# PNIKKEINIKKEI national museum & cultural centre IMAGES



Group portrait of the Marpole junior league basketball champions, in Marpole district of Vancouver, BC, 1940. In the back row, from left to right, Tony, Mush Fukumoto, Goji Suzuki, Jinx Miike, Curly Nakagawa, and Mooney Miike. Front row, from left to right, Mr. Fujioka, and Sub Miike. JCCC 2014.02.01.05 Dawn Miike Collection.



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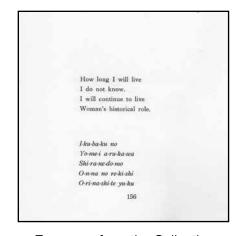
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Treasures from the Collection Back Cover



### **Submissions**



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.

We appreciate your contributions and hope you enjoy Volume 21, No. 1 of Nikkei Images, featuring Nikkei community stories. This issue features "Glimpses of Marpole" by Raymond Nakamura, "My Mother and Father" by Stanley Fukawa, and "Jun Hamada of Tonari Gumi and Our Community Friends" by Masako Stillwell.

- Toko Peters, Copy Editor, Nikkei Images

#### **Land Acknowledgement**

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### by Raymond Nakamura

The neighbourhood now known as Marpole is in southern Vancouver, on the unceded territory of the Coast Salish peoples. The place known as the Marpole Midden is a site of Musqueam ancestors and now acknowledged as a National Historic Site.

The pre-War Japanese Canadian community in the Marpole neighbourhood of southern Vancouver is not as well known as Powell Street or Steveston. Yet it was home to almost sixty families, including those of David Suzuki and Joy Kogawa, before being uprooted during World War II.

During the pandemic winter of 2020-21, I had to the opportunity to work with the Nikkei National Museum to develop a series of podcasts on this neighbourhood, drawing on various sources.

- Records from the Landscapes of Injustice project that revealed some of the material details of what people lost when they were dispossessed in World War II
- Articles from the New Canadian newspaper
- Article by Mas Fukawa on Ebisu Park (Nikkei Images 2010 Vol. 15, No. 2)
- Previously recorded oral histories and videos
- New interviews conducted over Zoom with former residents, descendants, and associates

We divided the podcast into three episodes, Work, Home, and Community.

For this article, I kept the information together with the sources. They all provide separate glimpses into Marpole from their different perspectives, and I hope that together they weave a better sense of what it was like.

Seki family home on Selkirk Street in Marpole, Vancouver 1933. From left to right: Madao, Kazuko, Tosh, and Yukie. NNM 1996-183-1.

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### **Carr Suzuki**

### "I used to play with the *hakujin* kids."

Carr Suzuki was David Suzuki's father. He was interviewed for an oral history in 1983, which is now in the audio archive at Simon Fraser University.

Carr was born in 1909 when the area was still known as Eburne, after Henry Eburne who first set up a post office in the area. Later he moved across the water and set up another Eburne. In 1916, the name of the first Eburne was changed to Marpole, after Richard Marpole, the CPR General Superintendent of the Pacific Division.

Carr's father Sentaro was a boat builder. He had boats lined up outside their house. He helped the three other sons with a boatbuilding shop set up on Annacis Island, which later became known as Mareno Boat Works.

His mother Shika worked as a domestic for a wealthy English family. This seems to have been a common occupation for first generation Japanese Canadian women. The Suzukis also kept chickens and sold them locally. Carr said this was their main source of income.

"First day in school, I couldn't speak any English, cause amongst Japanese, eh. I could count in Japanese, but I couldn't count in English. So English was the hardest subject at school. Mathematics come pretty easy."

Evidently, his language skills improved. He made friends with the white kids, the *hakujin*.

"I used to play with the *hakujin* kids. See, Marpole is mostly *hakujin*. So I'd go, you know, play with the neighbours, so I'd go to Sunday school. Then when the Methodist Church became United Church, that's when I joined. I was fifteen then. I was confirmed then, so that's why my name "Carr" is my Christian name. I said to my father, "You know" — cause they were Buddhist at that time, I said, "Gee, you're going to go to Paradise. We're going to go to Heaven. When we die, we'll be going to separate places." You know, people, they worry. Then so my father started to study Christianity and there was down here on Third Avenue, there was a Japanese Anglican Church."

Many Japanese gardeners lived in Marpole. Carr was able to get a job because he could speak English and Japanese. Later, he became manager of the Furuya food store, where he met his wife, Setsu Nakamura.

After that, he set up a Dry Cleaners on Selkirk.

David and Marcia were born twins in 1936 at Vancouver General Hospital. Carr's mother had worked as a domestic for the doctor who delivered them. "David was such a big kid for a twin. He was nine pounds and he was a twin. My wife almost died. Forty-eight hours."

### Miyo Ishiwata

### "We weren't allowed in many places"

Miyo (Ishiwata) Ling's memories of Marpole come from an oral history recorded in 1985.

She was born in 1919. Just before she was born, four of her older brothers died during the 1918 flu. She had one older brother left, and then he ended up passing away from tuberculosis before they were forced to relocate. "When you hear about it today, it's almost unheard of, you know, but they had no remedy in those days. It was terrible."

Her father, Hikotaro Ishiwata worked as gardener for Mr. A. L. Wright, on wealthy properties in Kerrisdale and Shaughnessy. Her mother Umeno worked as a domestic.

Sometimes she got clothes from places she worked and adjusted them. Miyo resented always wearing hand-me-downs but realized this helped them manage.

"We went to a school that was segregated. It's hard to believe but we went to grade three, children were segregated at David Lloyd George school. It was very embarrassing because we couldn't understand why, you know, they did this, but it was the principal. He just didn't like the idea of Orientals, you know, being dispersed with the other children."

