Nikkei NIKKEI national museum & cultural centre



Yosh & Kazu Koyama, Wakayama Japan, 1940. Koyama family photo.



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Treasures from the Collection Back Cover

Welcome to Nikkei Images

I would like to introduce myself as the copy editor for Nikkei Images. Being half-Japanese in Burnaby, BC, the Nikkei National Museum & Cultural Centre (NNMCC) was a regular par of my childhood. I attended the Gladstone

Japanese Language School, which is where I first discovered the strong and vibrant Japanese Canadian community in the lower mainland, and where I practiced Japanese culture through programs and events such as *shuji* (Japanese calligraphy), Japanese tea ceremony classes and the Nikke Matsuri. Growing up as a Canadian with Japanese heritage is a unique and special experience, but one which can also present identity and acceptance issues along the way. Having an incredible resource for education, language learning and history has always reassured me of the importance and impact of my community. The Nikkei National Museum & Cultural Centre has been instrumental in strengthening my identity as well as my understanding of Japanese Canadian history.

This issue features the Ucluelet Fishing Company by Pau Kariya and the Koyama Fish camp of Silva Bay by Danie "Yosh" and Kazu Koyama and Phyllis Reeve. I have already learned so much from the research and lived experiences of these authors. I hope you will appreciate their work as well

– Toko Peters, Copy Editor, Nikkei Images

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We, the Nikkei National Museum & Cultural Centre, acknowledge the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territories of the Coast Salish Peoples; and in particular, the x^wməθk^wəýəm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səliİwəta? (Tsleil-Waututh First Nations on whose territory we stand.

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Ucluelet Fishing Company and Japanese Canadians in Ucluelet¹

by Paul Kariya

In June 1942 the Ucluelet Fishing Company (UFC) filed its company income tax return for 1941 as it had done in previous years. This filing was made after all Japanese Canadians² had been removed from Ucluelet, the company assets seized or sold by the Custodian of Enemy Alien Properties and the final tax submission sent from an internment centre located hundreds of miles away from the Coast of British Columbia. In the span of two decades, the Japanese Canadian community in Ucluelet had gone from a place of social, cultural, and economic prominence to nary a shadow on the landscape. The UFC, a creation of the community, had helped build the Japanese Canadian

community and in the end helped dismantle it and assisted its people to leave. It is beyond the scope of this paper to do more than touch upon the essence of the company and its members, but I would like to share what I have found and invite others to examine their roots to the company, community, fishermen, and place.

I would like to introduce the reader to the remarkable company that UFC was and what it meant to the hamlet of Ucluelet - who were its members, where did they live, how did they fish, what was the nature of the community, and what happened post-war? The interesting sequel to the story is that after Japanese

Canadians were allowed to return to the West Coast could have been much larger. It is estimated that of Canada in 1949, many former residents of Ucluelet in the early 1920s there had been upwards of 320 returned and some of them helped establish a new Japanese Canadian salmon trollers operating from Ucluelet Fishing Company. Ucluelet in mid summer (plus 80 white and 80 First Nation fishermen).

Ucluelet Fishing Company³

In late 1941, the UFC was perhaps the largest private The company was incorporated in British Columbia business operating in Ucluelet and the West Coast in 1935, but its parent company, the Ucluelet of Vancouver Island. Gross Profit for the company Fishermen's Cooperative had operated since on August 31, 1941 was \$44,924.80 (\$797,000.00 1926. I have not been able to learn why a separate purchasing power in 2020). company was established, but it could have been to Fishing was good for the company and the member do with separating fishing operations from broader fishermen in the mid-late 1930s. The corporate minute aspirations of the parent cooperative into the member book notes that the share capital paid up to November fishermen's community. Note the following Articles 1935 was \$35,700 (\$632,000.00). By November 24, from the Coop's constitution of 60 Articles (translated 1941, the company owned two large packers, Loyal No from Japanese by Stan Fukawa): 1 and Loyola No 2; two messenger vessels, Epco and Article 3. Aims Prospect; and three scows, plus fishing gear and \$17, This Co-operative, while furthering conciliation 633.31 (\$312,000.00) cash in the bank.

and goodwill between Canadians and Japanese, Yesaki (2003) notes how lucrative the West Coast shall protect the just interest and advance the salmon troll fishery was for fishermen. In 1919 one welfare of all its members. Japanese Canadian fisherman earned \$4,000 (over Article 4. Enterprise \$61,000 in 2020) for his summer salmon season. From This Co-operative shall manage the Ucluelet a review of various anecdotal accounts, it appears that Fishing Co. as a subsidiary enterprise to buy and up to World War II West Coast Japanese Canadian sell fresh fish for members and non-members. trollers, pervessel, earned from two to three times more than their Fraser River salmon gillnetter counterparts. Article 32. Rescue in Times of Distress While the rougher seas of the open ocean required a Para 1 Should a Co-operative member be in greater investment in larger boats and motors, west danger of distress at sea, or in actual distress, the coast trollers did not have expensive fishing gear Co-operative shall do its utmost to assist, whether costs like their gillnet counterparts employing fragile by sending out rescue boats or search craft. cotton gillnets that might only last a few seasons.

Para 5 Should a Co-operative member rescue The UFC also bought and sold fish from the white and First Nations fishermen who welcomed the local Japanese Canadian company who helped increase prices paid for Chinook and coho salmon, Maekawa (2001). Perhaps an indication of the business integration and interdependency are the non-Japanese names listed in the accounts receivables of the UFC for 1941; Fraser, Saggers, and Dr. Swinden. Fraser and Saggers are amongst the oldest settler names in Ucluelet. While no First Nations names are listed in the accounts, it is clear that all Ucluelet fishermen benefited from having the UFC operating

someone outside the Co-op but it is a fisherman with whom he has a close relationship, then the provisions in Article 32, Para 3 above shall be deemed to be appropriate [recompense for assistance]. Clearly both organizations worked together to serve Japanese Canadian fishermen, the Ucluelet Japanese Canadian community, and at times the larger white and First Nation communities. During the period 1935-42, the UFC had 52 shareholders, all Japanese Canadian fishermen. This was the maximum number of Japanese Canadians

