# PNIKKEINIKKEI national museum & cultural centre IMAGES



Kimiko, Tamiko, Riye Nakamura, and other Women Waving at a Train Station; Vancouver, BC. NNM 2012.10.1.5.41

Divided and Reunited: Stories of Resilience



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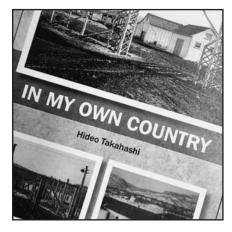
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### **Welcome to Nikkei Images**



Nikkei Images is a publication of the Nikkei National Museum & Cultural Centre dedicated to the preservation and sharing of Japanese Canadian

Stories since 1996. In this issue, we feature the resilience of Japanese Canadians through adversity, whether it be labor unions, fighting for voting rights, or internment and incarceration. We welcome proposals of family and community stories for publication in future issues. Articles should be between 500 - 3,500 words and finished works should be accompanied by relevant high resolution photographs with proper photo credits. Please send a brief description or summary of the theme and topic of your proposed article to Ireid@nikkeiplace.org.

Our publishing agreement can be found online at center.nikkeiplace.org/nikkei-images



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# Kohei and Kimie Shimozawa: Memories and Thanks (Part 2)

by David T. Shimozawa

Mom and Dad were forced to leave Ocean Falls on March 17, 1942. They went to stay temporarily with Mom's brother Shinichiro. His wife Tsuruko was a teacher at the Japanese Language School in Pitt Meadows. Mom and Dad stayed with them in their guarters. Dad had to report shortly to the RCMP to be sent to the road camp near Princeton. They had little time to decide what to do. Shinichiro had contracted TB, so he and Tsuruko would be sent to the sanitarium in New Denver. Mom learned that if she went with a group of Fraser Valley farm families to work in the sugar beet fields in Manitoba, Dad would be released from the road camp. As Mom later put it, because she had been separated from her husband for six years, she could not bear the thought of splitting up her family again. She felt that as long as she and Dad were together, they could handle any adversity.

They divided what money they had between them and Dad left for the Princeton road camp. Mom and her two children boarded the train to Manitoba. Carol was two years old and I was an infant of three months. We were sent to Letelier, Manitoba, a small French speaking farming town south of Winnipeg, about fifteen km north of the U.S. Border. Dad left the road camp and joined the family in April 1942.

The Sugar Beet Program was meant to employ large farm families with grown children who could work in the beet fields with their parents. No farmer was willing to host a family with two infants and only one working adult.

The Security Commission initially put the family into an abandoned farmhouse about two miles from town. Mom appealed, and we were moved into an old house near the railroad tracks in Letelier. These were very hard times. Dad took on any work that was available in order to put food on the table. He worked in the beet fields and in the grain fields during threshing season. He dug new pits and moved outhouses when they became full. He dug and planted gardens for the town people and farmers. In the winter he found work cutting blocks of ice from the frozen Red River and transporting them with a horse-drawn sleigh. When the winter wind was facing him on the long walk home, he had to walk backward to keep from freezing. Dad told me that it was difficult to find good well water around Letelier, so he had to fetch and use water from a pond located a few hundred meters behind the house. My earliest memories are following Dad along the trail to the pond. There was a round steel tank in the kitchen that he would fill with pails of water from the pond. I remember peering over the edge of the tank and seeing many bugs swimming on the surface. I think Mom used a cloth to filter out the bugs and then boiled the water for cooking and drinking. We were probably exposed to many pathogens in childhood. Perhaps this is why we have never suffered from allergies.

My younger sister Betty (Fumiko) was born on February 25, 1943. Dad had arranged with the local taxi driver to take Mom, when she was due, to the hospital in Morris, about 25 kilometers north. On that day there was a blinding snowstorm and the taxi driver refused to attempt the trip. One of the young men in the nisei community agreed to take her. They made it just in time, but he later said that he was very worried, that she might deliver in his car.

When the war ended in 1945, families interned in rural Manitoba were finally permitted to move into Winnipeg to live and seek work. Dad went ahead. He found

work at Dominion Wheel and Foundry. Dad became a moulder, creating sand moulds and pouring molten iron into them to produce train wheels for rolling stock. It required men who had the manual dexterity to mix and work wet sand like a sand sculptor, yet have the strength and stamina to operate an overhead crane delicately to pour molten iron into the mould without crumbling it.

After work, Dad would ride his bicycle around town knocking on door after door asking for a place to rent for his family. No one would rent to a Japanese family. He finally found a suite in a tenement house on Magnus Avenue, in the north end of Winnipeg. I remember it well. It was an old one and a half story house, with two suites on the main floor and two upstairs. The landlord lived in one of the downstairs suites and we lived in the other. Upstairs, there was an older lady in one suite and a prostitute in the other. There was one toilet and sink upstairs that was shared by all the tenants. Our suite had three adjoining rooms with wide openings and no doors. There was a wood burning kitchen stove and an icebox in the back room with a small stove in the front room. Metal stovepipes supported by wires from the ceiling connected the two stoves. This provided heat in winter. There was no running hot water. Mom would boil water and fill a washtub for our baths. Under a trapdoor in the kitchen, there was a small cellar.

Carol and I started school, attending William Whyte public school nearby. Across the street on Magnus Avenue, there was an orthodox Jewish synagogue. On Saturdays, the Sabbath, the Rabbi would ask me to follow him through the building and to turn each light switch on – something that he, as an observant Jew, was not allowed to do. For this, he always gave me a nickel.

One day, Mom took us for a walk to the United Church Stella Mission. She enrolled us in the Sunday school and arranged to have us baptized and given baptismal names. When the time came, Reverend McLeod asked each of us what name we would like. Noriko chose the name Carol. Fumiko chose the name Betty, because she had just seen a movie called "Dolly Sisters", starring Betty Grable. I (Tetsuo), chose David, because I had just been told the story in Sunday school of David and Goliath.



Letelier, Manitoba, Summer 1943 Kohei with David, Kimie with Betty, Carol (Shimozawa Family photo)

Dad often worked the night shift at the foundry riding his bicycle to work at 2:00 AM. I asked him how he was ever able to ride a bike in the winter after a snowstorm. He told me that he would ride between the streetcar tracks, because they had been kept clear of snow. To get from the Magnus Avenue house to the foundry, he had to cross the Red River on the Louise Bridge. He would often take a shortcut, by rolling his bike up the embankment of the CPR main line and crossing the river by walking his bike over the train bridge. I never asked him how many close calls he had with trains, but I shudder when I think of how close Mom might have been to becoming a widow.

Mom found work as a housemaid. She took Betty with her to work, while Carol and I were in school. She worked for two prosperous families, one Jewish and the other, German Mennonite. I find it not surprising that these people, whose families had experienced persecution in Europe, were the only ones that would hire her.







Dad's brother Ryohei followed him to Winnipeg where Dad found him a job at the foundry. In 1947, Ryohei decided to return to Nishioi. His father Kametaro was in his seventies and Ryohei, was expected to assume the responsibilities of the oldest son and look after his parents. Mom said that it was Dad's blind brother Masashi, who eventually helped to support the family after Ryohei died at age sixty in 1958. Dad was offered a share of the Shimozawa family property at that time. He declined, asking only that a portion of land be set aside in his blind brother Masashi's name.

