install our current exhibit, assisted with marketing activities, created some fun activities for our annual Manga kids camp, taken some portable exhibits to downtown Vancouver and to the Steveston Salmon Days, offered walking tours of Powell Street and Hastings Park, and helped us to research and catalogue several hundred photographs and archival records. They also help with day to day tasks, such as helping with research requests, or to guide visitors in the gallery and gift shop.

As a small non-governmental and non-profit arts organization, we are constantly under pressure to accomplish a great deal with our small staff. Summer students help us to get caught up on the backlog, and give staff a bit of much-needed breathing space. And they are a lot of fun! Thank you to Canada Summer Jobs and the Young Canada Works program of Canadian Heritage. We really appreciate this funding opportunity!



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PARALLEL PATHS: JAPANESE DIPLOMACY AND NIKKEI HERITAGE

By Seiji Okada, Consul General of Japan in Vancouver

Introduction

This year, 2014, is a landmark year as the Consulate General of Japan in Vancouver celebrates the 125th anniversary of its opening in 1889, as Japan's first government office in Canada. For this occasion, I've decided to review the history of the Consulate of Japan in Vancouver and alongside that, the history of Japanese Canadians. I believe that the two histories are linked and to explore that connection, I've looked into the Diplomatic Archives and the official historical documents and cables that are preserved there in order to uncover the work and activities of the consulate.

At the same time, I have also approached local Japanese Canadians, who are knowledgeable about their history and community, and also interested in this project. I asked them to work with me as a core group and organizing committee to create a series of forums featuring various keynote speakers each making a presentation about a different time period during the past 125 years. Together we are reviewing the history chronologically, one period at a time. I am pleased to have this opportunity to convey some of the material coming from the consulate side that was presented at the first two forums and hope that it enlarges the appreciation for our shared history.

Early Settlement: Late 19th Century – Early 20th Century

On June 22, 1889, the Consulate of Japan opened in Vancouver as the first Japanese government office in Canada. Choosing Vancouver as the first location for a consulate in British Columbia is something that had not been done before. The United States and Sweden-and-Norway already had consulates in Vancouver, but they had moved from their previous original locations in Victoria, the capital city of British Columbia.

The decision to open first in Vancouver was likely a matter of some discussion back in Tokyo as the original document appointing Fukashi Sugimura as the first consul also has the original word "Victoria" scrawled out and replaced with "Vancouver" which turned out to be the chosen location.



First Consul of Japan, Fukashi Sugimura

Photo courtesy: Shingo Fukushima, Tokyo,
grandson of Consul Sugimura

The rationale for the choice is not clear, but the Japanese government would have known that Victoria was the capital city as the naval training vessel Tsukuba with a crew of 380 had previously visited Victoria in 1888. Perhaps one of the deciding factors was the railway to Vancouver which when combined with the established transportation routes of the day, connected the west coast all the way back to England. Japan at that time already had a diplomatic office in London. I assume that the Government of Japan had information of the railway in Canada. We don't know who exactly in the Government of Japan made the final decision to open the consulate in Vancouver but it was a decision of great insight as the city

would become an important port city and the centre of commerce.

The first consul, Fukashi Sugimura, arrived on June 18, 1889 and on the next day, with the help of Vice-Consul Bolton of the United States presented his credentials to the mayor of Vancouver who duly accepted them and gave approval for Japan to open the office in Vancouver. A location for the consulate had to be found and Bolton was instrumental in helping Sugimura find a suitable place which at first was a temporary office at 431 Powell Street.

Remarking about that early consulate in the book, “Hands Across the Pacific – Japan in British Columbia 1889-1989”, Toshihiro Tanaka wrote:

“Consul Sugimura’s residence, which also doubled temporarily as the Consulate office, was located at 609 Howe Street at Dunsmuir.... The area, which was still undergoing sidewalk and water main construction, was regarded then as a fashionable residential street. An incident was described in which a young, unmarried neighbour returned late from a social engagement, tip-toed into the Consul’s home by mistake and made a hasty, but quiet, retreat leaving the sleeping residents undisturbed.”

One of the early issues the first Consul had to deal with was immigration taxation. At that time, there was a head-tax on Chinese immigrants of \$50 per person. In 1891, Consul Sugimura reported that there was an initiative to raise the head-tax from \$50 to \$200 per person and also discussion of imposing the same head-tax on the Japanese, as some people were saying that there was no difference between the Chinese and Japanese.

Consul Sugimura reported this to the home government and suggested that some action should be taken on this matter. He recommended that this matter be reported in the media in Japan as a means to advise and warn people in that country that this discussion is taking place and perhaps thereby, create some public debate. Another reason—and maybe more importantly—is that he wanted to constrict the immigrants from Japan, not in number but in quality of character. In the late 19th century, Japanese immigrants coming to Canada were largely those who did not have jobs, or education, or skills. So even in Japan, they would have had difficulty living and they came to Canada looking for opportunities. But they did not necessarily find employment and became a problem

here. Sugimura hoped that reportage about the head tax in the Japanese newspaper would help screen out those so-called “ruffians.” To deal with this, he made a very precise proposal to Tokyo that companies be established to organize the immigration process in Japan. Those companies would have a branch office in Vancouver to take care of the people coming from Japan. His second proposal—which did not see fruition—was for agricultural companies to be set up in British Columbia that would manage farm land and allow immigrant Japanese to use that land for agriculture.

In response, Tokyo headquarters asked the prefectural governments to establish the kind of companies proposed by Sugimura. Those companies were the forerunners of the current *kenjin-kai* from areas such as Wakayama. The companies, or agents, engaged a process of screening to select proper people to be sent to Canada. They were established by each local prefecture and as such, the immigrant system began.

According to Sugimura, in addition to the head-tax, the Chinese had many restrictions placed on them. They were prohibited from living downtown, possessing land, and getting jobs in the public service. That influenced the creation of Chinatown as a place they created for themselves. Sugimura reported that there were a little over 200 Japanese here at the time and their standard of living was below that of the Chinese. The Chinese worked very hard, took any kind of job that the Caucasians wouldn’t take, tried to organize themselves and take care of each other. Still, they faced discrimination in society and to Sugimura, it seemed that it was because they did not try to integrate with the Caucasians.

With that in mind, Sugimura suggested four conditions for Japanese wishing to immigrate to Canada:

1. They must commit to live in Canadian society.
2. They must be committed to learning English.
3. They should be persons who want to become Christians and go to church on Sunday.
4. They should be persons who will handle money properly; i.e. save it, but don’t hoard; spend it wisely and not on drinking and gambling.

Meeting those conditions would gain them the respect of the Canadian community. In that way Sugimura tried to control the character of immigrants and avoid further head-tax discussions.

..... Continued on next page

Following the immigration issue, the third Consul in Vancouver, Consul Kito, handled another major issue. Japanese immigrants had started to come and many were engaged in mining and coal mining on Vancouver Island in Comox, Cumberland, and Nanaimo. In 1893, the British Columbia government proposed shutting out all Chinese miners. About 2,500 Caucasian mining workers signed a petition demanding the expulsion of Chinese miners. They claimed that the Chinese workers didn't care at all about safety and caused explosions or serious accidents. The Chinese culture of the day didn't attribute such misfortune to human error but to the work of demons or the will of god. In the process of the petition being submitted to the government, the case against the Chinese came to include the Japanese workers as well.

The consulate then lobbied on behalf of the Japanese miners by submitting documents as evidence that they were experienced miners and quality workers. A debate among officials is revealing in that the member rebutting this claim against the oriental miners noted—as the consulate said—that the Japanese workers are all experienced mining workers with previous experience in Japan and that there were no accidents involving Japanese workers. The whole initiative suggests that there was a movement by the Caucasian workers to monopolize the mining industry. Eventually, the proposal was scrapped and both Japanese and Chinese were spared from being excluded from the mining workforce.

Family Settlement, Early 20th Century – Pre-War

The emigration system from Japan was streamlined following Consul Sugimura's suggestion for Japanese companies to screen potential immigrants. It led to a stabilized system of immigration with increased numbers and women joining the immigrants.

Thus at the outset of the 20th century, there was a tremendous growth of Japanese immigration to B.C. Such rapid growth can create tension in the local communities and here it created economic tension. Previous Consuls had worked with the government in Japan to mitigate that tension. The following figure shows the population growth of Japanese and Japanese Canadians compared to residents of other backgrounds.