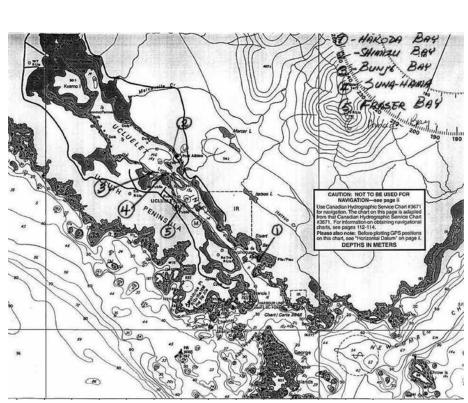
versus having to rely upon itinerant cash buyers. licenced to fish from Ucluelet. If progressively severe Reviewing the corporate Minute Book of the UFC is a restrictions on the issuance of salmon trolling licences discovery in and of itself. For the period of November to Japanese Canadians had not been instituted by the 23, 1935 to October 6, 1941, the minutes of meetings Department of Marine and Fisheries, the membership are all typed in English and properly signed by the





Chairman and Secretary. No doubt that a good part of the meetings was probably conducted in Japanese, but even the day to day records and ledgers and list of directors are either typed or exquisitely penned in beautiful fountain pen script – in English. It is a rare page or note that is written in Japanese.

A big part of the history of Japanese Canadians in the West Coast salmon fishery is one of licence limitation and restricted participation. With each round of reductions in licences available to Japanese Canadians, the Japanese Canadian Fishermen's Co-op had a priority plan for who would remain and who would leave the fishery. Age, mouths to feed, plans to return to Japan, and other factors were considered; so was



Map of Ucluelet Harbour with location of pre-World War Japanese Canadian settlements NNM Nikkei Fishermen's Committee Project photo.

compensation and assistance to transition into other industries were looked after. The 52 shareholders of the UFC were survivors who prospered as fishermen but the period of relative stability before December 1941 came to an abrupt end post Pearl Harbor. Licence limitation became 100 percent when the federal government ordered all Japanese Canadian vessels be impounded and taken to New Westminster on December 15, 1941, just one week after Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor.

The UFC and the Co-op that had helped establish and maintain the Japanese Canadian community, in the abrupt end, also helped its members leave Ucluelet in as dignified and orderly a manner as possible.

Ucluelet JC Community pre-war

At its peak, the Japanese Canadian population of Ucluelet in the mid 1930s was estimated to be 400-450 men, women, and children. In comparison, the First Nations population in the 1930s might have been at its lowest in its history, numbering no more than 100 from the Ucluelet, and Toquat tribes of the central Nuu-chah-nulth speaking peoples. The white settler population might have only been 200 to 250 souls.

Outside of Vancouver, Steveston, and Victoria, the West Coast of Vancouver Island had the largest concentration of people of Japanese ancestry in three centres as we know them today - Ucluelet, Tofino (including Clayoquot), Bamfield.

The Ucluelet Japanese Canadian community was actually six smaller communities of between 10 to 15 family groups: Shimizu Bay, Hakoda Bay, Spring Cove, Fraser Bay, Sunahama, and Bunji Bay. Plus, there were other Japanese Canadians who lived within the white settlement and a few others who lived in bays outside Ucluelet inlet in Barkley Sound, towards Port Alberni. In Ucluelet the Japanese Canadian homes were built on the beach on log skids or above the high tide line on pilings or posts. Some of these structures were two story homes that might be found in the city.

By the late 1930s, rudimentary telephone lines linked the communities that were organized based upon a house system. Transportation was by boat, beach, and trail access. The Japanese Canadian settlements gathered for school, worship, and socializing.

On national holidays like May Day, the Japanese Canadian community gathered with the white and First Nation communities to celebrate together. Boat races, tug of wars, and sports days reinforced linkages and cooperation.

From the accounts of the UFC, donations were made to support Japanese Canadian and also larger civic activities in Ucluelet. Search, rescue, and recovery efforts brought the larger community together. It was a Japanese Canadian family who found the body of Norman Lyche, lost in a tragic fishing accident (Fukawa). Building a new school to house a growing enrollment had the town and education ministry provide materials while the labour was provided by Japanese Canadian carpenters and fishermen. (Yesekai and Fukawa).

The accounting for the Ucluelet Japanese Language School was done by the UFC and it is conceivable the UFC also provided various services to others in the Japanese Canadian and larger community, such as organizing civic work bees, arranging financing for community projects, and acting as a clearing house for information and news. The UFC was very much a community fixture.

Salmon Trolling in Ucluelet

The Japanese Canadians in Ucluelet were hard working people and they excelled in salmon trolling. For many, the freedom and independent lifestyle of trolling compared to the crowded, unionized gillnet fishery of the Fraser River was the choice. Ucluelet was isolated but not that different from Wakayama prefecture and a hamlet like Mio-mura where so many

They were expert seaman who had hunted whales originated from. and fur seals offshore. John Jewitt, who lived in Chief The first Japanese Canadian fishermen came to Maguinna's household as a captured slave provides Ucluelet in 1917 and seeing the abundance of salmon details on the use of lures and hand made hooks for off the banks, they invited others to join them and salmon trolling. year after year the numbers increased; fishermen Yesaki (2003) documents early commercial trolling came annually to fish and depart for their homes after from Columbia River boats in the Straight of Georgia the fishing season. They came from Steveston and using outrigger poles for main lines from which Victoria and found an abundance of fish without the secondary lines would have had lures or baited hooks. racial tensions and competition of the Fraser sockeye In time this method of commercial trolling spread to fishery. The Chinook and coho were abundant, it was a the West and North Coasts of British Columbia. different type of fishery - ocean trolling vs. gillnetting. It was deep sea fishing on the inner and outer banks The Japanese Canadian fishermen observed and from 2-3 Km to 50 Km from the lighthouse. Even in the learned how to make and use lures. (The story small double end vessels of 32-36 ft, the areas fished of Madakoro from Tofino, NI Volume 22, No. 3). are the same as those fished today by a few larger Subsequently, they perfected specific specialties like Ucluelet based trollers and a fleet of commercial using trolling gear to catch sockeye salmon. A good recreational fishing boats. example of excellence in trolling is that of my uncle Shigeru Nitsui, who in the 1930s was high boat in Nuu-chah-nulth fishermen had been hand lining Ucluelet for nine years and was awarded a trophy as salmon and halibut from Ucluelet waters long before

Japanese Canadian and white fishermen arrived.







big as the Stanley Cup sponsored by the Japanese Consulate for his success.