When this segregation took place in 1924, the Japanese Canadian parents were upset. Community leader and missionary Peter Kuwabara and Reverend Kennedy from the local St. Augustine Church, spoke with the school trustees and then the principal. The principal claimed Japanese Canadian children did not understand enough English, which made teaching more difficult and the non-Japanese parents were complaining. Reverend Kennedy offered to set up a kindergarten to prepare Japanese Canadian children for school and this apparently resolved the issue.

"I found the teachers were very understanding, especially

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Marpole Japanese Language School graduation class, Vancouver BC, 1940. NNM 1992-21.

in primary years, although when I got into junior high school, we went to Point Grey junior high school, I had a teacher who said to me, 'Are you sure you wrote that yourself —' because I was interested in writing, even at that time, and she said, 'Did you lift this out of a book?' and I said, 'No,' because I guess, maybe she wasn't to used to Oriental children writing composition."

Marpole did not have a high school, so students had to go to Magee in Kerrisdale or King Edward, further away on Oak, where the Vancouver General Hospital now stands.

"I went to Magee high school and the first couple years, I just didn't feel very comfortable. Magee high school is in Kerrisdale, and very affluent society. I just felt like I was a nobody when I went to Magee high school. In Magee, George Reifel was chauffeured to school. He was chauffeured to school and we were nobodies from the other side of the tracks, coming from Marpole. We almost felt like second class citizens, you know, because we weren't allowed to enter socially many of the places."

After switching to King Edward school, she felt more supported and did much better.

"We weren't allowed in many places, like the swimming, public swimming pools were prohibited. Public pools were closed to Orientals, you know. And restaurants. They had signs up that said, 'Whites only.' It's hard to realize that today. But in those days, they wouldn't allow Orientals to enter certain quarters. Oh yeah, it was terrible."

### Sam Yamamoto

### "God, the amount of Japanese I learned was incredible"

Sam Yamamoto was born in 1921. He was about to turn a hundred when he spoke with us. He had been a teenager when his father Toraichi and mother Yasu moved their seven children across the bridge to Marpole from a cannery on Sea Island to avoid an outbreak of tuberculosis. The new home had a full basement with a furnace. They had a main floor and an upper floor with three bedrooms.

Sam fished with his father in the summer, fishing out in the Gulf. His father also ran a fish packer for which he hired a skipper to collect fish caught by other fishermen and transport it to the Imperial cannery in Steveston in the evening.

Rather than change schools, Sam decided to continue at the same one, although it was now much farther away, across two bridges.

"Because of the fact [we only had] one year left, the Principal McNeil gave us permission. A good friend, Donald Ross, had moved also. He wasn't living in the Cannery but he was my school mate, and he had also moved in on Oak street, several blocks from our way. So he and I biked together every morning, every afternoon going to Richmond High School to finish off grade twelve."

Like many *nisei*, he attended the Japanese school.





Rather than commuting for that, he went to the hall on Selkirk, which also houses the Buddhist temple and became an important hub for the community.

"I finished my sixth grade of Japanese on Sea Island. The last couple years, I attended the Japanese language school in Marpole. And fortunately, [we] had a very excellent teacher, Mrs. Abe. The reason she was able to get that job is because when she applied for the job in Vancouver Japanese language school, they found out that she had a higher level of education than the Principal. And at that time, that was a no-no for a lady to be higher. So fortunately, we got her. So, in a matter of a year and a half, two years, God, the amount of Japanese I learned was incredible."

Partly thanks to his Japanese skills, Sam was able to find a job with the Union Fish Company based on Powell Street after he graduated from high school. It was a large operation, selling goods from Japan and delivering them to Japanese Canadian homes around town, including Marpole.

Sam has been involved with the Nikkei National Museum and other projects for Japanese Canadians, including Ebisu Park, in Marpole. It was named after the Japanese god of fishing to commemorate the Japanese Canadian community that once thrived in Marpole.

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### Allan Arima

### "Life was pretty simple"

Allan Masayoshi Arima, was born in 1931, delivered by a midwife named Mrs. Watanabe, who he said was well-known in the community. His parents, Itaro and Same Arima, came from Kagawa prefecture in 1921. He said he was known as "Mush" (presumably short for Masayoshi) and shared stories about his life in Marpole for the *Sedai* video project produced by the Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre in Toronto.

His father worked as a labourer for BC Box Lumber, making 15 cents an hour. In 1939, he was killed in an industrial accident at the mill, when he was fifty-two and Mush was eight. "I never really got to know my Dad and it was something I really missed growing up..."

His mother was a housewife, like many other Japanese Canadian women at that time. She began working on Saturday mornings. Her eldest daughter Takako went with her to translate. Takako and his other sister Toshiko went to Magee high school. After school, they stayed with different *hakujin* families to do housework for five dollars a week. They returned home on weekends.

His family rented the first floor of a two-storey house on Selkirk in the heart of the Japanese Canadian community, from Sentaro and Shika Suzukis, the grandparents of David Suzuki.

Mush recalled buying chicken from Mrs. Suzuki.

"She would go to the chicken coop, grab a squawking chicken and brought it to a large tree stump, which served as a chopping block and chop its head off with an axe. The blood would be spewing all over, while the chicken danced crazily for a few moments. She would hand me the dead bird and I would take the chicken home, holding its feet while the blood drizzled to the ground. Upon returning home, I would help my mother pluck the chicken even though I dreaded the chore and to this day, I cannot handle a live chicken, but I still enjoy eating chicken, cooked, of course."

"Life was pretty simple. I went to David Lloyd George public school and later on the same day, the Japanese Language School."