Historical Growth of the Nikkei Population in British Columbia

Year	Canadian	B.C. residents	Japanese	increasing rate
1851	2,436,297	55,000	-	-
1861	3,229,633	51,524	-	-
1871	3,689,257	36,247	-	-
1881	4,324,810	49,459	-	-
1891	4,833,239	98,173	-	-
1901	5,371,315	178,657	4,738	-
1911	7,206,643	392,480	9,021	1.9 (190%)
1921	8,787,949	524,582	15,868	1.8 (176%)
1931	10,376,786	694,263	23,342	1.5 (147%)
1941	11,506,655	817,861	23,149	1.0 (99%)
1951	14,009,429	1,165,210	21,663	0.9 (94%)
1961	18,238,247	1,629,082	29,157	1.3 (135%)
1971	21,568,311	2,184,621	37,260	1.3 (128%)
1981	24,083,500	2,713,615	40,995	1.1 (110%)

In 1907 a sort of anti-Asian league or organization was established. In September a riot broke out on Powell Street during the tenure of Consul Morikawa. Right after the riot broke out, he went to the police to take the necessary measures to settle down the situation. At the same time, he met the Japanese people who lived there and told them to stay calm and to not fight back. Coincidentally, there was one officer from Japan from the Foreign Ministry of Japan headquarters staying in Vancouver while en-route to Ottawa. His name was Ishii, and he was a Director General in the trade section in Japan. He was on his way to engage in talks on commerce in Ottawa and he witnessed the riot. He proceeded to Ottawa and although his original purpose was to talk about trade between Japan and Canada, the discussion mostly centred on the riot issue. He asked for compensation from the Canadian government and they refused. Instead, the government formed an inquiry committee to see how the riot started. Eventually, they concluded that it was the fault of the Canadian side so they agreed to pay compensation. The first claim from the Japanese community was for \$12,000, but eventually Canada agreed to pay \$9,999, or \$10,000 less a dollar.

The first Consul in Vancouver, Fukashi Sugimura, had earlier recommended that Japan exert some control over the kind of people immigrating to Canada from Japan by creating companies in Japan that would screen potential immigrants. Offices were established in different prefectures such as Wakayama, Shiga, etc. Still, what was not controlled was the number of immigrants. After the 1907 riot, the two governments started to discuss more control of the number of immigrants. Canada sent Mr. Rodolphe Lemieux, the Director General of Labour, Ministry

of Labour in Ottawa to Japan for discussions. At that time, an agreement on the number of immigrants that would be allowed to enter Canada could not be reached because the number was so large. If the government agreed on a certain number, it would cause a big problem in Japan. So they made a so-called “gentlemen’s agreement” which is called the “Lemieux Agreement.” On the treaty itself, although it doesn’t clearly say 400, which is the number on which they agreed, it’s still sort of an agreement between two governments. So the system required that potential immigrants had to first apply to the Consulate in Vancouver for a certificate. Upon receiving the certificate, they could apply to immigrate and come to Canada. That was how the number of people was controlled.

Beginning in 1920, there was a movement by the government to restrict and reduce the number of commercial fishing licences held by Japanese. At first it was just on gillnet and trolling fishing licences, but then the restriction was imposed, not just on fishing, but also on the wholesale brokerage of salmon. As a side note, it is interesting that in 1922, a ban was imposed on high-seas fishing by Japanese. It was the high-seas, not Canadian water and it was open to anyone, but still they wanted to ban those fishermen. Then in 1924, the targeted reduction

became a 100% ban on Japanese fishing licences, phased in over 10 years. If implemented it would mean the total elimination of Japanese fishermen. By 1925, the number of licences had been reduced by 40% and the Consulate had been contacted about the matter. In response, the Consul in Vancouver at that time, Consul Gomyo, said that this is a purely domestic matter and he refused to take any action on the case or take it to court.

Following Consul Gomyo, Consul Kawai was assigned to Vancouver and he was the one who took up this case. He suggested two ways to handle the matter: one through diplomatic channels, and second through a court case. He acknowledged that what his predecessor had said was, strictly speaking, correct. He also noted that there are two kinds of fishermen involved in this matter. The first group were Japanese fishermen, that is, Japanese nationals fishing here. Their case was subject to the Treaty of Commerce and Navigation between Great Britain and Japan in which Japan was granted “most favoured nation” status. This meant that the government cannot distinguish between its treatment of Japanese and British nationals. So if they cannot get a licence, it



First residence of the Consul of Japan, 609 Howe Street. Photo courtesy: Vancouver City Archives

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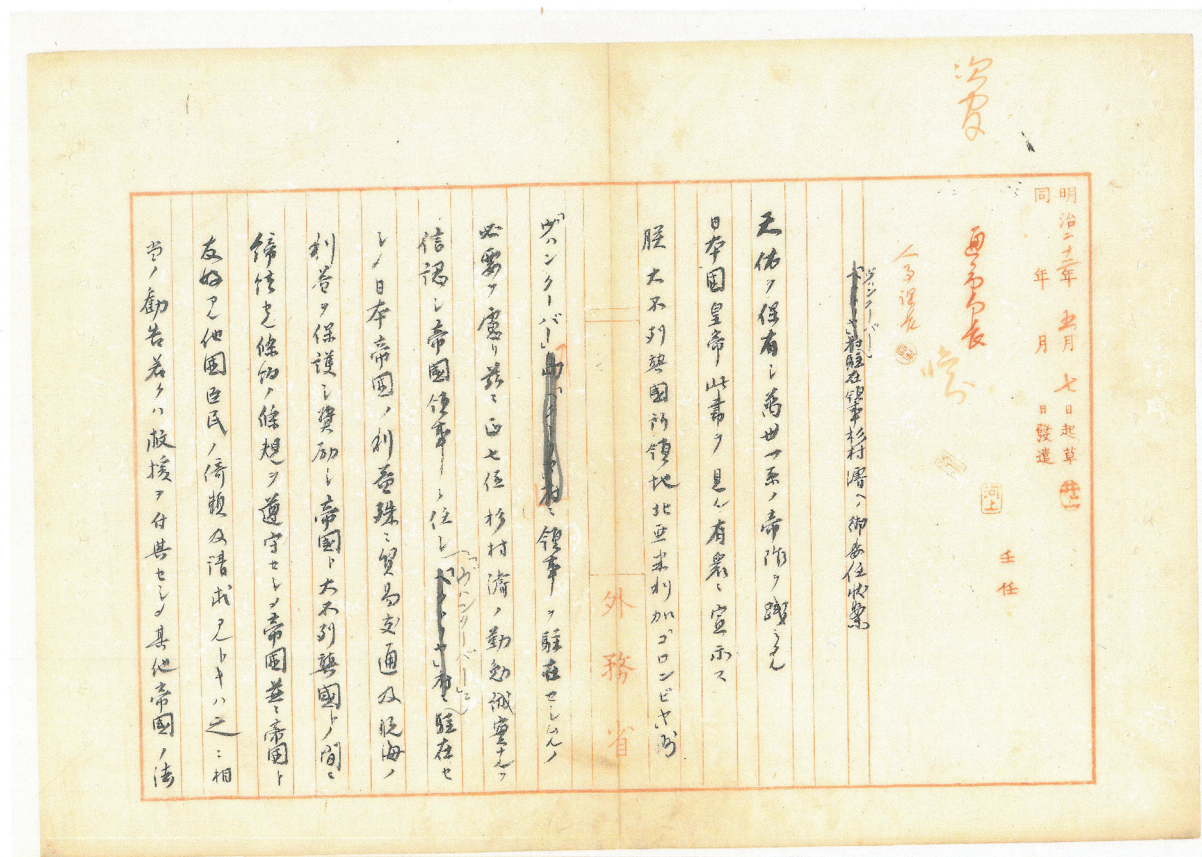
violates the treaty. The second group were Japanese Canadian fishermen who were naturalized to Canada. As such they were subject to Canadian domestic law. Under that law, it is against the British Constitution to discriminate against any Canadian and that law exceeded the mandate of the Department of Fisheries. So in either situation, the attempt to limit Japanese fishing licences could be contested.

A subsequent cable from November 4, 1926 written by Consul General Naokichi Matsunaga in Ottawa, mentions a visit by the president of the Japanese Canadian Fishing Association, Mr. Shinichi Tsujimura, from Steveston and recounts the conversation the Consul General in Ottawa held with Canadian Ministry of Fisheries Director General Mr. Found. The discussion did not bring any resolution to the issue and it became clear that the way to resolve it was through the courts.

For the fishermen, taking their case to court would require much money. At that time, there was a special account that had been set up by Consul Morikawa from which they hoped to draw money.

In that day – as now – the Consulate handled many applications and documents as part of its consular affairs. In the process, fees are collected. Nowadays, the money is forwarded to Tokyo, but in those days, considering the difficulty of transferring money, it was kept locally. In 1907, recognizing that there was a large Japanese population in Steveston, and that it took great effort for those Japanese to come to the Consulate in Vancouver to conduct any consular transactions, Consul Morikawa designated the “Fisherman’s Association” in Steveston as an organization that would conduct consular services on behalf of the Consulate and could retain the monies collected for use in the community. The amount of money grew substantially, and it was used to build a school and a local hospital. Then in Vancouver there was another organization formed called Nihonjin-kai which was for all Japanese people. They claimed that the money should be for all Japanese, not just those in Steveston.