Licence Limitation – Racism

Despite the wealth of salmon and the freedom of the sea, Ucluelet was no utopia. Early racial harmony amongst the First Nations, white and Japanese Canadian peoples was not so much achieved through relationship but via separation, spatially, and socially. It seems the Japanese Canadians achieved respect as hardworking, community-oriented people but a handful of racially motivated politicians and agitators wanted them gone. The method pursued was to have the government reduce and cut-off salmon trolling licences. If the means of livelihood was gone, the thinking was they would leave.

The 1922 Duff Commission was a federal parliamentary commission with a strong pre-set objective, the elimination of Japanese Canadians from the fishing industry and transfer of the catch capacity to white and First Nations people. Four of the six commissioners⁴ were from British Columbia and members such as A.W. Neil, from Port Alberni had previously lobbied to eliminate Japanese Canadian fishermen from the West Coast. Of the 191 witnesses invited to give testimony, only five were Japanese Canadian fishermen or association representatives. Even before the commission recommendations were out, the Department of Marine and Fisheries had already reduced Japanese Canadian licences by one-third in 1922.

Yesaki, references a petition from 45 White residents of Ucluelet to the Department of Fisheries in 1926 who opposed the continuing licencing reduction drive against Japanese Canadian fishermen, "We ... the settlers and residents of Ucluelet, BC beg to petition that there be no further reduction in the issue of salmon trolling licences to the Japanese settlers and residents of Ucluelet, BC" A key rationale for the petition was economic self-interest; they needed the Japanese Canadian fishermen as an economic engine for growth.

Percy Allard of Tofino wrote to the House of Common in 1926, using economic reasoning and Christian values to speak against the draconian measures to exclude Japanese Canadians from the cod and salmon fisheries.

"...They have proved themselves to be very good

settlers, interfering with none, law abiding and keen to improve their homes, if only they can be sure from one year to another that they will be allowed to fish. They have thousands of dollars invested in boats and fishing gear. I think it will be found that if the Japanese are excluded from fishing that there will not be sufficient white and Indian fishermen to encourage buyers to open buying establishments excluding the Japanese from the fishing industry does not mean that we are going to get rid of them ... it means they will leave the coast and engage in competition ... on the land, in logging, mining or trade in the cities.... we are the greatest Christian nation in the world today, and have done more than any other for the justice and freedom of our people. Now here we have encouraged these people to come..., we have naturalized them and used them, we try to educate them and ... then we turn around to them ... making our religion a farce."

Residency had been made a requirement for licencing and so Ucluelet was very much home to the 52 Japanese Canadian fishermen and their wives and children.

Leaving Ucluelet – Value and values – Losses

As previously noted, UFC was more than a fishing company. When the government order came for Japanese Canadians to leave, Canada Gazette No, 174 dated February 2, 1945, the UFC assisted its members and families in dealing with government authorities.

The signature of Katsuji Hamanishi, Secretary of the UFC is on numerous documents assisting its members to rent out their homes via a local resident, Ronald Matterson acting as landlord. The formal statements which detail lot number, house number and house owner by each community – Hakoda Bay (11 houses), Sunahama (20 houses) and so forth were signed by Hamanishi and Matterson in front of a Nanaimo Justice of the Peace dated March 18, 1942.

"If any person or persons wishes to rent our houses or property we all hereby give permission to Ronald Matterson, to act as landlord and our agent, he is authorized by use to set the rent, to collect this rent each month and to forward these rentals monies to the undersigned persons at whatever place they might designate. We the undersigned hereby authorize Ronald Matterson to take fifteen percent from the



 MV Marine K, in Ucluelet Harbour, Ucluelet BC, ca 1960. Kariya family collection.

 rental monies of each house or property to be his commission."

 He said the First Nation gentleman towed the house away at high tide (the house was built on a log raft).

Within the span of six weeks, the UFC officials must Another record within the Hamanishi's papers is an inventory of lumber. It is clear that this inventory was have met community by community in Ucluelet harbour to obtain agreement on an orderly process for protecting the value and ownership of assets. The for renting out homes; getting agreement that local 6.500 linear ft. of cedar and fir inventory worth \$181.84 resident Matterson would be their agent and collecting is for residents at Fraser's Bay, Nobuo Matsuba, Ukichi these agreements to take before a JP on the other Nitusi, Tatsuo Oura, Yoshio Nitsui, and Masayoshi side of Vancouver Island (before road access). What Oye. The statement concludes with, "Above are the collected inventory of lumber keep (sic) at Fraser's is heart breaking is that, in hand writing, someone has Bay" witnessed by DH Howell, Ronald Metterson (sic) written, "sell." One doesn't know when this was done or by whom, but it must have been after the typed and K. Hamanishi. document had been prepared.

Similarly, on Imperial Oil Limited letterhead is a memo On a personal note, in one table of records from the dated March 5, 1942 which references, "The members UFC, for Sunahama, it lists the homes, their owners, of the Ucluelet Fishing Co relinquishes all claim to and an estimated value. In the margin, beside No.17, the Gasoline and Oil held at Imperial Oil Co by B owner Takeo Kariya, there is in brackets "(sold)" for Matterson for the use of its members. This agreement only one house. This was my father's home. Father had not to come into effect until all the members of the told us children many years later that he had sold the Ucluelet Fishing Co have left Ucluelet." Provisions had been made by the UFC to dispose of perishable fuel house for guick cash, \$500, to an First Nation person literally days before he felt he would have lost it to the and oil. government (he had already lost his boat, MV Marine Japanese Canadians in Ucluelet were heavily invested K). Father had contacts and perhaps a relationship in Ucluelet, and despite the government orders to with the people across Ucluelet harbour at Ittatsoo.







leave their businesses and homes, it's clear that some Japanese Canadians expected to return and therefore with the help of the UFC expected protection for and a fair return for rental/use of their properties and assets.

Japanese Canadian Return to Ucluelet and a new Ucluelet Fishing Company

The first Japanese Canadian fishermen returned to Ucluelet in 1949, immediately after they were permitted to do so. The pull of fishing, its way of life, and also the need for good incomes drew the earliest returnees, men like Shigeru (Jim) Nitsui and his family, back. Others who had called Tofino and Clayoquot home before the war such as the Tom Kimoto and Joe Nakagawa settled in Spring Cove⁵. By the mid 1950s some 20 fishermen and their families had returned to Ucluelet. Many other Japanese Canadian fishermen returned to fish out of Ucluelet but chose to live elsewhere like in Steveston.