Our parents knew that the North End and the Magnus Avenue house were not where they wanted to raise their children. By 1948, they had saved enough money to consider buying their own house. The Mennonite family who Mom worked for as a housemaid, lived on Ottawa Avenue in East Kildonan. They were building

a new house so Mom and Dad bought the Ottawa Avenue house.

When we moved into the house in November 1948, Mom said that she felt as if they were the owners of a magnificent castle. Compared to the Magnus Avenue tenement suite, it must have appeared to be so. It was a one and a half story Craftsman, with three bedrooms, a sunroom and hardwood floors. For the first time they had a bathroom with a real tub and hot running water. There was a private back yard, garden and a garage. By current standards, it was a modest house, on a thirty-foot lot, with only thirty-amp wiring that provided only one outlet in each bedroom.

Dad often told me that he felt very sad that someone with Mom's intellect had to sew gloves to help support the family. Mom never complained. She was more socially adept than Dad and made friends easily. I think that she found many ways outside of her work to interact with her community and satisfy her inquisitive mind. Mom would read the entire newspaper and talk about current events with Dad. They would follow events in Japan through reading the *Bungei Shunju* magazines that Atsuko sent to them regularly. When I once asked Mom what these magazines were about, she said that they were similar to *Time Magazine* in content.

The bathtub was the feature most appreciated by Mom and Dad. Some of their friends lived in outlying areas in houses without hot water. Whenever they came to visit, Mom would fill up the tub and invite them to take a hot bath.

Mom's housework for the Jewish family led to a job with one of their friends who owned Perfecfit Glove Company. It was piecework, sewing fine leather gloves. She worked there for over twenty-five years until she retired. Dad often told me that he felt very sad that someone with Mom's intellect had to sew gloves to help support the family. Mom never complained. She was more socially adept than Dad and made friends easily. I think that she found many ways outside of her work to interact with her community and satisfy her inquisitive mind. Mom would read the entire newspaper and talk about current events with Dad. They would follow events in Japan through reading the Bungei Shunju magazines that Atsuko sent to them regularly. When I once asked Mom what these magazines were about, she said that they were similar to *Time Magazine* in content.

During the first years after the war, life in Japan was very difficult. Mom and Dad packed canned and packaged food into cardboard boxes, wrapped them in heavy paper, and sent me off to the post office with money to mail them. They sent off a lot of parcels on a regular basis to Atsuko in Tokyo, Nishioi and Iizumi.

Mom and Dad became active members of the Japanese United Church. Services were held in Japanese, using the chapel of Knox United Church, a large established church in downtown Winnipeg. Once a month on Fridays, they would gather at someone's house for a prayer meeting, or kateshukai. We were one of the few homes that had a piano, so the meetings were at our place quite often. I remember being in my room upstairs studying and hearing the piano playing a hymn. I could hear Mom's strong soprano voice and David Sakade's soaring tenor voice. There was tea and food served after the service with a lot of chatter. I think that these meetings were an enjoyable social event as well as a spiritual experience.

On Sundays, after church, Mom would prepare some food. She and Dad would take it to visit someone who was ill, in the hospital or living alone, who they thought might like their company. She would invite university students, new in town, who missed eating Japanese food. We usually shared our Christmas and New Year's dinners with some of Mom and Dad's friends who were couples without children. Mom thought they might enjoy the company of a larger family at these times. Over the years we had several visitors who stayed at our home. Some were former students of Mom from her Ocean Falls days. Others were newly arrived immigrants from Japan, who needed a temporary place to stay until they found their own place. Looking back, our modest home on Ottawa Avenue in Winnipeg was a warm, secure place, soon to welcome a new family member.





## Nancy Murakami's Life Story (Part 1)

written September 30, 2001

#### Family History

**Father** Kishichiro Sasaki, born 1876 in Nishikori Mura Miyage-Ken, Japan.

**Mother** Sui Ujiye, born 1883 in Fukushima-Ken, Japan. Her mother's given name was Okiku.

In 1909, Dad came to Canada and lived in New Westminster before settling at 9237 River Road, Sunbury (now called Delta). Nine years later, in 1918, Mother and sister Hannah followed and came to Canada from Japan.

Brother Kishio was born 1919, Kay Kishino 1921, Mitsuko (Mitzy) 1922, I in 1924, and Toshiko 1928. Unfortunately, Hannah drowned in the Fraser River in December 1924 while washing rice in very icy conditions. The day after Hannah died, Mother was lying in bed with me, I was only a few days old. She had a dream that she spoke to Hannah and said, "Hannah, Hannah, what is the matter with you? You were to name this baby and now you had to die on us." And Hannah replied, "Well, Mother, why don't you name her Takeko, this is a good name." So this is how my name was chosen for me. I recall Mother saying my sister's friend, Chiyako, that her mother, Mrs. Takahashi, was a mid-wife and brought many babies around Sunbury into this world.

#### Life on River Road

Dad was a naturalized commercial fisherman and very hard-working. Mom and Dad cultivated some of their seven acres by hard labour. They grew many different varieties of fruits, vegetables, berries, and currants, some for sale. Food was plentiful. They raised hundreds of chickens that were incubated from eggs. I recall the croaking of the frogs in early spring. This sound still brings back memories of us helping Dad and Mom flip the eggs in the incubators which were heated by kerosene.



First boat ride for the Sasaki children.

#### Chores

Brother Kishio learned commercial fishing from a young age, and had to help dad who developed a slight heart condition. We all pitched in mending nets, gardening, and tending chickens. My sister Mitzy and I had after-school chores of washing and grading the eggs for sale. We used to wash the kitchen floor every day with water from the Fraser River. Sister Kay Kishino did most of the cooking as Mother was too busy with other chores.

In the evenings, I recall that we occasionally enjoyed the Japanese bath which we all had, going to our neighbour's place and visa versa. Our parents would visit and have green tea and snacks. Corn Flakes were eaten like potato chips, they were larger then. It seems this was the main evening social past time in our neighbourhood.

In the springtime my sisters Kay and Mitzy sent to our next door neighbors, the Gotos, to help dig their garden for spring planting. When we were finished harvesting our crop of currants, then we would help the neighbourhood pick their currants. The part we enjoyed most about this was storytelling and we all ate together, big lunches and dinners. I recall being treated to juicy baked spring salmon covered with sweet miso.

During summer holidays, Mother sent us to Lulu Island to cousin Sasaki's, to help pick strawberries. We also went to cousin Sally and Kanroku Suzuki's in Strawberry Hill. Blueberries were plentiful behind our property, which adjoins Burn's Bog. We would go blueberry picking with a picnic lunch, a buyer would come and pay 4¢ a pound. This was our spending money and also for school supplies.

Fall fishing was bitterly cold, but Dad managed to get many chum salmon and steelhead. These were salted or preserved in miso for winter consumption for our relatives and our family. They made huge barrels of miso, which was quite tasty. In the winter season, Mom and dad knitted their linen nets for next season, which we all learned from them.