Consequently, the money was then moved from Steveston to the Nihonjin-kai in Vancouver as a compromise. It was on the condition that the money in the account would be used for all Japanese, and that any usage would need



Official document about the establishment of the consulate with the deletion in the text of Victoria and the addition of Vancouver dated May 7, 1889. Courtesy: Ministry of Foreign Affairs Diplomatic Archives

the approval of the Fishermen Association along with approval from the Consulate.

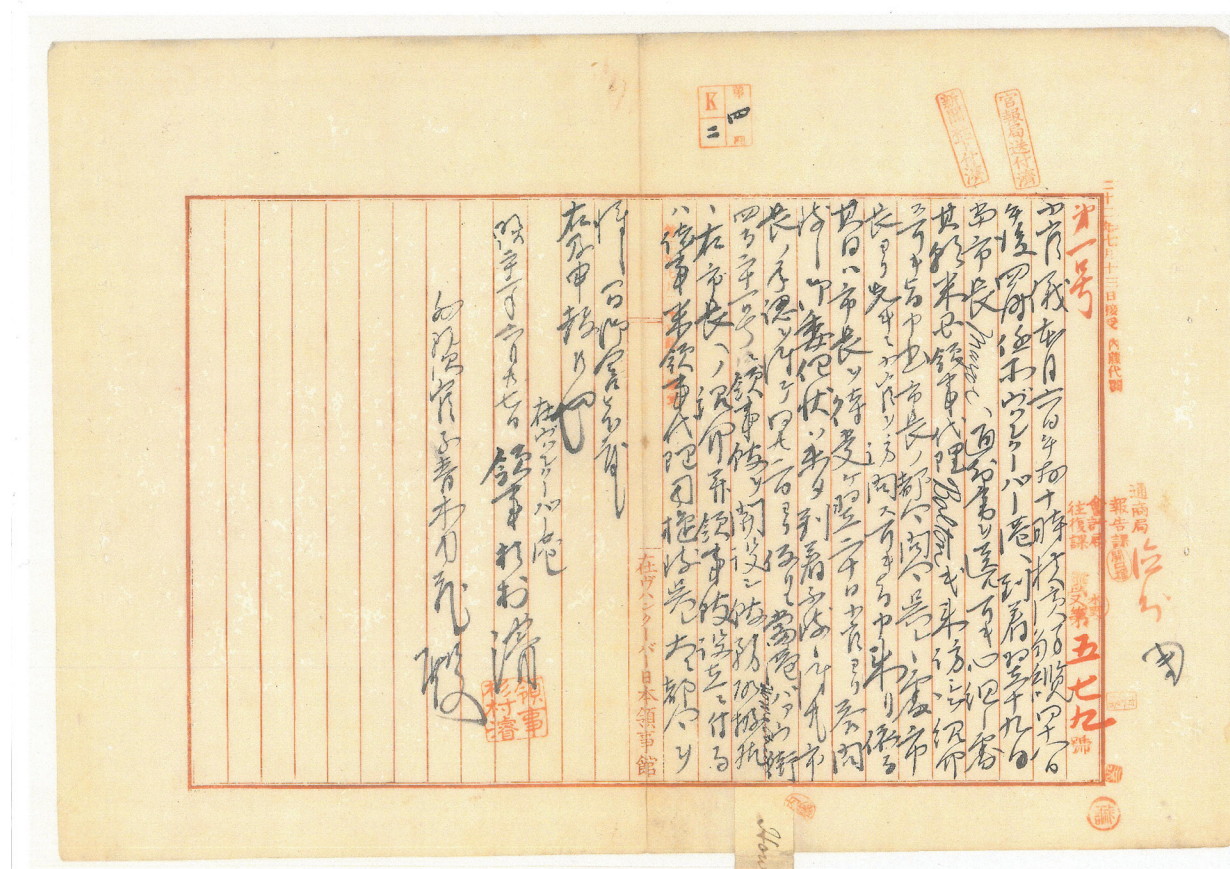
Then in 1927 when the fishermen wanted to begin the lawsuits, it was discovered that the money was gone. The explanation given was that the Nihonjin-kai had conducted a census of the Japanese population, but no census paper nor any results could be produced. Nevertheless, the Japanese fishermen were able to gather enough donations to take their case to court.

The first case on the fishing licence issue started in 1929 and the case went all the way to London. There the Privy Council said that the Canadian government action was against the constitution of England and the Japan-UK agreement and ruled in favour of the fishermen.

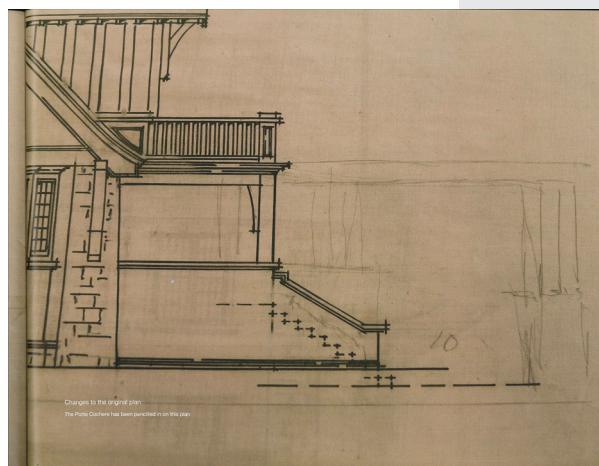
Acknowledgements

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I want to thank Gordon and Anne-Lee Switzer, Jim Kojima, and Dr. Henry Shimizu for being the keynote speakers in our three forums thus far. Their contribution to the understanding of Japanese Canadian history and this series is invaluable. I look forward to having Gordon Kadota, Art Miki, and Greg Masuda speak at our upcoming forums in the last half of this year and cordially invite all to attend. I hope to see you there.

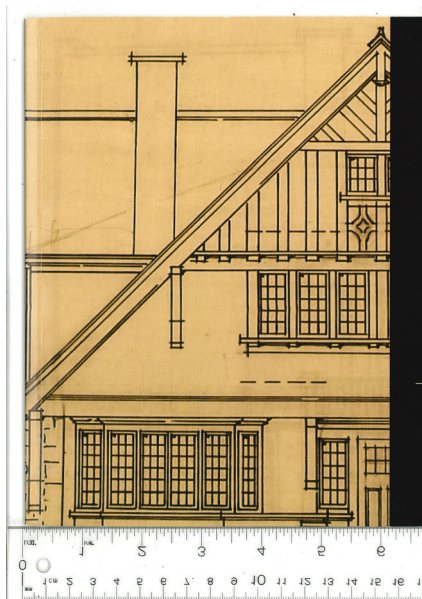


First official report to the Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs which mentions the assistance of U.S. Vice Consul Bolton, June 27, 1889. Courtesy: Ministry of Foreign Affairs Diplomatic Archives



Blueprint details with pencil marks for the addition of the Porte cochère.

Japanese Consulate's residence at Northeast corner of Dunsmuir and Howe Streets, 1899
Courtesy Vancouver City Archives Bu N429



Detail from blueprint of the former Dockrill Residence in Shaughnessy.



Mrs. Kawai with son Masumi pose by their car in the residence driveway, c. 1926. Photo courtesy: Masumi Kawai, Tokyo

THE CONSUL OF JAPAN IN VANCOUVER – OFFICIAL RESIDENCES

Information from consulate files

Right after the first Consul of Japan, Fukashi Sugimura, arrived in Vancouver on June 18, 1889, he stayed briefly at the Vancouver Hotel as he took up his duties. The day after his arrival, with the aid of United States' Vice-Consul Bolton, he presented his credentials to the mayor of Vancouver and with further help from Bolton, secured a temporary office at 431 Powell Street where he was able to begin work. Later a move was made to 609 Howe Street, a two-story wooden house which served as both an office and as the first official residence.

In those early days, the office-cum-residence moved six times over a ten-year period and included the northeast corner of Howe and Dunsmuir and 1345 Davie before a move to the upscale Shaughnessy Heights district. The residence in Shaughnessy was designed by the architectural firm of Maclure and Fox, having been commissioned by Walter Roy Dockrill, an influential businessman who was president and general manager of Empire Stevedoring and Contracting Company Limited.

The Dockrill residence displays the distinctive style of a Maclure and Fox house evident in the great hall and fire place and decorative details; original plans show pencilled marks for the addition of a Porte Cochère and a back porch. Upon completion of the house in 1913, Dockrill moved in and it remained the family home for him, his wife and three children until they moved to Asia in 1926.