All of the Japanese Canadian fishermen had to indenture themselves to one of the major commercial fishing companies like BC Packers or the Canadian Fishing Company to be able to acquire fishing vessels and gear. Wives and children followed soon but it was not the same place. The settlement patterns had shifted, and while some returned to the foreshore in Fraser Bay, Bunji Bay, and Spring Cove others moved upland and integrated into a much larger white settlement that they had left behind. There were no returnees to Shimizu Bay, Hakoda Bay, or Sunahama. While some were able to buy back their previous homes, for most, this was no longer an option – others owned their houses.

In our family's case, my father had left Ucluelet as a single man betrothed to my mother (Oye) in 1941 and returned with his bride and a daughter in 1951. His sojourn in between had been in Angler POW Camp 101 and a mushroom farm in Toronto. My folks rented Fraser's shack on the uplands above Fraser's Bay; the home that my twin sister and I were born into in 1953, a place with kerosene lamps and a stand pipe for water. They had bought Jack Thompson's house on the harbour but later sold it to my uncle and aunt Masayoshi and Sachiko Oye because they had a larger family and needed the space. My parents eventually bought Richerts home on Peninsula Road.



Ucluelet Fishing Company - Reprise

To exert autonomy from big fishing companies and The founding 17 were an odd mix of fishermen. There to obtain a better return for each fish caught, local were those who had supported the expulsion of Ucluelet fishermen created the new UFC. The local Japanese Canadians in 1941. There were those like spark plug for the venture in the late 1950s was my father who knew these local white fishermen Elling Reite, an immigrant from Norway who cajoled had felt this way. Somehow the common bond as and twisted arms amongst local Ucluelet fishermen, fishermen trying to make a living and supporting young including Japanese Canadian who had returned families drove them to work together for common from internment camps and exile in central Canada cause under a structure not that dissimilar to the preand argued for the establishment of a locally owned war Japanese Canadian UFC. These were fishermen and managed company to buy and sell troll caught who saw themselves as independent business people; salmon. The vision was the same as the original UFC. there were no union supporters in this group.

As soon as grub-stake loans were paid off, many of Over time, just as with the original UFC, the original the Japanese Canadian trollers left the major fishing members retired and sold their share to others companies. Some went to smaller independents or including sons and family members. The membership cooperatives. Five Japanese Canadian returnees, broadened to non-residents of Ucluelet. In terms of Hamanishi, Kariya, Nasu, Nitsui, and Suzuki, together Japanese Canadian participation, my estimate is that with local white fishermen were the 17 original founding at its peak they were 25% of all members. members of the new UFC incorporated as a private company but structured on cooperative principles -Both Ucluelet Fishing Companies are now long equal shares. The new UFC began operating in about defunct. The original company ceased operations 1960 and had a good run with member fishermen with the confiscation, dispossession, and relocation doing well as they marketed their own fish. But by of Japanese Canadians. The demise of the second the late 1990s, the shares were almost worthless Ucluelet Fishing Company is more complicated and no one wanted to buy them and the company but rests on the long-term decline of all salmon was moribund. Through the intervening years, other species on the West Coast of Vancouver Island and fishermen, not necessarily locals, bought the shares government policies to allocate fishing opportunities of retiring fishermen, a mix of Japanese Canadian to other sectors including the US through the Canada-



and white fishermen. No First Nations fishermen ever joined although they sold fish on a cash basis.





US Pacific Salmon Treaty and through increasing recognition of an Aboriginal right to fish.

Conclusion⁶

There is so much more to tell of the story of the two Ucluelet Fishing Companies than I have uncovered, but it has been difficult to piece together the remnants of recollections and records from the children and grand-children of original members. It is ironic that no corporate records seem to exist for the more recent UFC, but there are minutes and ledgers from the original company established by the Japanese Canadian residents of Ucluelet in the 1930s. Questions that I would like to pursue include,

Who is history told by; who reads the records and hears the stories? The First Nations people of Ucluelet do not figure prominently in my account, but they were in Ucluelet throughout the period, living, fishing, raising families, and telling their own stories. What is their account of the coming, going, and return of Japanese Canadians to their territories? What did the salmon troll fishery mean to the people of Mio-mura, Wakayama-ken, the village so many Japanese Canadians of Ucluelet originated from? Why were so many fishermen, especially those from Ucluelet, incarcerated in the Angler POW camp? In the structuring of the UFCs pre and post-war, why was

a cooperative type structure chosen? When I was 17 I wanted to fish full-time and asked my father for a loan to buy a boat – "we could be Kariya and son." I wonder how my history would have turned out if he had said yes?





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Personal Communications

Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Baird, interviewed in 1976. M Baird (nee Karn) was a child of one of the first settl who pre-empted land between Ucluelet and Tofino.

Endnotes

- of Japanese Canadians of Ucluelet. The author plans to continue research on this place he now calls home.
- 2 I use the term Japanese Canadian and not Nikkei, believing it might be more accessible to a broad audience.
- 4 There were 7 members named but only 6 participated in hearing testimony on the west coast.
- 5 Tofino Council expressed through a draft by-law that it did not want Japanese back in their town.
- perspectives on the Japanese Canadians of Ucluelet and the Ucluelet Historical Society for welcoming me home.



land	Professor Ian Baird, Geography Department. University of Wisconsin.					
	Claudia Cole, member Ucluelet Historical Society.					
ries. and	Dr. Michelle Corfield, Yuutu?it?ath Government (Hitacu).					
en's	Dave Christiansen, past Camp Manager, Ucluelet Fishing Company.					
BC	Dan Edwards, Ucluelet Fisherman.					
	Takeo Kariya, interviewed in 1976.					
en's leet.	Ellen Kimoto, member Ucluelet Historical Society (and author's Grade 7 teacher at Ucluelet Elementary School).					
<i>c</i>	Shirley Martin, member Ucluelet Historical Society.					
of : A awa	Vi Mundy, Yuutu?it?ath Government (Hitacu). Member Ucluelet Historical Society.					
iese oss. iing,	Mr. and Mrs. Toshio Murao - Mr. Murao rode with my father in Marine K on the trip in 1941 to New Westminster after all Japanese-Canadian fishing boats were ordered to be impounded. They were also incarcerated together in Angler POW Camp 101 and fished in the same group out of Ucluelet post war.					
kkei	Margaret O'Brien, spouse of late Gordon Bisaro, fisherman and past legal counsel, Ucluelet Fishing Company.					
hing eum,	Kenner Reite, son of Elling Reite, lead founding member Ucluelet Fishing Company.					
	Rick Roussin, past President, Ucluelet Fishing Company.					
Mrs.	Ron Shimizu, family lived in Port Albion before WW2.					
tlers o.	Sissel White, daughter of Elling Reite.					