Every year we would have a nice Christmas tree. My sister, Toshiko and I would sleep beside the Christmas tree on blankets on the linoleum floors. I recall one Christmas, brother Kishio bought us nice fountain pens. We were so thrilled with this gift. Kishio practiced kendo, martial arts with bamboo sticks, with Sensei Mr. Yuichi Akune. I recall he placed in a Kendo tournament and we were all very proud of him.

#### School

We went to Sunbury School during the week and Japanese language school, which we attended on Saturday and Sunday. Both schools were about ½ mile away from home, close enough to run home for lunch. The closest high school was about eight miles away in Ladner. Very few attended by bike. We attended Sunbury School faithfully and when I was about 12 years old, all the classes entered an essay contest. Much to my surprise, I received first prize for Intermediate Class, British Columbia and for the Dominion of Canada (as it was called then). My teacher, Mrs. Cora, and my parents were very pleased. I received five dollars prize money.

Our Japanese language school teachers were Mr. Shoichi Sakurai, Mr. Aoki Sr. from Vancouver, his son Ted Aoki, and Mrs. Masako Onotera, that I recall. Masako was Hideo Onotera's wife from Japan. At New Years, the Japanese school would have a big celebration

and concert. I had to memorize a whole story from a Japanese school book and recite it to the audience. We had some snacks, kamaboko, Japanese oranges, and Whistle pop.

#### Childhood Memories

My Dad and Mother had seven acres and our home was right on the Fraser River. The property ran from the river, divided by River Road, and into Burn's Bog. I also remember that herds of cows would walk down River Road. This was very frightening for me and I used to have nightmares about them.

We grew every type of vegetable and fruit, even cantaloupe, which didn't quite ripen fully before the frost came in the fall. We ate off the land and had plenty of chicken and fresh fish. I recall they had a large wash tub to cook fresh crabs when Dad came in from Gulf fishing. Cooking right on the wharf, it was delicious.

The 4X Bread Man came daily on River Road with fresh breads etc. Furuya Co. came to sell and take orders of dry goods. The Chinese man came often, with his putt-putt small boat selling all kinds of goodies, our favourite was a chocolate-coated red peppermint candy man. Dad took us by boat to New Westminster occasionally. Sometimes, they shopped at Nishiguchi's General Store, upstairs was a large Chinese restaurant. To this day, I recall the delicious flavour of those large bowls of noodles. There was large char siu floating on top, I've never come across anything quite so delicious.

#### Childhood Illness

When I was in my early teens, I was stricken with goiters, which was affecting my heart. I was scheduled to have my operation by Dr. Hugh. The day before the operation, my mother changed her mind. I couldn't understand why. I was later told that Mother and brother Kishio were mending linen fishing nets in the boat house. Every time they found a hole in the net to mend, they also found a baby swallow. They knew it was a warning about me not to have the operation. To this day, I feel I owe my life to the swallows. They made many nests and had families each year and flew away.

Mr. Nishiguchi had a store in New Westminster and also did taxi service. He took us to Port Mann to this "Special Lady" he knew about. Her name was Nurse Smith. She had worked with Florence Nightingale







when she was a very young girl. Nurse Smith was the only living nurse of this kind and known throughout the world, she worked with herbs etc. As I entered the old rambling house, it was dark and dingy, a cat scooted by. She was very old, with piercing eyes. I had my coat on, she could tell a person just by looking at you, also your illness and your future it seems. She pointed her finger at me and said "You are a very lucky girl and so I am going to cure you!" She said with the war with France, she couldn't get any more shipment of poultice and had just enough for one person. There were many people waiting to be cured of cancer and goiter etc. I was very fortunate indeed.

The process was very painful. Mother made this herb plaster and changed it on my neck every evening. I lay under a light bulb hanging in the living room, with big moths twirling around it. The plaster burned the goiter out. To this day, I detest moths, almost fear them. I must relate them to that painful period in my childhood.

Mother wanted to give it up and I would scream "No! No!" with pain. My throat was scarred but my goiters were gone. With that, my health came back. Scrawny me, I seemed to bloom into a young lady. I always wore a scarf around my neck, chokers in later years, even now although the scars are almost gone.

#### The War

The war broke out December 7, 1941. We left our family home, seven acres of land (including a large nethouse, barn and two long chicken houses). My Dad and Kishio's fishing boat was confiscated along with all the other Japanese fishermen's boats. We evacuated by bus with one suitcase each to Exhibition Park. Many friends came to wish us well, and say our good-byes. We were sent to the cattle building and slept on army cots. We traveled by CNR train to Winnipeg, Manitoba. Mother and Dad decided that since they had four girls, the best they could do for us was to take us to a sugar beet farm in Manitoba. They were very caring, but guite strict in

I remember my first meeting with my future husband, George. The one good thing was that the war brought us together. We also met Fujimoto's family of five. We called it the "sugar beet houses", about three small houses all lined up with an out-house close by. How we managed, especially the Murakami family, to all fit in the house is remarkable. Drinking water was drawn from a pond in the cow pasture. It was fenced but not very sanitary, with water bugs swimming around in it. In the winter the men got blocks of ice from the Red River for our water supply.

their ways. We were picked up by truck by J.L. Parent at the Winnipeg, Manitoba CNR station and taken to his farm in Letellier. Many families lived around this district including the Gotos, Onoteras, Tasakas, and Cousin Sasakis who all came to Manitoba. The Sakurais chose to go to Kaslo, and the Taguchis settled in Alberta.

We met the Murakami family, Otokitchi and Asayo and their eight children. I remember my first meeting with my future husband, George. The one good thing was that the war brought us together. We also met Fujimoto's family of five. We called it the "sugar beet houses", about three small houses all lined up with an out-house close by. How we managed, especially the Murakami family, to all fit in the house is remarkable. Drinking water was drawn from a pond in the cow pasture. It was fenced but not very sanitary, with water bugs swimming around in it. In the winter the men got blocks of ice from the Red River for our water supply.

We worked from dawn to dusk. We thinned and weeded the sugar beets, occasionally battling the wild oats in the blazing hot sun in the summer and bitterly cold for harvesting in the fall. Mosquitoes were a challenge and a discomfort to us all. We all worked very hard, I felt sorry for my Mom and Dad, they looked so tired and old beyond their time. In the winter season, the girls (most of us) worked at Winnipeg City as domestic help. It was quite educational. Some of the men worked in the city and some, like George, took off to logging camps. One place I worked was for Mr. and Mrs. Harry Ashdown

(Ashdown Company President). They treated me like their daughter. They had two sons, my nickname was "Sunshine". We looked forward to our "girl's day off", on Thursdays. One special lady, Thelma Scambler, was in charge of us. We called this social, the Canteen at the YWCA. The niseis, all young girls and boys, met at socials and dances. This was the one bright happening for us.

May 14, 1944, brother Kishio traveled by train to Kaslo, B.C. and married Toyoko Sakurai. The Sakurai family was one of our neighbours before the evacuation from Sunbury, B.C. (Delta). In 1946, the Government announced repatriation, where Japanese were allowed to return to Japan. Dad, who sent most of his earnings to Japan to retire, decided we were leaving for Japan. With this news, George Murakami proposed to me. We had fallen in love. The decision was made that brother Kishio would look after us three girls. Kay Kishino later married Shigio Sakiyama and has two sons, Rodney and Grant. Sister Mitsuko married Frank Nishimura and has two sons, Richard and Jeffrey. I, Takeko, Nancy married George Murakami to stay in Manitoba, Canada. In 1946, Toshiko was to look after Mom and Dad and leave for Japan. My saddest memory was our farewell at the train station in Winnipeg, never to see them again, our thoughts, unbearable! Toshiko and Dad died in Japan. Mother returned to Canada and resided with Kishio and Toyoko. Mother passed away at the ripe old age of 92 in 1973 at the Delta Hospital.