He did not recall having any *hakujin* friends at school or outside of school. Here he speaks about his last day of school, with Principal Harvey.

"I do recall going to school after the bombing and having Betty, a blonde girl with freckles calling me a 'Jap.' I wasn't sure what it was all about. Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor hadn't affected me yet. Life was still the same. One day in the early months of 1942, Mr. George Harvey, the principal, called all the Japanese kids into his office to tell us that this was our last day at the school. I can't recall if he had an explanation as to why we were being dismissed, but his last words were, 'I hope to see you, all of you back at the school.' Of course, that never happened."

### **Esther Matsubuchi**

"The Japanese community was quite vibrant."

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Esther Matsubuchi grew up Esther Yorimi Sunohara on Osler Street. Esther Matsubuchi spoke to us online with the help of her daughter, Wendy Matsubuchi.



Marpole Afternoon Tea at Mrs. Kuwabara's home in Marpole, Vancouver 1938. From left to right, Mrs. Nishio, Mrs Nunoda, Mrs Ishiwata, and Mrs. Kuwabara (in front)

Esther's parents, Junichi and Mii Sunohara, came from Nagano prefecture. Esther's mother was born in 1906 and came to Canada as a picture bride when she was 16.

Junichi worked a gardener for the head of the E.B. Buckerfield Seed Company. Mii worked at the house as a domestic.

She spoke to her older brothers about their recollections of the Japanese Hall on Selkirk Street.

"They remember the Community Centre where they went to Boy Scouts on Friday nights and it was quite a big community centre and the Japanese community was quite vibrant and there was grocery stores and everything Japanese."

The family lived in a house owned by the Buckerfields and were supposed to be given it, until "the War broke out and so that was all cancelled."

### **David Suzuki**

### "You still look like a 'Jap' to me."

In his first memoir, *Metamorphosis* — *Stages in a Life*, David Suzuki writes about the ice boxes when he grew up in Marpole in the late thirties. He remembered chasing horse-drawn ice wagons to pick up fallen pieces of ice as a treat in the summer. He recalled being amazed at his father removing a block of ice kept in sawdust bin in the back since the winter.

He also shared an exchange with a kid that perhaps illustrates some of the challenges of living in the community.

"We lived in the back of our dry-cleaning shop, next door to our Canadian neighbours, the McGregors. Their youngest son, lan, was my age and my best friend. One day a new boy who had moved in down the street approached lan and me. The boy told lan not to play with me because I was a Jap. At that point I shot back, 'But I'm a Canadian, just like you. I speak English, don't I?'





"He reluctantly agreed.

"I eat the same kind of food as you."

"Hesitant acknowledgement.

"'My clothes are the same as yours.'

"Well, I guess you're right,' he finally admitted. 'You must be a Canadian — but you still look like a "Jap" to me.'"

### Joy Kogawa

### "I longed to go back to that house."

Joy Kogawa was born Joy Nozomi Nakayama in 1935. She spoke to us over Zoom.

The family moved into the house when Joy was two. They had been living in an apartment in Kitsilano, which was in the Church building where her father worked. In recent years, the house has been saved and now operates as the Historic Joy Kogawa House, serving as a home for writing.

"I was shy about everything, but I remember at the end of our block, there was a Gospel Hall. And I can remember at one point, I think I was four years old, I was picked up and put up on stage, which was embarrassing. I was required to sing John 3:16, "For God loved the world but He gave His own begotten Son who should ever be not perish but should have everlasting life." So I remember standing there on stage and feeling horrible because of all this attention and then having to say that. So I said that and then one of the Steeves brothers said to me later, 'You were crying,' and I said, 'I was not crying.' I don't think I was crying. But I think I was really nervous."

She had memories of going to the kindergarten at St. Augustine and even some of the songs they sang. At five, she took the streetcar on her own.

And later, perhaps the beginning of her literary career.

"I remember the first day of school, at the David Lloyd George School, and making bread...that was what we did the first day. I remember it was delicious. And I remember how we were taught to read and how we used our fingers as rulers along the words."

The place now called the Historic Joy Kogawa house is a 1912 Craftsmen style bungalow with lots of wood panelling inside. It had two bedrooms. One for the

parents and one subdivided for Joy and her brother Timothy. They had large cedars, a peach tree and apple tree in the yard, though not a cherry tree.

"I remembered that house of my childhood all the rest of the time after we were removed from it. I longed to go back to that house."

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### **Barb Miiko Gravlin**

# "They went fishing on their honeymoon."

Barb Miiko Gravlin's mother, Yachiyo, grew up on Selkirk Street with her parents, Uhei and Tachi Miike, who were from Kumamoto prefecture. Many Japanese Canadian communities tended to have people from a particular area, but the *issei* in Marpole came from all over Japan.

Yachiyo was the eldest of the seven children in Vancouver. An older sister, Hatsuko, had been left with relatives in Japan. Because of the War, they weren't able to reunite.

According to records from the Custodian of Enemy Property as revealed by the Landscapes of Injustice Project, the Miike family owned the house. They had recently added an extra room to accommodate the family, when they were forced to move. In the backyard, they had five fruit trees and kept chickens, which seems to have been not unusual.

The three Miike brothers were quite athletic and their names appeared often in the *New Canadian* newspaper articles for basketball and baseball.

Yachiyo married Kinzaburo Nishimura in 1931 when she was 19. She had met him while working at a bakery on Powell Street, where he was a driver. When they first met, they were both engaged to other people. She had been betrothed to a much older man she had no interest in. He was engaged to a woman who ended up dying of meningitis. "She was considered quite attractive, but she chose my father, who was short. They went fishing on their honeymoon and my mother froze because my father was an avid fisherman."