1 Many sources have been drawn upon in preparing this article, but in the interest of readability, I have kept citations to a minimum. Listed at the end are a bibliography and list of people I am indebted to. Pre-Covid, the plan had been to host a community workshop early in 2020 to hear from First Nations, Japanese Canadians and other settlers on the dispossession and relocation

3 Fish buying and selling had also been organized by the Japanese Canadian fishermen in Tofino/Clayoquot and Bamfield.

6 Special thanks to the National Association of Japanese Canadians Endowment Fund for a grant to research the different





Koyama of Silva Bay

by Daniel "Yosh" Koyama, with Timothy Koyama and Phyllis Reeve Foreword by Phyllis Reeve

We came to Page's Resort & Marina on Silva Bay, Gabriola Island, in 1987, eager to carry on the spirit of the place as established by the Page brothers, Les and Jack, and their families. As we learned from them the story of the Bay, the docks, the fishermen, and the shore people, we heard that before Page's Store, fishing camp and marina, there had been Koyama's Fishing Camp, with docks, a store, and sometimes a family. The Pages had known Kanshiro Koyama, fishing and trading in the same waters for years until the traumatic events of the war years, and his forced disappearance from the Coast. No one seemed to

know what had become of him, except that he had not returned to Silva Bay, even after 1949 when some Japanese fisherman did resume their lives in Nanaimo and Steveston.

I found occasional mention of him, especially when reading Masako Fukawa's books about the Nikkei fishing fleet¹, but nothing postwar. Fukawa's grandfather had been one of the proprietors of the Sunrise Saw mill, also in Silva Bay. The Gabriola Historical and Museum Society became interested, and in 2011 I put together a piece about "The Japanese-Canadians of Silva Bay 1918-1942" for the Museum's journal Shale, now sadly defunct². In 2017,

the two Silva Bay locations were designated Japanese Canadian historic sites³. They are part of Gabriola's story. But the Koyama story has been incomplete... ... Until December 2020, when out of the blue I received a phone call from Daniel "Yosh" Koyama, son of Kanshiro. Now an octogenarian (like myself) and a resident of California, he and his son Tim had found the Museum's stories on the internet, and were eager to tell his father's story. To my delight, he was as excited to find out what had happened to the Fishing Camp over the years as I was to find out what had happened to his family.

Numerous phone calls and emails later, we have the story. In fact, we have two stories: the story of a decent, hard-working man whose world was smashed; and the story of his son who confronted prejudice in both Japan and America.



Farming community at or near Ueyama farm in Kamloops, before Kanshiro Koyama (5 th person from the right) was exiled to Japan, ca. 1946. Nakano family photo.





The story as told by Daniel "Yosh" Koyama

1898-1941

Kanshiro Koyama was born in 1898 in Mio-mura, a tiny village in Japan's southwestern prefecture of Wakayama, the fourth boy among seven children of Tomekichi Koyama. There was little arable land and no big fishing area, and by the time Kanshiro reached his teens, almost 70% of the townspeople had emigrated to North America. Emigrants reported back to the village about the plentiful fish. With the money sent to Mio, villagers built western-style homes and adopted other trappings of western society, and the village became known as "Amerika-mura"⁴.

So he joined others, including his own siblings in the area around Vancouver Island, especially Nanaimo, where his brother Frank had a successful fishing camp in the Brechin area⁵, and later Gabriola Island. Kanshiro fished the whole area that encompasses Prince Rupert all through the inland sea and the Strait of Georgia, West and South Coast. While fishing, he set out to buy out their catches from other fishermen and transport these to Vancouver wholesale markets and canneries. And that's how he became at the same time one of the Nikkei Canadian fishermen and the proprietor of the fish camp in Silva Bay.

He was held in high regard by his Caucasian friends/ peers and families. Kanshiro Koyama's small stature of 5'2" belied his strength. He always had a contagious smile and an eagerness to help others. He would have known the Page family, fishermen based on Galiano Island.

On one of his regular return visits to Japan, he married Haruko Shima, who accompanied him back to Canada, not knowing what conditions awaited her in British Columbia. The daughter of a Shinto priest, she had no idea how to care for her first baby boy, Tetsuo, who was born on Gabriola Island in about 1928. Tetsuo died in infancy, from beriberi, or Vitamin B deficiency, an illness readily treated with proper information and medical care, neither of which was available. And so Kanshiro sent his wife back to Japan and divided his life between his family and his livelihood, with the Pacific Ocean between them. Haruko was not all that healthy herself and she had to care for a very frail mother, in addition to taking care of the two sons she gave birth to in Japan, Kazu and Yosh.



Nevertheless, Haruko and Kanshiro were far from poor. Dad was making a good living in those days fishing the BC Coast and operating the Koyama Fish Camp and he sent money through Yokohama Exchange Bank so Mom could make a rich lifestyle in an exclusive part of Wakayama City adjacent to the castle. Dad used to come visit us almost every year and I have a recollection of a big ship and Christmas presents by my bed. Other than that I didn't have vivid memories of my Dad until after the end of war when he came back on a Canadian government 'repatriation' ship in 1947.

I am the writer of my Dad's story and years after his death, I get testimonies from his now-aging nieces and nephews and from old family friends and relatives about how "Kanshian" was so good to them and so respected. His love of all children stemmed from the



fact that his own two children were growing up in the distant land of Japan and every child reminded him of that.

December 7, 1941

Then war came and his world turned upside down. The Canadian government confiscated his boat without compensation and gave him 72 hours to get rid of his personal belongings.

Instead of waiting with others to be rounded up like cattle and forced into an internment camp, my Dad took the best course of action. He went on his own volition, looked up friends in Kamloops, BC, and relocated more than 100 miles from the British Columbia Coast.



After almost a lifetime as a Nikkei fisherman, he must turn himself into a farmer. But Kanshiro Koyama was resilient, stayed calm and adaptable and tried to do his best. His love for his family during the isolation of war and his concerns for his family's safety intensified as the tide of war turned against Japan.