# Shifting Tides in Labour From 1920-1939: A Profile of the First Japanese-Canadian Union

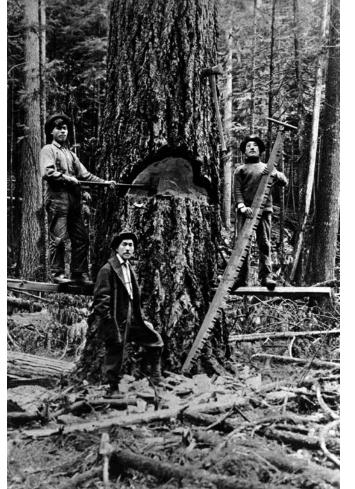
by Rita Rahmati

In 1920, the first Japanese-Canadian union – The Japanese Labour Union - was established after the Swanson Bay sawmill strike, to organize Japanese-Canadian workers and improve wages and working conditions. Established by a key political and intellectual figure of the issei, Etsu Suzuki, the union aimed to organize Japanese-Canadian workers in the logging and lumber industries in British Columbia. However, the union was inclusive and willing to incorporate any Japanese-Canadian worker – even small business owners and tradespeople. The union was formed in the post WWI environment of labour militancy that saw Japanese-Canadian workers in the lumber industry particularly involved in strikes for better wages and working conditions. Notably, the Japanese Camp and Mill Workers Union (CMWU) became incorporated into the larger labour movement through the virulently "anti-asiatic" Trades and Labour Congress and the Vancouver Trades and Labour Council. This was a nearly unprecedented moment in the history of the labour movement in Canada, and signaled a radical shift in the movement that lasted until the beginning of the second world war.

Etsu Suzuki, the founder of the Japanese Labour Union, was a graduate from Waseda University of Tokyo: an activist, journalist, and translator who arrived in British Columbia in 1918 from Japan. Before the establishment of the Japanese Labour Union, Suzuki was primarily known to the Nikkei community as a journalist. Suzuki had been recruited to write for the local Nikkei paper, the *Tairiku Nippo* (*Continental Times*). In his articles, Suzuki called for the organization of Japanese-Canadian workers, and common cause between Japanese-Canadian and non-Japanese-Canadian workers. Suzuki argued that Japanese Canadians were not the Japanese of Japan, but the Japanese of Canada, and thus should organize themselves across racial divides.

In 1920, Suzuki had the opportunity to translate his vision into reality. Strikers at the Swanson Bay sawmill, just south of present day Prince Rupert, were joined by Chinese and Nikkei workers in protest of arbitrary wage cuts imposed by the sawmill owners. Seventynine Japanese-Canadian employees declared that they would combat racial discrimination and promote mutual understanding through expressing their solidarity with their Chinese and white coworkers. Thirty of these men showed their solidarity by leaving Prince Rupert for work in Vancouver. While company pressure led to the strike's collapse, Suzuki followed up by organizing a meeting of the Swanson Bay strikers at the Japanese Language School in Vancouver. There, the Nikkei strikers were applauded by the Japanese consul in Vancouver, Satotsuga Ukita, among other leaders in the Japanese-Canadian community for striking alongside white workers. At that meeting, the Japanese Workers Union (Kanada nihonjin rodo kumiai) was established with Suzuki as its chief adviser. Within a short period of time, 120 of the 5,000 Nikkei labourers in the lumber industry joined the union.

The union soon began making its presence known in BC through its support of Nikkei employees at Alberta Lumber Co. sawmill. Sada Shoji, then leader of the Japanese Labour Union, had begun talks with the Alberta Lumber Co. over a gradual reduction in wages from forty cents an hour to thirty, and later twenty five, that eventually devolved into a strike. In an ironic contrast with the depiction of Japanese Canadians as anti union 'strikebreakers' promoted by the labour movement, white male workers were hired at higher wages as strikebreakers. In a significant departure from the racist sentiments common in the labour movement. the all white Lumber Workers International Union picketed in support of the Nikkei workers – marking a turn in race relations in the labour movement. Unfortunately, in spite of donations from the Japanese-



Three Japanese Canadian workers felling a tree at a logging camp near Steelhead, BC. NNM 2010.23.2.4.199

Canadian community, the strike eventually collapsed due to a lack of continued, sufficient funding. In 1925, at a sawmill in Port Alice, the Japanese Labour Union led a strike by Japanese-Canadian workers for equal pay with their white counterparts. The strikers successfully received a raise, but all of their leaders were fired. One leader was deported by the Immigration Department: a common fate for issei union leaders.

From its establishment, the Japanese Labour Union was fraught with both problems common to organizing camp and mill workers, and problems unique to their role as a Japanese-Canadian union. By the late 1920s, union membership was at approximately 1600 members. However, these members were scattered throughout the province due to the nature of logging and mill work – making the union organizationally weak. Furthermore, Etsu Suzuki returned briefly to Japan in 1931, and was subsequently forbidden by the Canadian government from returning for unknown reasons. Ryuichi Yoshida, an activist in the union from its formation and writer for the union's paper The Daily People, spoke on the problems that confronted a Japanese union isolated from the general trade union movement:

"Since I had worked in many camps over ten years and knew many people I thought it would not be difficult for us to increase the membership of the Labour Union. I was optimistic that a hundred new members should be easy to get. However, it was not so easy...The practical problem was that the Labour Union didn't increase in membership. It was not possible to strengthen the Labour Union because we could not achieve any gains in wages and conditions. Our union, consisting of just some Japanese workers, was too small to achieve any improvements in work conditions and pay. We were too scattered... ... The white unions were organized by occupations but they did not accept Japanese members usually. Because of that the labour Union included Japanese workers of all occupations." (Knight and Koizumi, 1976 54-55, Workers Capital and the State in British Columbia: Selected Papers - 78)