### Liz Nunoda

# "There was this thing called the Boys Brigade"

Liz Nunoda's father, Arthur Asao Nunoda, grew up in Marpole with his parents, Soichi and Sue Nunoda, who were from Shimano prefecture. Sue was probably a picture bride and when Arthur was born, his birth certificate said that she was 24 and Soichi was 36.

Soichi and Sue ran the Powell Bakery on Powell street. They would go to the shop at midnight to start baking the bread and cookies. When Arthur was old enough, he took the Interurban to work as a clerk. The public transportation made Marpole convenient for getting to other places.

At one point in the 1930s, her grandfather was president of the Marpole Japanese school, which seems to have been important to many of the Japanese Canadian families in Marpole.

Her father had two older brothers, Jim and Tak.

"There was this thing called the Boys Brigade. We've got photographs of my Uncle Tak and Uncle Jim in uniform, like a group photo of a bunch of *nisei*. The Boys Brigade was kind of like Cadets, but they didn't allow Japanese in the regular Cadets. This fellow my dad called Captain MacGillivary, he got this idea to have an all-*nisei* Boy's Brigade... My dad talked about him a lot. He was very kind. He was born in Scotland. In the group photos, he was always wearing his regalia with the kilt and everything. My dad sampled haggis."

Her father had other interests of his own.

"He loved jazz piano and he used to take lessons. His parents sent him to lessons with a *nisei* instructor, a woman. So he'd go dutifully to his classical piano lessons, but then he said, he'd sneak off and go to jazz piano lessons with a fellow named Joe Williams. My dad's passion was jazz piano. So they had a piano in their house. He saved up to buy one, a parlor upright. He had a cardboard keyboard to practice on before he could afford to pay for the real piano."

The two older brothers both passed away in the same year in the late 1930s. Jim of tuberculosis and Tak from falling through the ice at Deer Lake in Burnaby while skating. Soichi heard about this and drove out looking for the area.

"And when he got there, he fainted, he passed out. And the same thing with my grandmother, she fainted when she found out as well. So that was a big tragedy, but a lot of families had a lot of tragedy in their lives."

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### Wendy Matsubuchi

# "Acknowledging this history is important to the healing of survivors"

Content warning: The following passage references childhood sexual abuse.

One of the most challenging aspects of telling the story of the Japanese Canadians in Marpole was how to deal with the crimes of one of its prominent residents, Gordon Goichi Nakayama. We could not ignore what happened, but we also did not wish it to be the only thing to say about the Marpole community. To acknowledge the difficult and ongoing work, Wendy Matsubuchi made a statement on behalf of the Japanese Canadian Working Group.

"The childhood home of Joy Kogawa, currently known as Kogawa House, was owned by Joy's father, Gordon Goichi Nakayama. Mr. Nakayama said he sexually abused about three hundred boys over a sixty year period, while a minister of the Anglican Church of Canada. The victims of Mr. Nakayama's clergy sexual abuse include Japanese Canadian families who were living in the Marpole area before the outbreak of World War II. Those suffering under Mr. Nakayama's abuse include not only the survivors, but also their families, friends, descendants who now live across Canada as well as overseas, where Mr. Nakayama also served as priest. The Japanese Canadian Working Group encourages Kogawa House to work with the greater Japanese Canadian community to help the healing process for those individuals and families affected by Mr. Nakayama's actions as we understand that acknowledging this history is important to the healing of survivors, their families, and the greater community."

The Anglican Church of Canada issued a public apology and set up a Healing Fund for Japanese Canadians through the National Association of Japanese Canadians. We sincerely hope that survivors can find the support to heal that they require.





#### Laura Fukumoto

### "What would it have been like at that time?"

Laura Fukumoto's grandfather, Fujio Fukumoto, lived with four siblings and her great grandparents, Toyemon and Umechiyo Fukumoto, on Selkirk Street in Marpole. Toyemon worked at the Sawarne lumber mill.

Laura grew up in Ontario, but now lives in Marpole. She never met grandfather or great-grandparents who had once lived in the neighbourhood that is now her own.

Her grandfather was estranged from her father and grandmother, and they would not talk about him.

She said, "In my work as a theatre artist and as a poet, I often do come back to these questions about my family and generally, I try to approach with curiosity and with imagining what it might have been like to live in Vancouver, and travel through Vancouver, and to live in Marpole, and visit your friend on Powell Street, and maybe catch a baseball game on Powell Street. What would it have been like at that time? That's a lot of the magic of theatre and of exploring history is bringing those images and those questions to life."

Documents from the Custodian of Enemy Property revealed through the Landscapes of Injustice, went through the evaluation of the home of the Fukumotos. "I read through those files recently and that showed the appraisal of the house which I can only describe as biased and racist."

She also found documents that her grandfather Fujio was a store clerk according to the BC Purchasers Association. "There's this photo of a man standing in front of some women's coats in some kind of department store and he looks an awful lot like my Dad." But when she tried to ask her grandmother about him, she was evasive.

Laura remains curious and hopeful to find more about her Japanese Canadian ancestors.

"So it's so interesting to imagine that my grandparents, or my grandfather, and my great aunts and uncles, all went on that exact same bus ride, or streetcar ride. It makes you know that history is so much more present and alive than you can imagine at first, when you're actually physically standing here."



Jun Hamada, courtesy of Tonari Gum

# Jun Hamada of Tonari Gumi and Our Community Friends

by Masako Stillwell

I made Jun Hamada's acquaintance in 1973 as I was going about the Downtown East Side, visiting some businesses. I spoke with him several times.

We talked about the project I wanted to do, for which I had applied for a federal government Local Initiative Program grant (LIP) in October 1973. I told Jun I wanted to gather information by doing interviews with senior Japanese Canadians about their early days in Canada. Jun told me he also wanted to help elder Japanese Canadians.