But he kept his faith. Every morning and night he turned to the West and must have said thousands of prayers: "please spare my family from the bombing and ravages of war and please watch over them."

Married to the daughter of a Shinto priest and brought up a Buddhist, he had a myriad of different prayers and he said them all, not to just one god but to gods of all faiths, while two of his children and his frail mother with chronic thyroid disorder were being pushed to the edges of annihilation.

Koyama's Fish Camp in Silva Bay belonged now, and for the next 44 years, to Les and Jack Page, who would expand the store and the docks until it gradually became Page's Resort and Marina. Kanshiro knew and liked the Page Brothers, but he no longer had a home on the Coast.

Meanwhile in Japan

When war came, the first thing the Japanese government did was freeze all assets. Overnight Mom couldn't get money, our rich lifestyle had to be shut down and the next few years were a life of poverty for Kanshiro Koyama's family in Japan.

Mom closed down the gorgeous two-story house by the moat of Wakayama Castle and we moved to live with her older sister, the wife of a professor who taught at a Women's College in Nagoya. In 1942 everything was as normal as could be expected until Doolittle's first air raid over the Japanese mainland dropped bombs over Tokyo and Nagoya. We lived within hearing distance of the explosions. The explosions were so loud that I thought they would burst my eardrums. Soon after we had to decide to move back into much smaller cities like Wakayama, less likely to be targets.

Mom had to report to the *kenpei* [the military police] and file a family registry disclosing my Dad's addresses in Canada. Wherever we moved we were looked at as enemy aliens. I was picked on by my peers throughout the war. I had to change grade schools 11 times and I have scars to show for it. I had been brought up by



Mom without any man's strong discipline so I got away with murder. She did all she could to discipline me. I used to get in so many fights and poor Mom had to appear and apologize to school authorities.

I remember that in those earlier years of war, you would see me wearing all the clothing and shoes and rain boots made in America, different looking than the domestic make. Discriminatory actions against us were harsh. I hated whenever it rained; I had to wear American-made rain boots. Even after one stray bomb fell on a part of our town, people pointed fingers at us the following day saying that they "saw us using flashlights towards the sky."

Towards the end of the war, when formations of B-29 bombers flew over Wakayama, I used to lie flat on my back on our outdoor veranda and look up at them on their run into Osaka and they were a sight to behold: beautiful silver reflections, with beautiful vapor trails.

One month before the end of the war, the night started like any other night. Air Raid sirens were blaring in the distance and we thought the bombers had returned to finish what they had begun at Osaka a week earlier.

No. This was different from any others. Suddenly from the western part of Wakayama City the night sky turned a bright red. My brother and I looked at each other and started running towards the eastern part of the city without even telling our mother what we were going to do. I had put my shoes on but my older brother had only a pair of thongs.

I felt so full of guilt for not telling Mom and our grandmother that we were running away to save our skin and not even trying to help those two frail women to avoid the bombing.

We ran and ran, throughout most of the night, until we were out of the city proper and we reached one of the farmhouses on the outskirts, and an old woman extended her hand out to give my brother and me onigiri rice balls.

It was so good to see the first light of the new day. Then we needed to head back into the city from where we just escaped. And we were not sure what we were going to find on our return trip. The most pressing concern was whether we would be able to find our Mom and Grandma alive.

Anyone who finds themselves in extreme circumstances being pushed to a life or death situation could become a super Wonder Woman. My mother who is tall (5'8") and slender became such an extraordinary woman. That night in Wakayama when she was in an inferno and realized that her sons had run away and she and her mom had to get out of the city, she decided to dump a couple of trunks packed with clothing into our well. It must have weighed a lot. She managed to drag those trunks and threw them down the well. How did she ever have the presence of mind to do that before leaving the house while it burned?

By the time she was ready to leave, flames were already on neighboring houses. Smoke was so thick she said she couldn't make out which direction to escape.

I am going to tell you about my mother and her being endowed with extraordinary spiritual power she had in those days. She was a "Shirley MacLaine" type of spiritual intermediary. People would come to her and tell her they would like to talk to one of dead ancestors or siblings. Soon after special prayers and chants, my mother's body was taken over by the dead person's spirit and voices. I witnessed many of these events and was frightened each time whether she would be able to come back to a normal mother.

That was my mother. By the time she hit the street with her own frail mother by her side, she vociferously demanded or commanded her god to show her the way, and lo and behold, wind from the fireballs parted a path for her. That's the power of faith in extraordinary circumstances. Mom and Grandma made it alive. Now our house was burnt and how were we going to survive?

Anywhere we went there were dead bodies. Blackened bodies. We looked down at the moat. The place we used to call "our playground" was full of bodies. People had jumped in to try save themselves from the intense heat of incendiary bombs. I also saw one of my friends burnt black with his scalp split open. How did I know he was one of my friends? He was a newspaper boy who carried a bell on his left side, and the bell was there by his body. All of this was too obscene for a kid my age to witness the horrors of war.

First thing we did was to try to get back to our burnt down house and retrieve the trunks full of wet clothing from the well. We had to drench ourselves with water to keep us cool from the intense heat. We put everything on a burnt pushcart with no tires and just the burnt metal wheels and my brother and I pushed it Finally, in 1949, the Japanese Canadians' full rights of citizenship were restored. Travel restrictions were lifted, they were allowed to vote again and permitted to return to the West Coast. Why did the Government take all of four years to restore their rights to these people of honor and loyalty? Dad wanted to come back to the Coast as soon as the war was over. He waited until 1947.

across the whole city until we reached our friends' inn in Wakayama Bay. When we reached our friends' inn, it was full of burnt victims and the most hideous smell of burnt human flesh. I cannot get that smell out of my senses even after 75 years.

We could not stay there any longer than a few days, so we decided to move to Kanshiro Koyama's parents Before my Dad boarded the ship headed back to Japan, he used everything he had saved in the bank and turned it into consumables, clothing, coats, jackets, and suits. Plus hundreds of pairs of men and women's shoes boots, from a Coleman stove to a Singer sewing machine, even multi-gear English bikes for his sons. He knew that he was going to find his country in total ruins and a shortage of goods and food.

house in Mio-mura. It was a whole day's trip from Wakayama Bay by train. This is my Dad's village where he grew up, and most of the people were related. Many old photographs were destroyed in our house during the Wakayama fire bombing. One photograph that I remember vividly and was very fond of was a picture of my Dad and his dog on his boat in Silva Bay. I wish I still had this picture to share.