In September of that same year, the Government of Japan purchased the Dockrill residence for \$35,000 and it became the official residence of the Consul of Japan in Vancouver. After the hostilities of World War II broke out between Canada and Japan, it was held in the protection of the Honorary Consul for Spain and later the Consulate General

of Switzerland before being seized by the Canadian federal Custodian of Enemy Property. In an auction, the Custodian sold off the property for a mere \$9,000 in January 1946.

Between the time of the sale and 1952 there were a number of owners. It was occupied by a Miss Howarth and later it was the residence of a doctor. Mr. Gee Kee, of Varsity Produce became the owner in 1953. Then in 1959, the Government of Japan purchased back the house and land for \$55,000.

Over the years the house has undergone two renovations, one in 1986 and one in 1991. Additions were made to the salon and the dining room. Some Japanese touches were included but in both instances, the uniformity of the original design was respected and maintained.

In the autumn of 2013, an elderly couple from Japan dropped in to the consulate office unexpectedly. They brought with them some old photos and the gentleman explained that he had been born in the official residence and lived the first years of his life there. His father was Consul Ishii who served in Vancouver from 1933 to 1936. The photos he brought were family photos taken from that period and he went on to say that he had not been back since then. Consul General Okada invited them to have lunch at the residence the next day and the occasion brought back some early childhood recollections of life in the home for him and a greater sense of the building's history to the current residents.

The 100th anniversary since the completion of the residence was celebrated in June 2013 with a gala evening of Japanese culture and cuisine hosted by Consul General Seiji Okada.



Christmas celebration in the main hall, c.1934
Photo courtesy Mr. Akira Ishii, Tokyo



Official residence with guests, c.1930. Consul Sentaro Edo is in the middle of the front row.
Courtesy Nikkei National Museum 2010.31.8

CELEBRATING 125 YEARS OF THE JAPANESE CONSULATE IN VANCOUVER

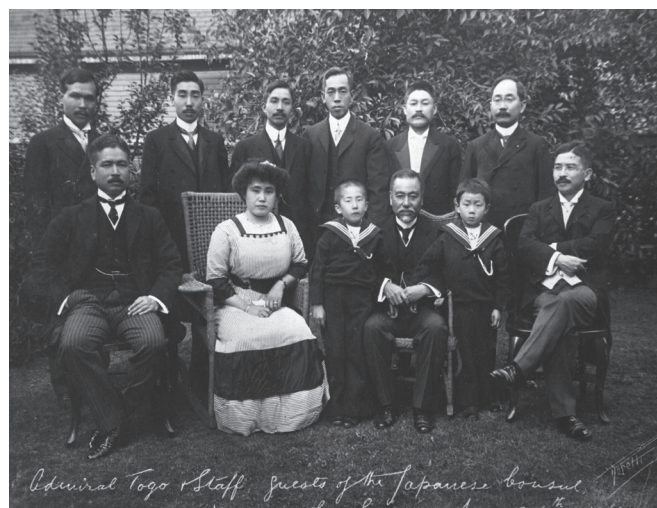
Consul Fukashi Sugimura opened the Japanese Consulate in Vancouver on June 22, 1889. He headed this first Japanese government mission in Canada until the completion of his tenure on August 11, 1891. According to Consul Sugimura's report to the Foreign Ministry, the Japanese population when he arrived was about 50. Of the 50 immigrants, 30 worked in sawmills, 10 in homes as domestics or cooks, and one operated a General Store (Mr. Washiji Oya). According to the Vancouver Daily World newspaper, dated June 19, 1889: "the Japanese Government, seeing the importance to which Vancouver was sure to grow as an outlet for the commerce of the Dominion, decided to establish a consulate here, the first so far in Canada. The main object is to aid the establishment of a sound commercial understanding between Japan and Canada." Nikkei National Museum 1994.85.2



Kishiro Morikawa was the Japanese Consul from 1902-1908 and is likely in this 1907 group photo in Stanley Park. Prince Fushimi (Hiroyasu), cousin of Emperor Meiji was the second Japanese royalty to visit Canada and Vancouver. He was en route home from England where he had been on a special mission for the Emperor. Prince Fushimi was welcomed by specially-staged fireworks and thousands of well wishers, including a lantern parade led by 2,000 Japanese residents. Throughout his visit the Prince was accompanied by Consul Morikawa. Fushimi Lake Provincial Park in northern Ontario was named in honour of his visit. He returned to Japan on June 26, 1907. Nikkei National Museum 2010.31.20

Consul **Chonosuke Yada** welcomed Fleet Admiral Heihachiro Togo on Sunday, August 27, 1911 when he visited Vancouver on his way home from the coronation of King George V in London. The photograph was taken at the Consul General's residence at 1345 Davie Street. Admiral Togo is the man in the naval uniform, seated in the centre front. The consul is standing at the back on the right, and his wife is seated. Consul Yada was in office from 1908-1913.

Nikkei National Museum 2010.23.2.4.64



*Admiral Togo & Staff, guests of the Japanese Consul
at the Consul's residence Aug. 27th 1911*



This group of prominent Japanese Canadians is proudly holding a large flag with the BC coat of arms shortly after the end of World War I. Consul **Ukita** (in middle with moustache) was in office from 1916-1921. Matsunoshin Abe (far left) was president of the Canadian Japanese Association during this period. He was president when the Association built and unveiled the Japanese Canadian War Memorial in Stanley Park in April 1920. Nikkei National Museum 1994.70.27



Consul **Ichiro Kawasaki** visited the Fraser Valley Japanese Farmers Association, May 11, 1941 in Port Hammond. Consul Kawasaki was in office when the Pacific War (WWII) broke out in 1941. The Consul, his officers and their families, 24 persons in all, were confined to the Consul General residence for nearly 5 months. Contact with the outside was forbidden. They finally left Vancouver in May 1942 on the first leg of a circuitous four month route that took them to Ottawa, Montreal, Washington, New York, and finally east Africa where they were able to board the ASAMA MARU for Yokohama. Consul Kawasaki's primary concern during his last days was the safety of Japanese Canadians. Interviewed by the Vancouver Province, he expressed the hope that "Canadians will be kind enough and broad minded enough to let naturalized Japanese in the Dominion live in peace." Nikkei National Museum 1994.67

Consuls in Vancouver (1889-1942)

1. Fukashi Sugimura 1889-1891
2. Consul Awaya 1891-1892 (Acting)
3. Teiji Kito 1892-1893 (Acting)
4. Tatsugoro Nose 1895-1897
5. Seisaburo Shimizu 1897-1902
6. Kishiro Morikawa 1902-1908
7. Chonosuke Yada 1908-1913
8. Yoshitaka Hori 1913-1914
9. Kahachi Abe 1914-1916
10. Satotsugu (Goji) Ukita 1916-1921
11. Consul Saito 1921-1923
12. Isago Gomyo 1923-1925
13. Tatsuo Kawai 1925-1927
14. Toyokichi Fukuma 1927-1930
15. Sentaro Edo 1930-1931
16. Teruo Hachiya 1931-1933
17. Masaji Nonomura 1932-1933 (Acting)
18. Yasushi Ishii 1933-1936
19. Shirokura Seiichi 1936-1936 (Acting)
20. Hiroyoshi Nemichi 1936-1939
21. Kenji Nakauchi 1939-1941
22. Ichiro Kawasaki 1941-1942

Re-opening of the Consulate

The Consulate was closed on May 4, 1942. It was re-opened 10 years later on May 20, 1952 by **Consul Takeshi Yasukawa**, following the signing of the San Francisco Peace Treaty in September 1951. The Consulate's re-opening coincided with a lessening of war-engendered animosities and the gradual return of Japanese Canadians to Vancouver and other coastal centres. It was a time of healing and aspiring to greater harmony among people of all nationalities. Less than a year later, in April 1953, those aspirations were given an impressive boost with the visit to Vancouver of Crown Prince Akihito (now Emperor). The Prince, who was then en route to England for the coronation of Queen Elizabeth, was accorded an enthusiastic welcome by Japanese Canadians and the Vancouver community. The visit itself was widely regarded as contributing greatly to the revival of close relations between Japan and Canada.



Terry Watada at Michigan State University, "Rally for Vincent Chin", Fall 1987. Photo credit: Tane Akamatsu.

To speak to my own people I had to be ordained by the White Man.

Mohammad Ali

Mohammad Ali, reputedly the greatest heavyweight boxing champ, was wise enough to know that, if he wanted his community to listen to him, he would have to be a success in the wider world. Speaking to Japanese Canadians is a difficult task I have learned over the years. I have had to ask myself, do they care about what I have to say? Are they even listening? I became cynical at times and, as Mohammad Ali opined, I concluded they will if I have my own television show, am a movie star, have been inducted into the Order of Canada, or achieved some other major mainstream distinction like winning a major literary or music award. But then another problem arises. Speaking for them in that light is relatively easy, but do I have the right?