Jun had a charming, friendly smile and struck me as easy to talk to, without pretense or guile. He was very honest and straightforward when talking with you. A

trustworthy, companionable man, it felt as though we were friends immediately.

Considering his later legacy, Jun did not stand out as an especially imposing figure then. He was not in good health at the time, and appeared quite thin when I knew him. Jun told me his kidneys were not functioning well, and that he was on dialysis. Jun's appearance was fine, but upon closer examination, one might notice that his facial colouring was a little sallow, and that his voice lacked resonance at times, sounding a little dry.

Something seemed different about Jun though, which became more apparent as I talked with him. There





was an intensity in his voice and his manner when we discussed our future endeavours, which told me we were not just having a casual conversation. This man, despite his engaging demeanour, was very determined, and extremely serious in his intentions. He wanted to do something to help the senior Japanese Canadians in the area, and my impression was that nothing was going to stop him. I didn't comprehend then, what it meant to Jun Hamada to get his project started, or the limited time he had to complete it. The days were counting down, and in hindsight I can see in Jun's manner that this project was so important to him that he was relentless in his determination to get it going.

My project, called the Japanese Contribution to Canada, was declined for a grant December 21, 1973. Jun and I didn't have a chance to talk about his project, but I later learned that Jun had also applied for a LIP grant, and successfully received one in December of 1973, as he reported later in *The Bulletin*.

I little realized at the time that I was talking to a metaphorically towering figure in Vancouver's Japanese Canadian history, a visionary instrumental for the beginnings of the beloved and greatly helpful Tonari Gumi organization, the Japanese Community Volunteers Association; an organization which has enriched countless lives ever since.

From its very beginnings, there have been a number of people to whom Tonari Gumi owes a great deal for its continuing survival, but of the people that I have personally brushed against or seen, I remember a few who had so much to do with assisting *issei* Canadians in the difficult years of re-establishing a livable community in the Vancouver area.

Michiko Sakata, who had worked for the UN in New York, was already assisting Vancouver residents, having started the useful Language Aid organization through a LIP grant when she began working with Jun Hamada. As Jun had little Japanese language, Michiko worked cooperatively with him to help the seniors. Around that time, I kept seeing her name everywhere in our community news. She seemed to be part of so many things in the Japanese community, constantly giving her time to support one project or another. I remember thinking how much we must owe this capable person, who always seemed to keep



Founder of Tonari Gumi, Jun Hamada. Courtesy of Tonari Gumi.

her cool, and tirelessly kept helping our community members, despite being at times misunderstood and rebuffed by traditional Japanese Canadian groups. I seem to remember her expression of patient fortitude, as she tried to respond to those requesting help in the Japanese Canadian community. I understand Michiko was also one of the original organizers of the Powell Street Festival, along with other friends. Her leadership must have benefited the Japanese Canadian community a great deal. I also recall Takeo Yamashiro, who was so vitally present at the beginnings of Tonari Gumi, and headed the organization with cheerful energy for many years. He helped my mother, as he helped so many elders, and his kindly and generous attitude undoubtedly made life a great deal easier and happier for many seniors. At the same time, Takeo was a contributor to the Canadian arts and culture scene, playing the shakuhachi (bamboo end-blown flute) at many musical events.

Akio Aoki, the long-time manager of the first Sakura-So, was another helpful figure involved in assisting senior men and women in their Powell Street home. To my memory, Aoki-san pointed out the lack of *matsuris* (Japanese festivals) in the area to those of us on the JCS board. I believe he and his friends were behind the very first time a *matsuri* was held in Vancouver. The equipment was modest the first year, and there were few participants, but it was launched, and the *matsuri* tradition continues on in western Canada.

These enthusiastic and energetic young people come to mind as just a few among the many who it seems to me have helped Vancouver Nikkei residents reestablish a sense of community and celebration in the promotion of Vancouver's Japanese heritage and traditions. Activist newcomers such as Maya Koizumi, who suggested the Centennial book, *A Dream of Riches: The Japanese Canadians, 1877-1977*, infused creative energy into the Vancouver Japanese Canadian scene, and along with people like noted photographer, Tamio Wakayama, who helped record the revitalization of the community. There are so many more stories of interesting people and of events about which the community might be enlightened, and I hope others will tell us about them.

### Homage



Dedicated to the Memory of Jun Hamada and all our old issei friends



by Tamio Wakayama

Cover of Homage to Jun Hamada by Tamio Wakayama. Courtesy of Tonari Gumi.







Stan's ancestors engraved on a marker in Shobu cemetery. Earliest ancestor (Male) 1623 to 2009. Courtesy of Stanley Fukawa, 2000.

### My Father and Mother

by Stanley Fukawa

### My father Shoji Fukawa, second son in a prominent village family

Shoji was born in 1899, the second son of a land-owner with tenants. As the 16th generation, he was from one of the two oldest families in the village of Shobu (meaning "Japanese Iris") just west of Hadano on the Odawara Line, 90 minutes from Shinjuku, today the world's busiest station.

It is clear from the family ownership of mountain property (only paddy land was confiscated by the US Occupation administration as part of the postwar Land Reform) that the family has had a long history and has been prominent in the village. When the cemetery had to be expanded my cousin donated the land adjacent to the temple to fill the need. Also, there are acknowledgment postings of gifts of money that the family has donated to the temple, ancient funerary tablets among the oldest in the temple, and expensive decorative gifts more recently donated.