August 6, 1945

Then a new big bomb was dropped on Hiroshima. time he reached the port of Uraga, his belongings We didn't know what it was. The newspaper reported alone took one entire train's freight car. a new type of bomb. Next morning in Mio-mura, Towards the end of the war, I had contracted typhoid fever which almost took my life. With hardly any medicine available, how I ever survived is a miracle in itself. I was told by nurses that I was brought to an isolation hospital by townspeople who carried me strapped me down onto a storm door. They told me that I went berserk because of high fever and did quite a lot of damage. I was hovering between life and death for one week and when I came to, a nurse was massaging my thigh as she was feeding me with an IV.

approximately 155 miles from Hiroshima, we were showered with ash. It was as thick as 4" on every roof and plants and trees all over. Soon after that the war was over. After Hiroshima, that's the knockout punch. Why then Nagasaki? The most Christian city in all of Japan? They incinerated almost a guarter million people between the two cities.

Forced Exile to Japan

Kanshiro Koyama was relieved. Now what is ahead for him? Would he be allowed back to the west coast? South of the border, the Japanese Americans were even before the war was over.

freed to move about anywhere including the coast We all take everything for granted, but to me my mother was more than a mere mother. I pray every day and night conveying my gratitude for what she He waited. Meanwhile, through the International Red did throughout her life: not only caring for us through Cross, he found out his family were safe and had our childhood but doing all she could when money survived the bombings. stopped coming in and then moving 11 times and He waited. But the news that he wanted to hear surviving through the bombings, the food shortage, never came. Another year passed without Japanese and the need to put a roof over our heads, with no Canadians being permitted to return to the Coast. So money. She had to sell a lot of her pretty kimonos and he decided to call it guits and in 1947 arrived back in jewelry.

Japan aboard a Canadian government 'repatriation' ship, never to return to the land that he learned to love and to fish and farm.



He even pre-ordered a big trunkful of salted salmon, and another trunkful of salted salmon eggs. By the

I lost all my hair but that is all. I made it through and my Mom must have exhaled a sigh of relief. She couldn't lose one of his sons before Dad came home. She had done her job well.



My Dad could be thankful that two of his children and his wife were well when he stepped off the 'repatriation' ship.

To be honest, when I was growing up, I could not remember what my Dad looked like. I recalled I went to Kobe to send him off a couple times when we were small but when I tried to recall his face, it was blank. Now in 1947 I met my Dad for keeps and so I stared at him good. He was not a bad looking man. He didn't look like a typical Japanese. We didn't know how to behave in front of our father since we had not had that luxury for too many years.

When Dad came home everyone knew that he brought back a bunch of goodies with him. Many aunties and uncles lined up outside our house to receive a gift or two because they knew my dad was a nice guy.

In the early days after his forced exile from Canada, he tried his best to settle down into war-torn Japan. Although rebuilding had started, everywhere you looked there were still ruins. Even the cities of Osaka and Wakayama were full of the steel skeletons of tall commercial buildings.

In those days immediately after the end of war my dad was taken advantage of by some unscrupulous men. He had spent a good portion of his life conducting business in Canada on a relatively high moral level, and now those Japanese men saw right through him. His attempts to start a business was met with one failure after another.

When he noticed that money was running low he started selling all the shoes and clothing he had brought back. He even sold our multiple-gears English bikes telling us that riding in town would be dangerous. Even if we had the only one of their kind in the whole of Japan, that might be unsafe for us to keep, so they were sold. I didn't object too much.

About this point in Dad's life, his personal life was starting to fall apart, and my mom and dad went through a divorce. In Japan in those days, it was almost unheard of. A divorce in a family meant the children would be subjected to ridicule, prejudice and their chances of getting decent employment would be almost impossible. I didn't know at the time that it was going to haunt me and my brother for a long time.

My dad after the divorce was a changed man due to the difficult circumstances. The longtime love of his life was gone, and his years of working so hard and successfully in Canada were fading away. He decided to move back to Mio-mura where he was born and where he had started his odyssey to Gabriola Island, Nanaimo, and Kamloops some 40 years ago.

He took up farming to raise a portion of what he needed to feed two sons. He also eventually met a new woman from a neighboring town, and brought her into his family. However, my brother did not like this new situation, and decided to run away and eventually moved in with our real mom. My dad asked me what I wanted to do, and since our family was split in two and my older brother was with Mom, I decided that I would stick with my dad.

Sometimes you have to overlook what parents do or don't do. When it happened I tried to concentrate on my tasks on hand. That was my schooling. I was finishing my junior high education in the tiny village of Mio-mura.

Yosh Grows Up

I applied myself persistently and without any reservation. I used to listen to Armed Forces Radio network and in any spare time I would read the Bible. I read somewhere that to truly understand the West and America you need to understand Christianity.

So I studied and studied, trying to even memorize the whole dictionary. On one occasion I had an opportunity to participate in a Wakayama High School English Oratorical Contest at nearby Shingu High School. I finished with honours, and I appreciated the assistance from a Nikkei American woman who taught me enunciation.

When I finished my high school, it was time to apply for the best work available for graduates. In those days it was working for Import/Export Trading firms in Osaka. So we along with other graduates applied for the entrance exams with the top trading company in all of Japan at that time. It consisted of two parts; the first academic and second interviews. I passed the academics with flying colors and was only one of two finalists so my chances were good, so I thought.

Then came the interviews and that was when they brought up my parents' divorce.

I did not get the job.



Haruko Shima, Kanshiro Koyama's first wife. Founder of Rippo-Kyodan church, Wakayama-shi. Wakayama ca. 1991. Koyama family photo







Kanshiro & Akiko (second wife) in new house in Mio 1970s. Koyama family photo.

knowledge of the whereabouts of Kanshiro Koyama during and after WWII. I emailed my father, now 87 years old and suffering from COPD and severe spinal stenosis. I inadvertently opened up some old wounds. My father's story is difficult to believe, and includes many family struggles and tragedies during a difficult time in our world history. But his story also includes rebuilding and starting anew, and explains how he came to be here in Los Angeles. Painfully, both emotional and physical, he wrote his story as a family legacy to me and future generations. For this, I am truly thankful. Arigato.