I suppose the first question is why would I want to? I found out many years ago that the *Sansei*, my generation, were really a lost generation. Their past was a blank. For whatever reason, the *Nisei* did not tell their children much. They did not let on that there was a strong and vibrant community pre-WWII. They were reluctant to keep traditions alive. They did not reveal the history of the internment and dispersal. As a would-be artist then, I decided to try and fill in the blanks by exploring Japanese Canadian history, culture and traditions. I'd like to think that the work recreates that which has been lost, but with a relative lack of JC support, I can never be sure. I suppose my life has been a long struggle for acceptance and relevancy.

Like most *Sansei*, I was floored by the Beatles on the *Ed Sullivan Show* back in 1964. My mother, an *Issei*, laughed at their gyrations and shenanigans on the screen, my father totally ignored the performance, but I sat in rapt attention, fascinated by their stage presence, their appearance and above all else their music. We didn't have a radio and my brother, a whole generation older (more *Nisei* than *Sansei*), liked ballet soundtracks and Russian Army marching music on vinyl. If that wasn't odd enough, we didn't own a record player. So music for me was background for any television show or movie I happened to see. Nothing really to listen to while sitting down in calm or excited reflection. But not this time, not with the Beatles. It was strange, exciting and for me.

I, like so many others, wanted to learn how to play and then be in a band. Thus began my adventure in making music and

performing in front of an audience. Once I learned basic guitar chords from a German/Japanese Canadian classmate, I joined neighbourhood garage bands. My first was a group called The Proprietors, a top-fourty, four-man musical unit. We played more than a few teenage house parties. As time went by, the bands progressed in quality and stature. The names varied and indicated the type of music played: the Buddhist Boys, the Psychedelic Flower Band, the Soul Men, and the Blues Society. My last was The Asia Minors, a well-known Toronto Chinatown band under the casual but enthusiastic sponsorship of Jean Lumb, a restaurateur who welcomed politicians, television personalities and Prime Ministers to her restaurant. As her children's band, the Minors was the first all-Asian Canadian rock band. In all, three *Sansei* were members during various incarnations: Alan Kondo (classmate of the Lumbs who starred in a Toronto production of the *King and I*), Garry Kawasaki and me.

And it was great fun. Played many clubs – night, country and yacht; high schools; frat houses; churches converted to concert halls; and other venues like Hagermann Hall behind Toronto City Hall. We hung out in Yorkville and met many of the then current rock stars. I got to know Roy Kusano, a folksinger in the Village and today President of the Toronto Buddhist Church, who knew all the greats: Joni Mitchell, Neil Young and Gordon Lightfoot to name a few.

By the end, circa 1969, I wanted to get away from hit songs and play music that said something. I initially did this by accepting, on behalf of the band, a gig at City Hall organized by the Vietnam Mobilization Committee [VMC] to commemorate the Hiroshima Bomb anniversary and to protest the Vietnam War. The organizers thought an all-Asian Canadian band would be appropriate. The Minors had no objections since we'd be on stage with notable acts like Nucleus, a powerhouse prog rock band.

Unfortunately, Mrs. Lumb was not amused. She saw the VMC as Communist sympathizers and a group of hippies against a war supported by the Canadian government. She then did everything in her power to cancel the rally, calling in favours from everyone at City Hall including the mayor, but to no avail. The VMC was too well organized for an eleventh-hour attack. So she did the next best thing: she forbade her children from participating. And even though the two

SPEAKING TO MY OWN

by Terry Watada

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sons and daughter were in their early to mid-twenties, they agreed. Perhaps they were afraid of the association as well, I never knew.

Undaunted, I appeared by myself and sang the anti-war song *I Feel like I'm Fixin' to Die Rag*. The throngs of people cheering me after I finished filled me with a sense of purpose and exhilaration. I was more than a Beatle now; I was more akin to Bob Dylan. It was the time of protest and action. The Asia Minors soon broke up after that and I began to seek a new direction in music. I would write my own songs. The early 1970s was the era of the singer/songwriter. Musicians like Paul Simon, Carole King and Joni Mitchell produced albums of insight and heartfelt personal emotion. I would try to do the same.

The first rule of songwriting is to write what you know, but what did I know? It seemed too trite to compose songs about my love-life. So I asked my mother about how she met my father. She gave me a terse "*baka*" and that was the end of our conversation. But I persisted in the days to come and she finally told me about her arranged marriage. This was earth-shattering. Arranged marriages weren't done in Canada in the 1970s. Or so I thought, naive as I was. I also learned of the internment.

It bothered me to know my parents and brother were considered "enemy aliens" and so "evacuated", exiled really, because of their ethnicity. I also became aware of the fact that Japanese Canadians only enjoyed the full rights of citizenship just two years before I was born. My response was to write a song about my parents during the war years.

Internment camps in BC's wilderness

Are all I recall.

But I'm too old to think about the past

With bitterness in my heart.

I fell in love with you in the camp so long ago.

It kept us from the hatred and the bigotry

That existed outside.

New Denver is washed away with the rain.

New Denver will never know, never know,

The pain it caused.

The lyrics to *New Denver* were printed in the Christmas edition of the *New Canadian* in 1970. Shortly thereafter, Alan Hotta, the temporary English-language editor of the paper, contacted me. He being a *Sansei* was impressed with the lyrics and wanted to talk to me about joining a "rap" group he was forming – "rap" in the sense of talking rather than in the contemporary use of the term.

At his house in the north end of the city, he brought together ten interested *Sansei* to discuss the issues facing Japanese Canadians: racism, identity and the internment history to start. Al, with his keen, intelligent mind and a deep knowledge of American activism, introduced me and the others to African and Asian American literature and Asian American music. His tapes of Chris Iijima, Joanne Miyamoto and "Charlie" Chin in concert fascinated me. Two Japanese American *Sansei* and one third generation ABC (American-born Chinese) wrote and performed songs about being Asian American. "Charlie's" *Lo Mein Blues* was particularly affecting – a song about a Chinese American man living in Minnesota unable to get the ingredients for *lo mein*. Funny yet poignant at the same time.

I started playing venues as a solo act (like most folksingers) in places like the Toronto Buddhist Church, the Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre and the Free Times Cafe. Unfortunately, I only had one original song and so filled my repertoire with covers. I really didn't feel I had much of an audience. That is, until 1972.

Out of the aforementioned "rap" sessions came notable projects like the *Powell Street Review*, the first *Sansei* journal, and the Asian Canadian Youth Conference. Held primarily in a three storey house on Mutual Street in downtown Toronto, the conference drew Asian Canadians from Vancouver and

around Toronto. During the four-day conference, artists displayed their art, poets recited their poems and speakers expounded on JC identity and racism. Many discussions took place with strong personalities like Ron Tanaka, David Fujino and Gerry Shikatani leading and provoking. Most importantly for me was the internment camp photograph exhibit from Vancouver. It was amazing. I had never seen the stark images from the 1940s. Very few really had. The black and white images conveyed the desolation, the isolation and the injustice of the camps.

I was in charge of organizing the two Arts Nights, concerts really, at the University Settlement House behind the Art Gallery of Ontario. I invited a lot of performers from my Buddhist Church days, former bands and from the "rap" sessions, in particular Martin Kobayakawa, Garry Kawasaki and Maya Ishiura. Vancouver performers like Sean Gunn, Joyce Chong and Shannon Gunn also performed. For the occasion, I wrote many songs about the internment and the Asian Canadian experience including *Slocan (I'm Coming Back to You)* and *Go for Broke*. And I introduced *New Denver* to an Asian Canadian audience. Both nights were recorded by Alan Kondo from the Asia Minors days. Everyone could feel the birth of something new.

In 1972, there weren't any established venues for

Asian Canadian musicians; there really weren't any recognized Asian Canadian musicians. But undaunted I played folk clubs, schools and community halls until the Japanese Canadian Centennial Year (1977). Many projects were initiated that year: the Japanese Canadian Centennial Project which produced the *Dream of Riches*, a collection of photographs based on the 1972 exhibit; the Powell Street Festival: a Celebration of Japanese Canadian Art and Culture;

and the National Centennial Youth Conference.

I was asked to write the conference theme song and to perform a set of music as a kick-off. It was a wonderful opportunity to work with other Asian Canadian musicians. Thus Martin Kobayakawa, Garry Kawasaki, Sean Gunn and I stepped on stage and opened with *Go for Broke*, a tribute to the Japanese American military battalion the 442 and the spirit of Asian Canadians who strive

to "make it" in a racist society. I suppose it was a bit of a gamble, not knowing how a packed house of Sansei would react to music meant for them. After a very pregnant pause, we were met with thunderous applause and a standing ovation. Fortunately.