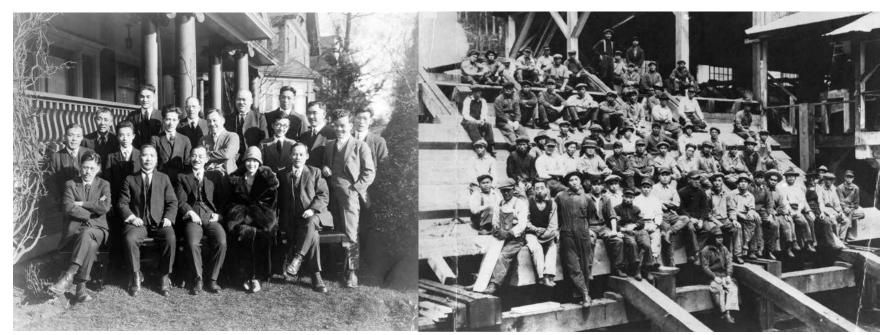
The union's establishment formed a rift in the Nikkei community itself. The union was condemned by the Japanese Merchants association, who mounted a campaign to weaken the union. The Japanese Labour Union's condemnation of the boss system that enabled the hiring of issei labourers from Japan stirred up the ire of wealthy members of the community. The Japanese Labour Union also faced the problem of the close relations between workers among the issei who had immigrated from the same prefecture in Japan, who may reject belonging to a larger pan-Japanese union in favour of their locales. The Labour Weekly newspaper was shut down when Suzuki targeted predatory labour contractors, and Ryuichi Yoshida accused Japanese-Canadian companies of making excessive profits by supplying cheap, low quality meals to camp workers. Members of the Japanese Labour Union were fired by their employers, and advertisers boycotted the newly-founded union newspaper The Daily People. In response, the union organized boycotts and a food cooperative to supply members. The union's paper was self printed, and survived off donations and volunteer work, while also functioning as an employment agency by providing free ad space for available jobs. Despite being boycotted by advertisers, The Daily People had many readers in the province's isolated mills and lumber camps. Until 1926, the Japanese Consul, who held a great deal of sway among the issei, was supportive of the union. The replacement Consul in 1926 was an ardent nationalist who placed pressure on the Japanese Association to exclude Labour Union members.





In 1921, one year after establishment, the Japanese Workers Union applied for affiliation with the Vancouver Trades and Labour Council (VTLC). Affiliation with the VTLC translated to being incorporated into the larger, and more powerful Canadian labour movement – a move which was consistent with the union's ideology of mutual understanding and solidarity across races. The VTLC had long been the centre of both working class organization in early 20th century Vancouver, and the centre of organized anti-Asian sentiments. Since its establishment, the council has held a near constant focus on the "oriental problem", supporting all-white hiring policies, disallowing employment of white women alongside Asian men, and restricting areas of Asian employment, residence, work hours, and immigration. The VTLC organized boycotts of Japanese-Canadian businesses, complained that cheap Japanese-Canadian labour undermined union workers and blamed Japanese-Canadian labourers for poor labour conditions. But in 1927, six years after their initial application was rejected, the Japanese Camp and Mill Workers Union became the first Asian union to become a member of the Vancouver Trades and Labour Council. The shift occurred under continued lobbying by the Camp and Mill Workers Union (CMWU), pressure from union leaders like Ernest Winch and Angus McInnis, and the declining power of organized labour. Unlike their first application and subsequent rejection from the VTLC, only five of twenty five members unions objected to the CMWU's inclusion.

The VTLC was not the only branch of the labour movement to "otherize" Asian immigrants, rejecting Japanese Canadians as workers, citizens, and Canadians. The Trades and Labour Congress (TLC), Canada's largest and most significant union organization from the 19th to 20th centuries, spearheaded "anti-asiatic" policies in Canada under the guise of protecting white male workers. Despite this long history of exclusionary policy, in 1931 the Japanese Camp and Mill Workers Union was incorporated into the Trades and Labour Congress as the Vancouver and Vicinity Camp and Mill Workers TLC Federated Union No. 31. Upon inclusion, the Camp and Mill Workers Union challenged the racist policies of the TLC at the 1931 convention. The Camp and Mill Workers Union presented a number of resolutions, along with the presence and advocacy of a delegate, K. Iwashita. Several unionists spoke in favour of the



A group of individuals outside the home of the Japanese consulate. In the centre of the first row is Consul General Ukita and his wife, surrounded by prominent members of the Japanese Canadian community. NNM 2010.31.10

Camp and Mill local's proposals, including prominent unionists such as W.J. Bartlett of the VTLC, formerly one of the strongest advocates in the labour movement for the creation of a "white man's country." Barlett was recorded at the 1931 convention as having "paid tribute to the members of the Camp and Mill Workers Union as loyal trade unionists." The resolutions proposed to the congress by the Camp and Mill Workers Union supported the efforts of Japanese Canadians to be naturalized citizens and receive voting rights. These resolutions were adopted with minor modifications by the TLC, and the TLC joined Japanese-Canadian pressure groups in urging the provincial legislature in British Columbia to amend the Provincial Elections Act and grant Japanese Canadians suffrage. But there were clear limits to this "inclusion" of Japanese Canadians in the TLC. The Camp and Mill Union also proposed a resolution calling for the deletion of Article 9 of the TLC's Platform of Principles. Article 9 ("the principle of "asiatic exclusion") was a landmark moment in increasing anti-Asian sentiment among the Canadian labour movement. The article called for a blanket ban on immigration from Asia. The Camp and Mill Workers Union accused Article 9 of being a "platform of race discrimination" that was intolerable for the trade union movement, which should stand for the "equal rights of all working people." The resolution failed to pass under immense opposition; the Committee on Constitution

A group of approximately one hundred Japanese Canadian sawmill workers at Wood & English Ltd., in Englewood, BC. NNM 1994.85.19

and Law instead recommended the replacement of the term "asiatics" with the "exclusion of all races that cannot be properly assimilated." The opposition was not surprising; even among those who had voted for the Camp and Mill Union's proposals, it was made clear that further Asian immigration was out of the question.

The inclusion of the Japanese Camp and Mill Workers Union in the Vancouver Trades and Labour Council and the Trades and Labour Congress signaled a shift towards a limited form of racial inclusion in the labour movement. Anti-orientalism was repudiated from even the most orthodox unions - on the 15th anniversary of the founding of the CMWU, nine greater Vancouver unions published notices of support and congratulations in The Daily People. From 1900-1939, Chinese, Japanese, and East Indian Canadians participated in fifty separate strikes. Seventy percent of these strikes occurred alongside white workers, much like the Swanson Bay strike of 1920. Union membership in the Japanese Labour Union/CMWU gradually rose to 1,600 by the late 1920s. By 1935, the Camp and Mill Workers Union (CMWU) had eight locals, despite a large concentration of Japanese-Canadian workers remaining under the purview of local benevolent societies or paternalistic employer - employee relations. Political parties affiliated with labour began to push for Japanese Canadian's rights.

The Canadian Labour Party agitated for Japanese-Canadian suffrage in 1928, and the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (the precursor to the present day New Democratic Party) broke with "white solidarity" practices in the 1930s and supported Japanese-Canadian franchise. As for the CMWU, the union became one of the most prominent Japanese-Canadian organizations opposed to Japanese militarism until it ceased publishing in 1941. The union was dissolved along with all other Japanese associations as soon as the war started. Despite this, some individual members continued to organize Japanese-Canadian labour during internment - former English language secretary, Seiku Sakumoto, successfully organized Japanese-Canadian beet workers in Alberta through the Shogo

Endo Kai (Beet Workers Association).

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# Wow for P.O.W. an accidental book review

by Sherri Kajiwara

A Canada Post expedited envelope covered almost entirely by an assortment of colourful stamps, many from the 1960s and 70s, arrived unexpectedly in my in-box at the Nikkei National Museum shortly after Valentine's Day 2019. Enclosed was a copy of a book titled P.O.W. In My Own Country, 1942-1946 by Hideo Takahashi, and a hand written letter by the author's two daughters, Louise and Norma, explaining that their "late father, Hideo Takahashi, wrote a manuscript in the 1970s about his experiences as a Canadian civilian interned in his own country during the Second World War. The manuscript has now been made into a book. As the English (language) clerk for the prisoner. of.war (sic) camp at Angler, Ontario, this memoir is a straightforward account of his days behind barbed wired aided by the correspondences he sent out on behalf of the camp and individual internees to officials."