The temple cemetery seems to have more Fukawa grave markers than any other name but almost all of them are unrelated to us. This does not seem

unusual, because I have heard of other villages in Japan where a majority of families who, though unrelated, chose the same name. Surnames were rare until the Meiji Period which began in 1868, as most commoners were not allowed to have one, and those who did, had to receive a special dispensation. After 1868, there was a legal reversal and everyone had to have a surname.

The genealogy which verifies Shoji's elder brother, Yoshio, as a 16th generation descendent of the first head of the Fukawa family in Shobu is a graveyard marker which lists the successive male household heads, their spouses, and children who did not leave home whose remains are buried there. The 17th generation family head was my cousin Hideo who spent 4 1/2 years in a Siberian prison camp after WWII and died at home at 85 years of age in 2008.

The ancestral home is on a huge lot by Japanese standards. Besides his elder brother Yoshio, who inherited the family property and his elder sister Taki, who married Denjiro Okabe, the farmer in Canada, Shoji had a first younger sister who married a mandarin orange farmer in nearby Yamakita village and another who married an inn-keeper in the hotspring resort town of Yugawara.

The presence of gravel in the mountain property became a valuable asset when the national government decided to build an expressway from Tokyo to Nagoya. The proceeds from its sale enabled my cousin to start a real estate business which has since been inherited by his second son. The elder son has inherited the ancestral home but he is living in Kyushu, the southernmost of the four main islands of Japan where he and his family were sent by the auto parts company he entered after university.

The fact of so few relatives in the village despite 19 generations of habitation suggests that there must have been a firmly established custom of primogeniture inheritance that became law in Meiji era Japan (1868-1912). Second and lower order sons could not share in the inheritance and had to leave the village or be adopted into other families.

After completing the six years of compulsory education, Shoji spent time in Tokyo as a tram conductor. While the big city's bright lights offered more excitement than the countryside, he could see that opportunities were more plentiful abroad. In 1924 at age 25, he becomes a *yobiyose* ("to call



Ellen Fukawa Kurz, Shoji's first grandchild ,cleansing one of the gravestones in the Fukawa cemetary in Shobu. Courtesy of Masako and Stan Fukawa, 1990.

over"), or sponsored emigrant guaranteed by Denjiro Okabe, an option available under the Gentlemen's Agreement. After working for his brother-in-law to pay back the loan to come to Canada, Shoji went to work at the lumber mill in Abbotsford. Always good with numbers, he worked his way up to scaler. He habitually added up the sums when picking up items at the corner store and surprised the store keepers with the exact total amount including taxes. They called him the "adding machine."

His knowledge of Tokyo enabled him to regale his new found friends in Canada with stories about the capital that they, as rural Japanese, were eager to learn more about. For a time, he had the nickname of "Tokyo." He loved to get together with friends, to talk, to sing, and have a few beers. He liked to have a drink and could hold his liquor for a Japanese person of short stature. He was not even five feet in height and weighed about 95 pounds. After partying, he generally fell asleep.

When he accumulated enough money, he bought a farm in Mission and went back to Japan to find himself a bride.





#### Shoji Fukawa's lineage

Ancestors: Kyubei (1623-1708) earliest recorded ancestor according to Buddhist funerary tablets.

Descendants: 16th to 19th generations.

16th Generation	17th Generation	8th Generation	9th Generation
Yoshio (1894-1937) married Sato (1898-1902)	Hideo (1925-2009) married Sachiko (1933-1987)	Tetsuya, Masashi	1 Son 3 Daughters
Taki (1897-1983) married Denjiro Okabe (1887-1965)	6 children		
Shoji (1899 – 1965) married Toki Ono (1910-1973)	Stanley (1937) married Masako Shinde (1940)	Ellen & Karl Kurz Kevin & Alison Osborne	1 Son 3 Daughters
2 younger sisters			

### My mother Toki Ono, fourth daughter of an artisan

Toki was born on June 11, 1910, the 43rd year of the Meiji era, in Yoshidajima-mura, Ashigara Kamigun, Kanagawa-ken, Japan. Toki is recorded as the fourth daughter of Kikujiro Ono and Waka Ono in the Fukawa Shoji Family Register (koseki). There were five siblings.

Kikujiro was a cooper (okeya). Coopers made wooden containers such as buckets, bath-tubs, troughs, casks, and caskets. Japanese burial plots are smaller and corpses were sat up in the caskets before burial. New caskets were buried on top of the remains of earlier deceased. Cremation has made burial easier. The eldest and only son Shuhaku followed in the coopering trade.

Kikujiro owned a bit of paddy-land on which he raised rice. In a very status-conscious society, ownership of land was very important and Toki was not proud of her father's artisan origins. The Japanese version of the Confucian social hierarchy placed the warriors at the top, with farmers next, followed by artisans, and then merchants, and then pariahs. The farming class thought itself and was thought by others to be better than people employed in the crafts, fishing, or business. This four-class hierarchy [shinokosho] was the official hierarchy during the Tokugawa period, 1600-1868. It was supposed to be more egalitarian after the fall of the Shogun in 1868 but old ideas die hard.

I am surprised to see her referred to in the family register as the fourth daughter. Perhaps there was an older sister who died in child-birth or in infancy as I had always thought that Toki was the third daughter. She suspected that her parents had not planned or wanted to have her come into the family because her immediate elder sister was called "Su-eh" which means "the last." Birth control was obviously not very effective because there were two daughters born after her.

All the children of the time attended school and completed the compulsory six years of elementary school (shogakko). Much of the time must have been spent in reading and writing because they learned enough to read the newspaper of the day, some three or four thousand characters. In the present day, children who complete high school are taught only two thousand characters. Toki's elder sister Sue once told me that she found it funny that her children who had twice the years in school that she had, would ask her to read characters they hadn't learned

After elementary school, Toki went to Tokyo at the age of 13 to work in a spinning mill. The factory owners promised to educate their young charges after hours but the workers were too tired after long hours to learn very much. The promise of continuing education for child labourers seems to still exist today in developing countries.