That concert encouraged Larry Sasaki and me to produce the album *Runaway Horses*, the first Japanese and Asian Canadian record with Asian Canadians themes. The album was recorded in the



Redress Rally, Ottawa, 1988.
Photo by Gordon King.

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Sasaki family's suburban basement. Not the best sound quality but good enough to preserve the songs I had written. Frank Nakashima, Martin and Garry appeared on the eight tracks.

What followed was a sustained flow of invitations to play across Canada: the Annex in Toronto, Toronto City Hall, the Molson Amphitheatre, the Montreal Buddhist Church, Folklorama in Winnipeg (where I met Art Miki for the first time in 1978), Edmonton's Asian Heritage Festival, the Powell Street Festival in Vancouver, and Kamloops and Vernon BC. I also made several appearances for the redress campaign. Most memorable was the Ottawa Rally and New Denver where I performed my song. By the mid-1980s, I had produced two more albums, helped found the Canasian Artists Group in Toronto and staged a couple of Japanese North American plays. There was a compelling reason to go into theatre: redress for Japanese Canadians.

The Redress Movement needed publicizing. Conferences, public debates and speeches were fine but if the arguments could be humanized through art then Canadians would then empathize and perhaps willingly support the cause. So I acted as consultant and narrator for a CBC Radio docudrama called *Wasteland Gardens*. It ran and was repeated several times on the show *Ideas*. I

went on to produce plays that held at their core the Japanese North American internment experience. *Life in the Fast Lane* by San Francisco Sansei Lane Nishikawa and *Yellow Fever* proved useful in placing the arguments for redress in a relatable context. None was more successful than *Song for a Nisei Fisherman* by another San Francisco Sansei Phil Gotanda. Because the production starred Nisei actor Robert Ito, a favourite in Vancouver's Powell Street area pre-World War II, Japanese Canadians from all around Ontario, parts

of Quebec and nearby US border states made it a point to see the show. From these productions much publicity was generated through interviews, previews and reviews on television, radio and newspaper. It was about this time, I began to play music and give talks at various colleges and community concert halls across the United States, many for the cause of American redress. Memorable gigs included the Basement Workshop, Chinatown, the Asian Heritage Festival, Lincoln Centre, and Hunter

College, all in New York City; Oberlin College; Michigan State University; University of Michigan; the Buddhist Church in Chicago; Ohana Cultural Center, Oakland CA; the San Francisco Asian American Theatre; and Nisei Week, Los Angeles CA. I continued to give concerts throughout the 1990s and into the early 2000s as well producing albums for myself and other artists like Number One Son (a Vancouver group including Kuan Foo, Sean Gunn and Martin Kobayakawa); John Seetoo and Billy Asai of NYC; and Nisei Roy Miya.



In front of the Nisei Lounge, Chicago, Fall 1979. Photo credit: Steve Isozaki.

For Roy's album, it was a great privilege to bring together a genius at jazz piano and Butch Watanabe, a session musician who played with Oscar Peterson and Anne Murray to name just two.

In 1984, my mother passed away. I suddenly realized that I had to write down everything I knew about her. So I began a poem, my first, and what emerged was about thirty pages of impressions and scattered images. I then reorganized and edited the piece until I thought I had a coherent long poem. I had always been fascinated by poetry since university days when I was introduced to great poets like TS Elliott, Wallace Stevens and Ezra Pound.

I submitted *Chisato: a Thousand Homes* to the CBC literary contest and was shortlisted. Encouraged by the placing, I then sent it and other poems to a publisher who immediately accepted it. Like the playwright David Henry Hwang (*M. Butterfly*) told me during the Canasian production of *FOB* (with me as producer), "After I won the OBIE [best play off-Broadway], I thought it would always be as easy." But it was not to be in David's and my case. Every book thereafter, from *Daruma Days* (short stories), *Ten Thousand Views of Rain* (poetry), *Obon: the Festival of the Dead* (poetry) through to *Kuroshio: the Black Current* (novel), has been a struggle to get into print. The publishing world is always plagued by economic concerns and publishers themselves are not willing to commit to helping an author develop. They just want near-perfect product by a writer with a proven track record of large sales.

Even with my publisher problems, I continued to write prose. Writing, I found, allowed me most effectively to revive that which has been lost: the Japanese Canadian community from the early days through the war years and afterward. *Bukkya Tozen*, the history of Jodo Shinshu Buddhism in Canada, was a challenge because there was so much information to be dug out, and I found working with a committee was a double-edged sword. Though not an ideal situation, the Nisei members did so much of the research. In the end, I must say, I learned a great deal about Japanese Canadians, mostly from their reminiscing.

For years, I had heard about a particular murder case involving Issei. After a lot of digging, I discovered Morii Etsuji, the leader of the Vancouver Black Dragon Society. His criminal exploits pulled me deeper and deeper into the community. Then I found out one of my dad's good friends was Morii's *yojimbo* or bodyguard. Rikimatsu Kintaro was a scary guy yet he always treated me kindly. Used to give me a five-dollar bill every visit, probably to get rid of me. Delving into their lives, I developed storylines based not only on their activities but on others I discovered along the way. Out of this near obsession came a published short story collection and a novel. Drafts of two other novels are waiting

further editing.

I also wrote plays, beginning with *Dear Wes/Love Muriel*, a drama based on the letters of Muriel Kitagawa, for the Earth Spirit Festival. I had never written a play but the organizers knew my monthly column in the *Nikkei Voice* and so offered it to me thinking that a writer is a writer. I don't believe it was a fully realized one-act but every performance received a standing ovation, more due to Brenda Kamino's (the sole actor) outstanding acting skills. Shortly thereafter the Workman Theatre Projects commissioned me to write two plays, *The Tale of a Mask* (based on a Vancouver suicide/murder case in the 1980s) and *Vincent* (a play about a schizophrenic outpatient gunned down by the Toronto police). Again, both were well received and played to appreciative audiences across Ontario and Manitoba. *Vincent* is due for a revival starting this June. A national tour may follow.

So - have I won the right to speak for and to Japanese Canadians? Probably not but I have enjoyed a national presence through the *Nikkei Voice* and now the *Bulletin* out of Vancouver. I was puzzled by the Vancouver Nisei negative reaction to *Kuroshio*, but I realized I shouldn't have been. Airing dirty laundry always leads to controversy. But I draw strength from those who mentored and/or encouraged me in my artistic efforts: Wes Fujiwara, Jesse Nishihata, Midge Ayukawa, Tom Allen, Gloria Sumiya, Bishop Newton and Mary Ishiura, Bill and Yuri Kochiyama, Frank Moritsugu, Roy and Kay Shin, Ken Noma, Al Hotta, Martin Kobayakawa and a host of others. With such backing, I am confident that my work has struck a chord. I doubt that I'll make much of an impact on the mainstream literary world, but that was never my goal.

I will continue to produce work as long as I can. For 2014 and into the future, I am looking to complete the *manga* trilogy (the first, *The Sword, the Medal and the Rosary*, came out in 2013), two novels and a fifth collection of poetry. My fourth poetry collection and the second *manga* are due for publication this fall. I am developing a film based on my first novel, a couple of music projects and fulfilling article commitments. I am particularly proud of my investigation into the Japanese Canadian resistance movement during WWII. I hope my second novel *The Three Pleasures* will dispel the stereotyped notion that Japanese Canadians were passive, quiet and accepting victims during the internment experience. Nothing, I have discovered, is farther from the truth. I may not be fully accepted by the JC community but I will not be ignored just as Ali was always there inside and outside of his championship status.



Miyakichi and Jineimon in
Shimosato, 1907
(Yesaki Family photo)



Sunae and Kiku, 1927
(Yesaki family photo)



Somewhere on the Skeena River,
1917. From the left; Toshihiko Hama-
guchi, Miyakichi, Hidekichi Ezaki and
unidentified person.
(Yesaki Family photo)

Miyakichi at 16 years of age,
c.1915
(Yesaki Family photo)



Photograph of crew taken aboard
their navy ship, 1921. Miyakichi at
right of top row.
(Yesaki Family photo)



THE YESAKI FAMILY CHRONICLES - PART I

Miyakichi Yesaki (1899 – 1986) and Sunae Yesaki (1905 – 1984)

by Mitsuo Yesaki

Miyakichi with the new gillnetter
on the Skeena River, 1931
(Yesaki Family photo)



Shimosato, Wakayama-ken

Jinshiro Yesaki returned to Shimosato sometime in the autumn of 1898 after 3 summers fishing on the Fraser River. He married Koyuki, eldest daughter of Toyomatsu and Iso Ezaki, on February 4, 1899.¹ Jinshiro returned to Victoria on the **SS GOODWIN** on April 17, 1900², leaving Koyuki at the home (*banchi* No. 754) of his parents in Shimosato. Koyuki gave birth to Miyakichi on May 6, 1899.