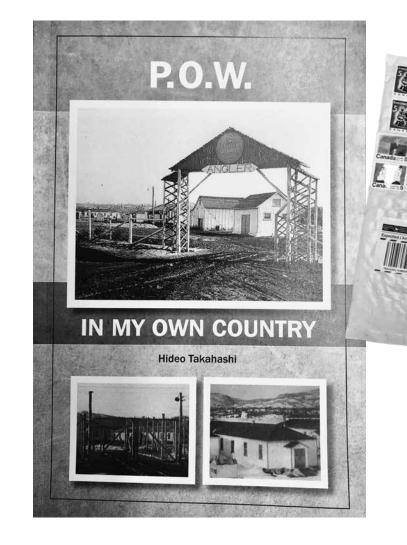
While Louise and Norma write that their father produced the manuscript in the 1970s, it is primarily a compilation of journal entries written while he was in his twenties, in present time, during 1942-1946.

Randomly flipping the book open, I landed on page 148 and the subtitle, "Outgoing letter to: Custodian" which documents the author's letter to the Custodian in October 1943 decrying the forced sale of his house in Vancouver. I was struck by the transcript of his letter and the auspiciousness of timing. At that moment I was deep into a project with the Virtual Museum of Canada called Writing Wrongs, based upon over 300 letters of protest written by the Japanese Canadian community during the 1940s and into the knowledge mobilization phase of a multi-institutional research project on the dispossession of the Japanese Canadian community in the 1940s called Landscapes of Injustice. My curiosity

piqued, I resolved to read the book from beginning to end. Given the Takahashi daughter's description that the text would be straightforward, I braced myself for an interesting but dry read. What I discovered within seconds of entering the prologue that this was going to be a very unique telling of extraordinary days.

The description of 'straightforward' is apt for the look, layout, and cadence of the book. But the content is decidedly not. It is rife with drama, tension, pathos, and surprisingly, humour. Seemingly brief entries paint vivid, colourful visuals, replete with sensory input. On September 8, 1942, when the author writes, "...a skunk left its unmistakable calling card" you can practically smell it. When he bemoans on November 10th of that same year – "We are not getting any butter this week – and I love butter", I sympathized, empathized, and had a giggle. A minor entry earlier on about reading King's Row which he describes as "a 'dirty' book", compelled me to look up the title. I discovered the book was written by Henry Belleman, popular in the 1940s and was turned into a movie starring Ronald Reagan in 1942. It seems to be a lost classic that I may need to search out next.

This book exposes aspects of the internment era that aren't well known. There was a nationality gap in the prisons where Japanese nationals were technically under the protection of the Spanish Consulate, and Japanese Canadians who were not. To add insult to injury, Japanese Canadians could not denounce Canada and claim to be Japanese because they were deemed to legally be British subjects by birth. British nationality was non-renounceable at the time. There was also an unsurmountable divide between Japanese Canadians who wanted to renounce Canada



be. The author spent four Christmases incarcerated, including a final one three months after the official end of the war.

Although the war officially ended on Sept 2, 1945, that date is not even noted in the book.

On April 4, 1946, the author is suddenly released with no apparent explanation and one-hour notice to leave the camp. Angler was officially closed in July of that year. No internee was ever charged with a crime. Hideo Takahashi passed away on April 5, 2015, 69 years after he first arrived at Union Station in Toronto. The book was published posthumously with funding assistance from the National Association of Japanese Canadians. A permanent copy is held in the Charles H Kadota Resource Centre of the Nikkei National Museum, which isn't a lending library, but makes rare books available for visitors to read on site.

altogether and go to Japan, and those who wanted the complete opposite, to actively remain in Canada with their families and accept forced dispersal. The author documents the strife between the "Seki-nuki" who were the former and the "Mass Evacuation" group who were the latter.

The letter on page 148 was not unique. The dispossession of fishing vessels is documented on page 55, property queries appear on page 68, 70, and 149, with little resolution. A harsh description of the treatment of Japanese Canadians, versus Germans and Italians is eloquently noted on pages 159 – 161 and repeated by two separate entries further in the book.

It was poignant to see annual entries documenting the kindness and generosity of the Japanese Canadian community at Christmastime. Regardless of incarceration, internment, or denial of civil rights, there is almost religiously a journal entry documenting festive greetings and annotation of gifts, as humble as they may





# Divided by war, friends find each other after 75 years

by Ross Carter

In April 2016, I began a search to find Mariko and Yaeko. These were two Japanese-Canadian schoolmates/ friends of my mother, Anne Carter (nee McMillan). She hadn't seen them since the early part of 1942. Over the years, she had mentioned her two friends whenever the topic of Japan was, for one reason or another, being discussed. In 2012, I traveled to Japan and volunteered on my older brother's Japanese bird study in Kyushu, so again I heard about Mariko and Yaeko. In the early spring of 2016, my brother, a bird biologist, was again conducting field research in Japan on the Japanese Murrelet and my mother again mentioned the story of her two Japanese-Canadian friends. She said after Mariko and Yaeko were sent away to the Interior of BC during the war, that she wrote to both of them, but the letters came back unopened. She never heard from them again. Hearing this story, the mystery caught my attention and I felt compelled to know what had happened to them, wondering if they were still alive and if they remembered my mother after so many years!

Anne Carter was born in Port Alberni in 1931. Her father was a Sales Manager for the Alberni Pacific Lumber (APL) Company. They lived at the corner of 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Angus Street. Across the street, there was a lane that was a shortcut up to the Eight Avenue Elementary School that Anne was attending in 1942.

Anne remembered well when the clouds of war first arrived on her horizon. Her family used to spend a month each summer at a rented cabin on Judges Row at Qualicum Beach. It was 1939, on the September long weekend, and England had just declared war against Germany. On that day, Anne remembered peering down the back laneway behind their cabin at Qualicum and seeing Bruce Farris (VP of Great Central Sawmills Ltd.) and her father, John McMillan, discussing that war



A Yaeko Nishimura in New Denver, BC. NNM 2012.151.2.43 Was this Anne's other lost friend?

had come again and shaking their heads. Little did she know how it would directly affect her Japanese-Canadian schoolmates a few years later.

First of all, I needed to find out Anne's Japanese-Canadian schoolmates' last names, so I emailed the Alberni District Historical Society and requested assistance. Judy Carlson, a volunteer archivist there, was helpful and provided me with the 1940/1941 and 1941/1942 Eight Avenue School's class lists for Grades



4 and 5. The lists said that the teacher's name was Marjorie Brown (see Note 1). In Anne's Grade 4 class (1940/1941), I found the names of some long-term friends (e.g. Diane McColl, Peggy Renwick and Gloria Robinson) and also listed was a Mariko Kobayashi. So I had found Mariko's last name. In Anne's Grade 5 class (1941/1942), her same three friends were listed but also a Yaeko Nishimura, her last name with the first letter N listed just after Anne McMillan's last name starting with the letter M. So now Yaeko's last name had been established too! It was a tiny Eureka moment even to find these names considering that so much time had passed and I was relying on my mother's memories from when she was 10 years old. With these last names, Kobayashi and Nishimura, I went to the Vancouver Public Library, and tried to find these two family names in the Port Alberni telephone directories from those years, but I couldn't find them listed. I had hoped to

find the addresses of where they had lived or possibly a first name of one of their parents but the information trail went cold.