Toki Ono, Stan's mother's family in Japan. Toki's father was a cooper. (date unknown, photographer unknown). Courtesy of Masako and Stan Fukawa.

As luck would have it, that was the year of the Great Kanto Earthquake. On September 1, 1923, almost exactly at noon, the earthquake struck Tokyo and the surrounding area. Housewives all over the city were preparing lunch and this caused the fires that swept the area. Toki was on her lunch hour and just as she passed a large concrete or brick wall, it collapsed just missing her. She would tell me the story and be disappointed that I would not be excited to hear it. "I was almost killed!" she would say. Growing up in Canada, I had no inkling of what earthquakes were like and couldn't imagine what she was talking about. I remembered thinking that if she had died, I probably wouldn't even exist—which was a really weird idea. She said that they had to try to find open areas, away from buildings that might fall on them. It must have been frightening.

After working at the factory, she went to work as a maid in a middle-class family. She said that there were three maids in the home, a sign of the family's

affluence. This was an opportunity for country girls to learn the social customs of their social superiors. The maids had to cook and clean and do the housework but they also met and welcomed the master of the house when he came back from work—which meant that having maids must have been important as a status symbol. For rural families, sending their daughters to be maids in the city was a means of making them more marriageable as they would learn about such things as dress, manners, speech, makeup, cooking, and household management from those who had more expertise than their mothers at home.

I did not question Toki very much about her life before she left Japan but she probably spent most of her time as a maid in the city. She married Shoji in November of 1934 at age 24 just after the depth of the Depression. The unknown "Amerika" must have had its own appeal and it was fairly common for gobetweens, usually family friends and acquaintances, to embellish and lie. Toki was told that he was taller





and younger than he was to make him more attractive as a prospective partner. He was eleven years her senior, not an uncommon age difference at that time in Japan but a lesser difference was probably preferred by the brides.

After they married, Shoji returned to Canada ahead of his wife until her documents were in order. Toki sailed from Yokohama on board the *Hiei Maru*, sister ship to the *Hikawa* which I took to Japan as an exchange student from UBC. She was very seasick and spent most of the voyage confined to her bunk. The Japanese seem to have been lousy sailors as is shown in the dairies of early Japanese visitors to foreign countries. (Keene, Donald – *Modern Japanese Diaries*, Henry Holt & Co. 1995)

Upon arriving in Mission, BC she found herself living next-door to the farm of Shoji's older sister and her husband. The Okabes had six children, ranging in age in 1935 from 6 to 16. As they were my only relatives in Canada and we were neighbours until 1942, they were all the family we had due to our being cut off from our relatives in Japan until 1958 when I went there as an exchange student to Keio University.

### The Fukawa family in Canada

#### The Story Begins with Uncle Denjiro

My uncle-to-be, Denjiro Okabe, came to Canada via Hawaii in 1907, on the SS Kumeric, part of that ship's 1.177 Japanese male passengers. (The two last syllables in his given name "ji-ro" indicate that he was a second son and by law could not inherit the family farm.) This large influx triggered the Vancouver Anti-Asian Riot of September 7, 1907, incited by the Asiatic Exclusion League, originating in the US, but joined by many local white labourers of like mind. The riot made headlines around the world, resulted in property damage in Vancouver's Asian quarters and racial confrontations in Japan town but no serious injuries or deaths. It led to the signing of Gentlemen's Agreements between Japan and both the US and Canadian governments in 1908, by which Japan agreed voluntarily to reduce numbers of immigrants to both countries. This explosive incident was but another example of the tense racial situation which continued to unfold for decades, bringing suffering to Asian immigrants from Japan, China, and India.

Denjiro, from Hadano in Kanagawa Prefecture in Japan, left Hawaii after toiling for a few years in the banana plantations and sugar cane fields where he was quite disappointed with the subsistence level pay. He decided to move to the continental US but was caught by the shutting of the gate by the US against any more Japanese immigrants. Forced to settle in British Columbia, he tried jobs fishing on the Skeena, with the railway, and at a sawmill. He saved money and bought a farm in the Fraser Valley.

After settling in to farming, he decided to start a family and sent off for a picture bride, who turned out to be Taki Fukawa, my father's elder sister. One of my father's cousins who I met during my year in Japan as an exchange student (1958-59), was quite full of praise for Taki who had elected at the age of twenty in 1917 to emigrate to Canada as a picture bride in order to help the family which was in difficult financial straits—not an unusual situation in farms all over Japan at that time. In order to save her father the expense of a dowry, Taki chose to come to Canada to wed Denjiro who hailed from a farm in the neighbouring town.

#### **Mission City**

Shoji paid off his loan to his brother-in-law and accumulated funds working in a lumber mill in Abbotsford to buy a farm. In 1929, Shoji bought 9.3 acres of land on Dewdney Trunk Road adjacent to Denjiro Okabe. Shoji's Mission farm had strawberries, raspberries, and rhubarb as the main crops. The rhubarb was not harvested in the summer but the rhubarb roots were dug up every three years to be "forced" in the winter. In a process developed by another Mission Japanese farmer named Buniiro Sakon, who was honoured by the Japanese Emperor for his discovery, the rhubarb was placed in beds indoors with watering and heat, the rhubarb in winter grew stalks suitable for stewing as a dessert when fresh fruits were impossible to find. It supplied a much-needed source of revenue for berry farmers who had little else in that season of commercial value.