Jinshiro returned to Shimosato sometime in 1906 and it was probably during this visit that he purchased a house from an old couple in Ota, inland from Shimosato. He had accumulated a good grubstake from several years of fishing and especially during the phenomenal sockeye salmon run in 1905. The house was disassembled, put on a barge, floated down the Ota River and erected on family land in Shimosato. Also, he probably arranged for several photographs of the family to be taken during this visit. Jinshiro returned to British Columbia before the 1907 Fraser River fishing season.³

Miyakichi was 7 years old and enrolled in the elementary school when his father returned to Shimosato. He was sickly in his youth so was given another name, Tsunakichi, in the hopes of his health improving. He showed little interest in schooling and spent all his non-curricular time outdoors, especially in fishing for river and coastal fish. He was an accomplished swimmer and swam out to Tate-ishi, a rock island off Shimosato. He graduated in 1912 and refused, despite the encouragement of parents and relatives, in pursuing his studies. His reluctance to continue his schooling probably convinced Jinshiro to make arrangements for his wife and son to join him in Steveston so that Miyakichi could be his deckhand. While waiting for immigration papers to be processed, Miyakichi passed his time catching freshwater eels that Koyuki would sell on her daily rounds marketing Jineimon's catch to households around Shimosato. With immigration papers finalized, Koyuki and Miyakichi arrived in Victoria on the **AKI MARU** on July 15, 1915.⁴

Sunae was born in 1905 to Tomegoro and Kino Tasaki, the second daughter of four siblings. She attended Shimosato

Elementary School where she developed a lifelong passion for literature. Classic comic books were common in the Yesaki household while the children were growing up in Alberta. Sunae would know the storyline of these comic book stories from reading Japanese translations of the classics. She graduated from elementary school in 1918.

Steveston, British Columbia

The Yesakis lived in one of the seven cannery houses built outside of the dyke west of the Beaver Cannery. Miyakichi probably spent the summer of 1915 as a boat-puller with his father. The sockeye salmon runs on the Fraser River were devastated after the Hell's Gate landslide of 1913 and that of 1916 was one of the worst on record. Of the 216 Japanese fishermen whose catches were examined, only 16 made a profit.⁵ During the summers of 1916 to 1918, he went to the Skeena River as a boat-puller for an uncle, Hidekichi Ezaki.

Japan - Canada

Miyakichi returned to Japan in November 1918⁴ to fulfill his military conscription obligations. He probably traveled with his uncle, Matsusuke Ezaki, who took his two eldest sons (Toshihiko and Yasuhiro) to Shimosato for schooling. Miyakichi joined the Japanese navy in May 1919 and after serving two years of a normal three-year assignment, was released to support his aging grandparents.⁶

Miyakichi returned to Shimosato and married Sunae Tasaki on July 23, 1922. Sunae gave birth to Kiku on August 5, 1923. Unable to find gainful employment in Japan, he returned to Canada in May 25, 1923 on the **AFRICA MARU**⁴ and may have fished on the Skeena River as a boat-puller for his uncle Hidekichi. He returned to Japan again in November 1925⁴ and tried earning a living by building a boat to troll for pelagic species. The boat, **IE-MIYA MARU**, was built

by Kichitaro Kuramoto and was supposedly one of the first boats in Shimosato to be powered by an inboard engine.⁶ This venture was probably prompted by the success of Japanese fishermen trolling for spring and coho salmon off the lower east and west coasts of Vancouver Island. Unfortunately, Miyakichi was unsuccessful in this trolling venture and returned to Vancouver on the **ARIZONA MARU** on May 26, 1926.⁴ He probably fished as a boat-puller that summer with his father.

Steveston, British Columbia

After the fire destroyed the Beaver Cannery premises, Jinshiro started fishing for the Great West Cannery in the summer of 1924 and was assigned a cannery house. With a place for his family to reside, Miyakichi sent fare for Sunae and Kiku to join him in Steveston. Sunae made all arrangements to immigrate, even having a photograph of herself with Kiku taken for a passport, when she received a letter from Miyakichi advising her to leave Kiku with the grand-parents. A recent regulation by the cannery association prohibited all women from taking their children with them to work in the canneries because a child had been injured during canning operations. Sunae was expected to work in the cannery as her wages were crucial to supplementing Miyakichi's meagre income from fishing the Fraser River in the 1920s, after the collapse of the sockeye salmon runs following the Hell's Gate landslide. Reluctantly, she left Kiku in the care of Jineimon and Omatsu Ezaki, and arrived in Vancouver on May 14, 1927 on the **ALABAMA MARU**.⁴

The Yesaki cannery house was the outermost of five built on pilings on Great West Cannery premises outside the wooden dyke and drainage ditch. The area offshore of the houses was an extensive wharf on pilings for racking nets. A section of the attic was partitioned off for a bedroom and the rest of the space was used for weaving and

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mending nets. The family tended a small garden plot across the wooden dyke and drainage ditch near the Chinese bunkhouse. Jineimon and Miyakichi probably fished the Fraser River together while Sunae worked in the cannery during the summers. Sachiyo was born in 1928, Tadashi in 1931, Tamotsu in 1934, Mitsuo in 1936 and Shiro in 1938.

Miyakichi petitioned the federal government in December 7, 1928 for naturalization, submitting as evidence his father's status as a naturalized citizen and of his being the first natural son. This petition was rejected for an unexplained reason. He subsequently reapplied for naturalization and received an affidavit on March 28, 1932 apparently confirming his citizenship as this document appears to have been used to obtain the annual fishing licenses.³

In 1930, the Yesakis had a new boat built at Kishi Boat Works: the cost of the hull was about \$230 and the engine with accessory parts \$730⁸. This boat was probably built to enable Miyakichi to fish the Skeena River using Hidekichi Ezaki's fishing license for that area. This was a wonderful opportunity as the Skeena River was consistently producing larger sockeye salmon runs than the Fraser River in the 1910s, 1920s and early 1930s. Miyakichi traveled with the new boat to the Skeena River with Sunae and children (Sachiyo and Tadashi) and probably fished for the Balmoral Cannery. He fished with Sunae as his boat-puller during the 1931 fishing season while the children were cared for by their grand-aunt, Nichi Ezaki, while the parents were out fishing. The following year, Miyakichi traveled alone to the Skeena River and stayed at the Sakai No. 2 bunkhouse of Balmoral Cannery while not fishing.

Jinshiro probably fished the sockeye fishing season with the old boat and his Fraser River fishing license. This license was probably transferred to the new boat for chum salmon fishing in the fall by Miyakichi, while Jinshiro stayed ashore and painted boats at Kishi Boat Works.

In 1931, Koyuki with her children returned to Steveston to care for Jinshiro, as he was beginning to suffer from ill health. Kiku and Omatsu were left in the care of Katsujiro's family (Jinshiro's younger brother). Jinshiro's and Miyakichi's families lived together in the Great West Cannery house.

The Great West tally ledgers lists catches under Jinshiro's name until 1936, but were most probably made by Miyakichi after 1933 (A table showing the details of his catch is available online at www.nikkeiplace).

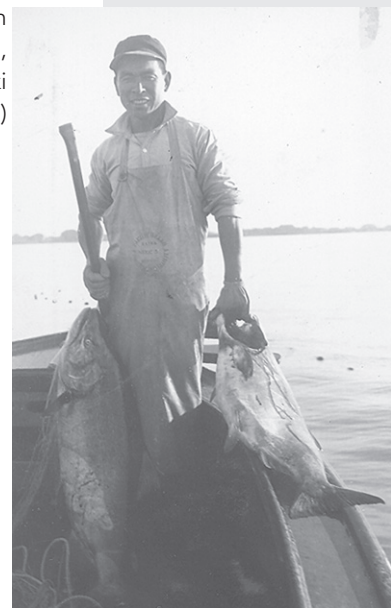
org)⁵. Fishing profits for 1931 and 1932 for the Yesaki family should be augmented by Miyakichi's catches on the Skeena River, which were not available for analysis. The 1933 debit from fishing resulted from a combination of a poor sockeye run and low prices for fish during the depression. The following year, Miyakichi landed 1,900 sockeyes indicating evidence of the rehabilitation of the Fraser River runs and the Adam River stock becoming the dominant sockeye salmon run.