My next step was to contact Lisa Uyeda at the Nikkei National Museum to see if there was any information on these families. Lisa, was intrigued by this story of lost friendship. Through her research, she managed to find two photographs of a Yaeko Nishimura, one taken in New Denver, BC and the other in Lemon Creek, BC. She wasn't sure if it was the same person or not and she hoped Anne might recognize the girls in the pictures. I informed Lisa that my mother had macular degeneration and was losing her eyesight and that she wouldn't be able to determine if either pictures were of her childhood friend Yaeko. It seemed that Lisa and I were at a impasse in finding out more information about Mariko and Yaeko. We ceased communicating for a time.





I did some Internet searches linking the Kobayashi or Nishimura name to Port Alberni but there were no hits. I did find an article called "Remember Us: A search for Chinese roots in Canada" written by Lisa Mar. In her article, she said that in 1942, the Canadian government interred Port Alberni's one hundred and sixty-four Japanese Canadians in the Interior of BC and that overnight the Japanese Community with its families and school disappeared. She went on to say that the forced removal of the Japanese Canadians allowed the mill company to buy up the former Japanese homes, which the company converted into Chinese and Anglo boarding houses. I believe this mill company was the same APL Company for which Anne's father worked.

Overall, the trail to finding Yaeko and Mariko had dried up. I had gained some insights about Port Alberni in those days and the plight of the local Japanese community but I had failed to find more information on them or their families. So I gave up looking because it seemed impossible to discover more about these two women from Anne's past. Then a month or so later a surprise! Out of the blue, Lisa Uyeda emailed me. She had received some information from a colleague in Toronto who had spoken to Yoko, Mariko Kobayashi's younger sister. It turned out that Mariko Kobayashi was now Marie Watai and that Marie lived in Honolulu, Hawaii. Yoko had said that Marie was born in 1931/32 and provided her Hawaiian address. Yoko had said she was only six at the time so she had few memories of Port Alberni. I was amazed we had found one of the girls. I now wondered what my mother would say to Marie after all these years.

A few days after receiving that information from Lisa, I went to Victoria to attend my mother's birthday party. It was held on a Saturday, a few days after her actual birthday date. I told her before dinner about Mariko/Marie having been found and Anne was greatly interested. Later that night, after most people had left, at 10pm, I asked her if she wanted to call Marie in Honolulu where it was only 8pm. I had found her number on the internet. Anne was game to try. I called and started to leave a message when Marie answered the phone.

I put my mother on the phone and after close to 75 years the childhood friends were finally reconnected. Marie didn't remember too much from those days.

However, she remembered three names. They were Anne McMillan, Diane McColl and John Demorest. My mother was happy that Marie had never forgotten her either! Marie also remembered that Anne and Diane lived up on the hill. My mother told Marie how she had never forgotten that her friend was taken away from her. It was amazing to hear these two women chatting after so long.

However, I was really surprised when Marie said that it was her birthday that day. Both women were celebrating their birthdays on the same day and we just happened to call on that day. There was definitely more going on her than simply coincidence! It was a reminder of the interconnectedness of all things. There was also a birthday connection with Diane, one of the other names Marie remembered. Anne and Diane always had fun over the fact Diane's birthday was exactly two months after Anne's birthday. Anne always called Diane on her birthday however the tradition had ended the year before because Diane had passed away. Interestingly, Marie was not the only one to leave Port Alberni in 1942. Both Diane (see Note 2) and John Demorest, the third person Marie remembered, moved away the summer of 1942. Diane moved at first to Alberni, then Parksville. John to Ottawa.

After they had finished chatting, Marie told me some of the events in her life after she left Port Alberni. Her father had been working at the Port Alberni APL mill, the same one where Anne's father worked, when they were rounded up and taken away. Marie remembers they had to stay in the Hasting Park stables in Vancouver, and then they were interned at Lemon Creek, BC.

A few years later, her mother chose to go back to Japan rather than move to Eastern Canada. Marie said the family ended up in the countryside outside Kyoto. She said there was no doctor or hospital there and her mother got sick and died at the age of 44. She said that she was 15 years old when she arrived in Japan but couldn't speak Japanese. She ended up getting an office job on an American army base. At that base, she would meet a Japanese-American man, Frank Watai, who would later play an important role in her life.

After some time had passed, Marie's older sister's friend, who lived in Toronto, paid the travel costs for Marie's sister to come to Toronto. This trip entailed

taking a ship from Yokohama to San Francisco and then a three-day train trip to Toronto. Once there, her sister worked hard, saved money and paid for Marie's travel costs, by ship and train again, to come to Toronto. Marie, in turn, did the same for her brother and he the same for their youngest sister. Finally, they paid for their father to come to Toronto in 1954.

Then, Marie's older sister married a Japanese-American man she had met and they moved to Honolulu, Hawaii. Marie visited her sister in Honolulu and while there she again met Frank Watai. He was originally from Hawaii and had been on a trip to Japan with his parents when the war broke out and couldn't return to Hawaii. That was how he came to be previously working on the American army base. Marie and Frank married in 1964 and they have one son currently working in Washington, D.C. She said they were married for over 50 years and that she has had a good life and has traveled the world.

Regarding Anne (nee McMillan) Carter. She subsequently went to Crofton House School in Vancouver for Grades 9 through 12. She attended UBC for one year but decided to become a nurse and graduated from Nursing school in 1952. In 1954, after completing a post-graduate obstetrics course in New Jersey, she married Harry Carter in New York City. He was originally from Alberni, which used to be a separate town from Port Alberni before they amalgamated in 1967. He had recently graduated from the first year graduating class of the UBC medical school and was in New York interning when they married. Harry was a few years older than Anne and they had met as children. Harry's father had owned the Carter Hardware Store in Alberni. They had their first three children in New York before they returned to Canada choosing to live in Victoria where their fourth son was soon born – me! They also were married for over 50 years, and have enjoyed their family and their travels too.

We never did find Yaeko Nishimura, the other girl in the story, but it was wonderful that my mother and Marie could reconnect. I did mail off a recent publication on Port Alberni to Marie and she received it. She finally got some mail from my mother (through me), in a way representing the mail she didn't receive during the war. Sometimes life does come full circle.



Two of the friends Marie never forgot. Anne Carter (centre) and Diane McColl standing in front of Anne's house that was located, as Marie said, "up on the hill".

#### Note 1

Marjorie Brown, their teacher back in 1942, had dated Anne's oldest brother John. Anne remembers telling her teacher Marjorie that her brother John had just had a baby boy. He was born in June 1942 so Marie had already left the class by then.