Disillusioned and disgusted, I had to find something to do to earn a living. So I set out to Osaka, rented a small room, and looked for any kind of work. I found a job at the Air Force Base in nearby Itami. There I made a good friend, a Navy chaplain, who helped me with my entry into the US.

Meanwhile Dad contacted his older brother in Los Angeles and asked him to be a sponsor for my entry into the USA.

Was there a reason why I studied English so earnestly with such a feverish pace? I didn't have any inkling of what lay ahead in my life. Was there a reason why I was introduced to the Bible? Why was I attracted to church? Was this divine guidance from above? Did I pick Christianity just to be spiteful to Mom's religion?

I was brought up by a mom who possessed supernatural spiritual power in Buddhism and I was positive she wanted us children to follow her religion. Yet, I was surprised when she encouraged me to choose any kind of faith of my own choosing and with her blessing. She eventually departed from her Buddhist sect and formed her own church in Wakayama, the Rippo-Kyodan with a thousand members. She was treated as one of the Spiritual Leaders of Japan. She died in 1999.

I was given a visa and my dad had enough Canadian dollars left in the bank to mail to my uncle to sponsor me. So I set sail to a new country. I thought it was going to be Canada, but it was the USA. No one cares about my family history here. This is the land of the free. Finally, I am free.

But I did encounter discrimination and hatred when I came here and enrolled in an English literature class at a theological college. One day, out of a clear sky, and to my shock, a female professor said that "Japanese are sub humans". I found out later that her husband was a conscientious objector during the war. It was in 1954 or 55. My classmates were dumbfounded, and they did not say a word. I eventually left that college. It was hard for Nikkei in those days.

About that time I married Kay, a Japanese American sansei. I worked at a photo engraving company where I experienced the same harsh discrimination. Then my boss who had been a US marine in the Pacific war interceded and challenged the guy who called me "a dirty yellow Jap", and made him apologize to me. After that my boss and I became the best of friends.

Meanwhile

Kanshiro Koyama was cooped up in the tiny village of Mio-mura, making barely enough to get by, raising vegetables and gathering firewood. He was almost 60 years old then. I decided I had to do something to bring him over here to the US.

There was an opportunity for him to come as a refugee. A US agency went to Mio-mura and interviewed and gualified him. I invited him to forget his heartbreaks and come to live with us in warm sunny California.

So he came with my Step-Mom. I was under the impression they would stay for a while. But I was wrong. He worked hard and saved enough to return to Mio-mura after seven years here, and then went back and built a brand new western-style home.

On his return to Mio-mura, he was content. His children, one here in the US and another in Japan, have made contributions to their respective countries, as have their children and grandchildren. Koyama Fish Camp became Page's Resort & Marina and still flourishes as a family business, proud to acknowledge him as founder. After going through war, through racial hatred, prejudice and discrimination, but with love and friendship along the way, he died in 1975.

Afterword by Timothy Koyama

Recently retired, I have had time to delve into family history. When I was a young boy in the mid-1960s, my father, Yosh Koyama, took us on multiple vacations to Nanaimo, BC, where I was told that my grandfather, Kanshiro Koyama, was a fisherman. In my college years in the early 1980s, my father took us on a vacation to an old fishing village called Mio-mura, in Wakayama, Japan, where my grandfather is buried, and the lighthouse there flies both the Japanese and Canadian flags. I was told by my father that he spent some of his childhood years there, and that there are strong ties between this Japanese fishing village and Canada. Recently, I did an internet search on the words Japanese, Canadian, and Koyama. Interestingly, I came across a story written in 2017 by the Gabriola Museum in BC on a Koyama Fish Camp, and its being on a list of historic sites with significance to Canadians of Japanese descent. Furthermore, the owner of the fish camp was identified as Kanshiro Koyama back in 1934. I also found a supporting reference, written by Phyllis Reeve, mentioning that there was no

Endnotes

- 2009.
- 2 https://nickdoe.ca/pdfs/Webp267c.pdf
- 3 https://gabriolamuseum.org/japanese-settlement-press-release/
- 4 http://jccabulletin-geppo.ca/mio-steveston-fishermen-dialect/
- 5 https://www.newspapers.com/clip/18789234/frank-koyama-obituary-march-3-1944/



1 Masako Fukawa et al. Nikkei Fishermen of the BC Coast, Harbour Publishing, 2007. Spirit of the Nikkei Fleet, Harbour Publishing,



Treasures from the Collection

Taiko Drum and Stand, the Saito Family Collection

Traditional *taiko* has been an important part of Japanese culture for many centuries, and evidence of its use can be traced back as far as 2000 years ago. Early-on, the *taiko* was reserved for special occasions such as cultural festivals and religious ceremonies, where it was only played by those who had been selected by a priest. As such, it's common to see *taiko* at Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines in Japan.

The group-oriented *taiko* playing that we commonly see today didn't existed until quite recently. Group drumming, or *kumi-daiko*, was developed in the 1950s by Japanese jazz drummer Daihachi Oguchi. This style of *taiko* was imported to North America in the late 1960s, where groups of young California sansei began to play taiko as a way to reconnect with their culture.

Kumi-daiko became popular in North America in the 1970s, after Seiichi Tanaka, who is known as the "Father of North American Taiko" toured across the continent teaching the art of *taiko*. This drum was brought to Vancouver in 1971, when Tom Satoru Tamoto, instructor of the Vancouver Judo club, organized a judo tournament with members of Japan Air Lines (JAL). Tamoto received this *taiko* as a gift from the Japan Airlines Judo team, following an annual tournament. The gift was given as a sign of friendship and appreciation between Japan and Canada. Following the receipt of the gift, each Vancouver Judo Club tournament began with a ceremonial playing of the taiko, until the instructor, Mr. Tamoto, retired in 1988.

This *taiko* is a symbol of stories like those of Daihachi Oguchi, the Vancouver Judo Club, JAL, and every other person who introduced this traditional art form to a culture outside of their own. That is what



Taiko drum and stand, circa 1970. Saito Family Collection. NNM 2001.22.2.

distinguishes this drum and every present-day *taiko* as treasured artifacts. They represent the outcome of appreciation and sharing between people of different backgrounds, and hopefully, these cultural exchanges will inspire more people to do the same.

Tai Anderson is a receptionist at the Nikkei National Museum, and briefly worked with the Museum's collections team. He has been a member of Chibi Taiko, a Vancouver based taiko group, for over a decade.