1936 was an exceptional year for the Yesaki family. Jinshiro passed away on July 28 after a long illness. Miyakichi was out fishing but returned home to arrange for the funeral. Fishing was good that week with a fisherman landing 900 sockeyes⁵. The following week, he took his younger brothers, Toshio and Teruo, as deckhands and fished the channel along the Steveston waterfront. Many fishermen were taking turns fishing the Ikeda Bay drift while there were few fishermen fishing the waterfront channel. Consequently, they were able to make a gillnet drift, pick up the net, steam back up river and set the net again, without having to wait their turn. They made drift after drift, frequently pulling in the net with enmeshed fish, streaming back for another drift while clearing the net of fish. When the hold was full, they pulled a good part of the net with enmeshed fish into the boat and steamed back to the Great West Cannery to clear the net on the wharf and unload the fish. They returned numerous times to unload at the cannery during the 5-day opening. They caught 141 sockeyes on the first day, 596, 624 and 326 on subsequent days, requiring two deliveries each day to the cannery. They ended the week delivering 120 and 223 sockeyes on Friday and Saturday morning, respectively. Fishermen began fishing the next week with great anticipation, but the sockeye run was essentially over. Miyakichi continued fishing for the cannery until September 12th, resulting in the best daily catch of only 93 and a seasonal total of 3,299 sockeyes and gross earnings of \$1,765 for the year.

The 1938 Adam River sockeye run was not as large as that of 1934 and this is reflected in Miyakichi's catch, though some Fraser River fishermen had large catches that year. Miyakichi had his third largest catch of sockeye in 1940.

Miyakichi gillnetted the Fraser River from about April through November; beginning with spring salmon from April to June, sockeye from July to August, followed by pink in September (in odd-numbered

Miyakichi with spring salmon, c.1938 (Yesaki family photo)



Family posing at the back of the Great West Cannery house, 1936. From the left: Tadashi, Sachiyo, Sunae with Mitsuo and Miyakichi with Tamotsu. (Yesaki Family photo)



Miyakichi in duck punt in 1938, with Stevens double-barrel shotgun and decoys deployed around the punt off the Yesaki cannery house. (Yesaki Family photo)



Boat built in 1936 moored on wharf in front of the family home on Dyke Road, 1941.
(Yesaki Family photo)



Yesaki house on Dyke Road showing bridge over drainage ditch, 1940
(Yesaki Family photo)



Sunae and Miyakichi preparing land for planting, 1940 (Yesaki Family photo)

years), coho and chum from October to November. He sold his catch to the Great West Cannery when it was operating from late June to early September. On the other hand, his early spring salmon and late autumn catches were sold to the River Fish Company. The latter company distributed the spring and coho salmon to the local fresh-fish market and processed chum salmon for the salt-fish trade in Japan. River Fish Company was the largest cooperative of Japanese fishermen on the Fraser River. This cooperative operated a saltery on Bowitch wharf and a general store, both at the foot of Number Two Road. Profits from the saltery and the general store were shared amongst cooperative members at the end of the year. Members were able to purchase fishing gear and accessories as well as some food items, such as rice, from the cooperative.

Miyakichi fished mainly in Canoe Pass for chum salmon in the autumn. During the duck hunting season, he would tow out a duck punt loaded with his hand-crafted decoys and frequently hunt ducks in inclement weather with a Stevens double-barrel shotgun in the Ladner marshes

Sometime in the early 1930s, Miyakichi started long-lining for dogfish in the Gulf Islands, often with Sunae as deckhand. The children were left in the care of the grandparents, though Tadashi was occasionally taken out on a fishing trip. He was tethered with a rope around his waist to prevent him from falling overboard while on deck. He kept throwing dishes overboard, apparently fascinated by the erratic movements and flashes of the dishes in the water.

With the profits from his bonanza catch of 1936, Miyakichi built a new boat at Richmond Boat Works in the winter of 1936/37. It was 30-feet long, 8-feet 4-inches wide, 3-feet 5-inches deep and powered by an Easthope 10/12 HP engine. This boat cost approximately \$450 and \$785 for the engine.⁸

Miyakichi long-lined for dogfish with this boat during the early spring of 1938 off Lund in the northern Straits of Georgia with his cousin, Yasuhiro Ezaki, as deckhand. They took a 100-pound sack of rice and fished until it was all eaten, approximately one-and-a-half months. They were paid \$6 per ton of dogfish: the approximate distribution of earnings was \$120 for Miyakichi, \$60 for Yasuhiro and \$20 for expenses.⁹ Yasuhiro also gillnetted with Miyakichi for dog salmon during two autumns in the late 1930s.⁹

With the profits from the third largest sockeye salmon catch, Miyakichi was able to purchase one acre of waterfront property east of Number Two Road for \$280 from the River Fish Company.¹² This Company had purchased 10 acres of waterfront land and sold one acre lots to shareholders of the cooperative. Miyakichi invested \$2,000 to build a two-storey house: with full basement; first floor with kitchen, parlour, washroom and two bedrooms; attic with 2 rooms.¹² He added a bridge over the drainage ditch, wharf, net shed and mooring piles for securing his gillnet boat. Sunae and Miyakichi also planted strawberries, raspberries, peas and numerous fruit trees. In 1941, Sunae earned \$204 for strawberries, \$62 for raspberries and \$10 for beans sold to the Richmond Berry Growers Association.¹¹

The federal government declared war on Japan after the Japanese Imperial Navy attack on Pearl Harbour on December 7, 1941. After hearing of the attack, Miyakichi, who was long-lining for dogfish in the Gulf Islands, returned immediately to Steveston. The government confiscated all Japanese fishing boats and had them taken to New Westminster for safekeeping. Then in February 1942, the government ordered the evacuation of all Japanese and relocation to areas 100 miles from the west coast. The Yesakis, Nishis and Kuramotos conferred and decided to be relocated to sugar beet farms in Alberta in order to keep the family together. The Yesakis were advised there was little work for a family with such large numbers of youngsters, but that they were accepted. On the day before they were scheduled to leave, they were told not to depart. A cousin and a few others went to Vancouver to apply for special permission and were finally given permission to leave on the day they were scheduled to depart.¹⁰ Miyakichi was able to arrange for the sale of his boat to the Canadian Fishing Company the day before their departure for \$900. Miyakichi was paid \$888.50 after a supervision fee was deducted.¹²

Part Two of the Yesaki Family Chronicles will be published in a future issue.

Due to space limitations, the footnotes and tables for this article are available online at www.nikkeiplace.org in the Nikkei Images section.

TREASURE FROM THE COLLECTIONS

NEMICHI CHALLENGE TROPHY

Silver on a wood base, 1938

NNM 2004.11.1

The late 1930s ushered in radical change for Vancouver's *Nisei* population. Canadian media outlets condemned Imperial Japan's invasion of China, exacerbating anti-Japanese sentiment among Vancouver's Anglo-Canadian population. Meanwhile, a rift emerged between Vancouver's *Issei* and *Nisei*. Many *Issei* retained their Japanese national identity, while cries for assimilation and acceptance grew louder within the *Nisei* community, which was reaching adulthood, independence, and an age of unhindered self-expression. In this way, a profound level of communal estrangement characterized the late 1930s for some of Vancouver's *Nisei*. They began to drift from their elders, while also being increasingly ostracized by many of Vancouver's Anglo-Canadians.

In 1938 Hirokichi Nemichi, former Japanese Consul to Vancouver, contributed the pictured **Nemichi Challenge Trophy** to the Japanese Canadian Citizens' League, which was founded in 1936. The trophy was awarded at an annual speech contest for *Nisei* students, which continued until the Pacific War broke out in 1941. The trophy's front is engraved with: JCCL NATIONAL ORATORICAL CHALLENGE TROPHY. DONATED BY HON. HIROKICHI NEMICHI. 1938. Engraving on the back side reads: Shinobu Higashi 1938, Norah Fujita 1939, Kiyoshi Kato 1941, Thomas Tamaki 1940, Mary Endo 1954.

In the same year that he introduced the trophy, Nemichi addressed Japanese Canadians in the *Tairiku Nippō* newspaper¹. In light of Japan's war effort in China, he advocated for all Japanese Canadians to be "loyal to Japan" and "keep the Japanese spirit."

Historical context suggests that the Nemichi Challenge Trophy was not just a symbol of oratorical achievement. Rather, Nemichi's contemporaneous advocacy for Japanese nationalism suggests that the trophy held a stake in the politics of Japanese Canadian identity. The Nemichi Challenge Trophy begs us to ponder the malleability of national identity, and ask, *were the speech contest and its trophy meant to play a role in nationally unifying Vancouver's Japanese Canadian community?*

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¹ Hirokichi Nemichi, "Hijōjishin'nen ni saishi nihonseishin shinkō o toku," *Tairiku Nippō* (1 January 1938)