#### Note 2

Diane McColl. Her father, Don McColl, worked for the APL Company, the same one as Anne and Marie's father. His job was Manager of Logging Camp #1. The McColl's house was five houses down the street from Anne's (up on the hill). Diane also moved away after Grade 5, first to Alberni (a separate city at the time) for two years, then to Parksville for three or four years and then Vancouver. She graduated grade 12 from the Prince of Wales Secondary School and earned a BA at UBC in 1954. Diane married Donald Gleig, from Abottsford, on April 7, 1955, lived in Vancouver but later moved to Burlington, Ontario where they had a son in 1971. Anne remained friends throughout.







## Treasures from the Collection



### A Champion for Human Rights: The Scrapbook of Tomekichi Homma's Legacy

by Aaron Tong

Born in Chiba-ken, Japan on June, 1865, Tomekichi Homma was a standout leader of the Steveston community who avidly sought to improve the Japanese-Canadian community. He was also one of the first Japanese immigrants to settle in the area during 1883, at the age of 18.

In 1887, just four years after his arrival, he notably founded the Fisherman's Association called Gyosha Dantai and chaired it as President until 1889. Homma then became a naturalized citizen in 1889. Along with the first Japanese Language School, Homma also founded the Fisherman's Hospital in Steveston and the first daily Japanese newspaper in 1897. The newspaper was called the Canada Shimpo and it was distributed in the Vancouver area.

Between 1899-1900, Homma, now at age 35, was not issued a voting card by a voting registrar by the name of Thomas Cunningham, based on the rule of the British Columbia Provincial Elections Act denying minorities such as Indigenous peoples, Indians, Chinese and Japanese citizens the right to vote in elections. Simply his title as a naturalized citizen should have been enough for Homma to vote, as per the rules written out in the Naturalization Act in effect at the time. But as a result of this unfair treatment, Homma took it upon himself to sue Cunningham for his democratic right to equal political franchise as a naturalized citizen. Homma eventually won the favor of both the County Court at the civil level and the Supreme Court of British Columbia at the Provincial level.

However, the Provincial government, who did not wholeheartedly stand by Homma's right to vote, remained opposed to the B.C. Supreme Court's decision. They then put forth an appeal for Homma's case to the British Judiciary Court/Privy Council in

England, which was considered to be the highest legal power at the time for Canada and the British Empire. The Privy Council made the decision to deny Homma's case, once again referring back to the Provincial Exclusion Act, stating that provincial government indeed had the power to deem who could or could not vote. Another contention that was made defined the word "Japanese" as including "any person of the Japanese race naturalized or not" (Cunningham v. Homma). Because of this, Homma continued to make it his mission to be an advocate not only for Japanese-Canadian suffrage, but the other minorities as well. Homma's courage, despite being part of a minority, has made his case of resistance become one of the most significant in the history of repressed Canadian human

Even though Homma was a naturalized citizen, he was still one of the many Japanese Canadians interned during World War II. He was relocated from West Vancouver to the Slocan internment camp in British Columbia's interior. Eventually, he passed away at the age of 80 on October 28th, 1945, still interred at Slocan and before Japanese Canadians achieved equal voting rights four years later in 1949. Continuing on his legacy, Tomekichi Homma's son, Seiji was present in the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia at the time a new law was passed allowing Japanese Canadians to finally vote and put their names on the voters' registry list. Furthermore, the fruits of Tomekichi Homma's activism also served as the inspiration for other minorities to advocate for equal voting rights in Canada as well, which was finally secured in the 1960s, long past Homma's passing.

This scrapbook, assembled by Tomekichi Homma's youngest son, Keay, before being donated to the museum, is dedicated to the memory of Homma's



Mom

Junkichi



legacy and gives a chronological snapshot of life before and after his passing. It also allows for more moments pertaining to Tomekichi Homma's human rights legacy to be added to it in the future. Historical black and white photos of Tomekichi Homma as an adult, with his wife Matsu and their children, and as a senior are included in the first few pages of the book. An extremely welldocumented family tree that follows the photographs stretches from the 9th and 10th generations of the Homma family, to the 15th generation being Tomekichi Homma and two generations after him. Being born into a samurai family, Tomekichi Homma's family record states that Homma Sadonokami Genji Munemasa began as the first retainer of Master Ashikaga Yoshiuji around 1400. Retainers with the title of Genji would have served as the military advisors to the ruling Daimyo, and retainers were employed to maintain order over an area in a Daimyo's absence. The second to eight generations have unknown records, until the ninth generation when we see the title of Genji appear again with Genji Masamichi, the retainer to Daimyo (warlord) Kuroda.

In addition, there are various newspaper clippings of Tomekichi Homma's selfless journey to attain equal rights for Japanese Canadians and other minorities after being rejected by the voting registrar in Vancouver. Following that is the complete set of terms detailing the court case between the Appellants, represented by the Privy Council and the Attorney-General of British Columbia versus the Respondents, being Tomekichi Homma and the Attorney-General for the Dominion of Canada. Also included in the following pages is Tomekichi Homma's article from Jinshiro Nakayama's 1922 book called Canada Dobo Hatten Taikan which was re-published in The New Canadian, in which he documents a lengthy list of many firsts the Japanese went through or accomplished during their time in Canada. For example, the first interracial marriage between a Japanese and a Caucasian woman, the first Japanese to buy land in Vancouver, and the first Japanese baby born in Vancouver, to name a few.

Posthumously, the construction process of the Tomekichi Homma Elementary School from the ground up is also included in the scrapbook, beginning in 1977. 1977 was significant in the fact that it coincided as the centennial anniversary year of the arrival of Japanese people in Canada. The school was dedicated to Tomekichi Homma out of acknowledgement and

respect for the Japanese-Canadian contribution to the Steveston Community and allowed the honour to be shared amongst all Japanese Canadians in Canada. It was officially opened in September of 1991, and its architectural design was inspired by Japanese stylings. Tomekichi Homma's two sons, Keay and Shingo were the first to break ground on the new site with the school board trustee, Betty Speers. It was one of the first schools in the Lower Mainland to have a retractable stage, opening windows in every classroom and anti-vandalism blinds installed. The school library was dedicated in memory to June Chiba, who was set to be the school's first principal before passing away unexpectedly a month before being appointed.

The final pages of the scrapbook are a collection of family photos taken in colour, as well as photographs taken during the opening ceremony of the Homma Elementary School.

In 2011, a motion to immortalize Tomekichi Homma's court case as a historical event was put forward by the Nikkei National Museum's previous Executive Director, Grace Eiko Thomson. The federal government organization, Parks Canada then received this nomination and made a commemorative plaque in 2017 to show their acknowledgement of this past injustice and momentous effort to progress equal voting rights.

The plaque was unveiled to the public in an official ceremony at the Nikkei National Museum in Burnaby that same year with Tomekichi Homma's granddaughter, Tenney Homma, and other Homma family members present. She was accompanied by Tara MacLeod, representing Parks Canada, Andrea Geiger, a Simon Fraser University Associate Professor who researched Homma's case, and John Aldag, the MP for the Cloverdale-Langley region. The plaque will be on display in the near future at the Allard Hall Law Building at the University of British Columbia.

If you would like to discover more about Tomekichi Homma's legacy, the Nikkei National Museum and the Homma family welcome requests to release informational material.

The Nikkei National Museum would like to express their appreciation to Tenney Homma and the Homma family for their help in advising on the research of this article.