The Japanese farmers were very successful in berry farming and were accused of "working too hard," and making it seem impossible for white farmers to compete against. They were defined by the white population as constituting the "Japanese Problem." However, unlike the fishermen who organized along



Shoji Fukawa and Toki Ono, wedding photo in Japan, 1934. Courtesy of Masako and Stan Fukawa.

racial lines, the berry farmers were able to form racially-integrated cooperatives including both Japanese and white farmers. They organized the marketing and utilized technology that allowed them to ship their SO2 (sulphur dioxide) processed surplus product to Europe for jam production.

Toki became pregnant right away but miscarried fairly early. She had to have a D&C, dilation and curettage, a surgical procedure in which the cervix is dilated, so that the uterine lining can be scraped with a curette (spoon-shaped instrument) to remove abnormal tissues. A very painful procedure. In 1936 a daughter, Etsuko, was still-born. Toki wanted to have her child at home like the other Japanese women in the community. She thought it her duty to make the standard sacrifice. The child died because the umbilical cord was wrapped around her neck. I was born in 1937 in the Mission Memorial Hospital. They didn't want to take any chances. In 1941 a second son, Ken, was born. Due to the Rh-factor, he

developed jaundice and died. Thereafter, the Rhfactor prevented my parents from having any more children. A number of pregnancies occurred but they were all terminated by spontaneous abortions due to the Rh-factor, which was understood but for which there was then no cure. I have heard that since then, a straightforward solution of an in utero blood transfusion to match the blood type of the fetus to that of the mother has solved the problem.

In December 1941 war was declared between Canada and Japan and in 1942 the uprooting and internment commenced. Exile from the West Coast of British Columbia continued until 1949. All people of Japanese descent in Canada were declared to be "enemy aliens." The War Measures Act permitted the government to unilaterally declare people to be enemies of the state without trial and to deal with them accordingly. The early plan was to send as many able-bodied men as possible to "road camps" to build roads for defence purposes. Women, the elderly, and children were to be sent to "internment camps" in the Interior of BC. Some complete families were sent to the Prairies to work on sugar-beet farms, while others were allowed, as "self-sustaining: individual families or communities" to go to communities in BC. Since Toki spoke almost no English at that time and would have been helpless on her own, my father elected to be sponsored by a Japanese farmer in Vernon, the father-in-law of a friend in Mission, and to go and work for him before the government separated us. I was four years old when we left Mission in the spring of 1942. Their farm was taken over by the socalled Custodian of Enemy Alien Property. Despite having the title of Custodian which would suggest the "keeping of" or "maintaining custody on behalf of the real owners," it was unilaterally sold by the government without the consent of the owners to a World War II veteran as a part of the Canadian tradition of rewarding veterans with subsidized purchases of farmland, after hostilities had ceased.

#### Vernon

My parents worked the first summer of 1942 for a Japanese Canadian vegetable farmer. He grew tomatoes and cucumbers. We lived in a pickers' shack and found out that its previous tenants had left us their pet bed bugs. Father got rid of them by purchasing "bed bug powder" at the Rexall drug store in Vernon. He sprinkled it around the feet of the







Shoji plowing his farmland with his horse, Queenie. Farm was rented out to a farmer but was confiscated and sold without his consent during his internment in Vernon. Fukawa family photo.

bed we shared. He seemed to be bitten more than anyone else. His theory was that he had alcohol in his veins because he had the odd drink and bedbugs like alcohol too, he explained.

At the end of the summer, we moved to Coldstream, outside of Vernon, first to share a house with another Japanese family and then to a one-room shack with which my mother was delighted because we had electricity again. It had painted walls. The farmer supplied the materials for my father to build a two-room shack and outbuildings which we occupied until 1949. He was quite proud of being able to build a brick chimney himself which was safer than just a steel pipe chimney.

The original outbuildings were a woodshed, a Japanese bath-house (ofuro), a privy and – added later on – a root cellar. Outside probably each Japanese house in Canada before they could afford to purchase an ice box or refrigerator was a Japanese outdoor food storage device, a set of shelves with mesh walls and a mesh door to keep out the flies and let in the air. In Japanese, it was a haeirazu or "keeps-out-flies."

Our water was piped to a pipe stand and carried by pail to the house and bath. It took many buckets



to fill the bath but as we washed and rinsed ourselves outside the tub, we filled it anew only once a week. Even in the wintertime, we bathed every day. It warmed us up for the cold Okanagan nights when the temperatures could plunge to seasonal lows of 20 degrees below zero.

We bought our firewood and chopped it into pieces suitable for the woodstoves and bathhouse. It was often the children who were responsible for stacking it in the wood-sheds. I was not big enough to chop the wood but still could keep the wood box full. As I grew older, I could start the kitchen stove by lighting the fire on which the pot of washed rice sat, so that mother only had to cook the meat and vegetables after getting home from work. At the age of nine, I began doing the weekly shopping in downtown Vernon during the apple picking season when both my parents had to work seven days a week in the orchard.

One of the joys in mother's life was her love of flowers. Even when we lived in the shack in Vernon, one of the first things she did was to



plant a flower garden on the side of the house. I can remember the gladioli against the wall of the house and Mrs. Hemsley, the Orchard owner's wife, stopping by with a visiting friend to appreciate the beauty of the flowers in the garden.

Mother had a sweet tooth, and so her baked goods were a bit sweeter than those of the other mothers in the neighbourhood. She even added sugar to the standard Jell-o recipe, claiming that it needed sweetening.

Farmers did well during the war years because they had to feed the people of Canada and in embattled allied countries as well. The conscientious, honest and hardworking Japanese labourers were much appreciated but my father was eager to return to the coast and to resume berry-farming on his own. In 1949, after the apple harvest was finished, we moved to Mt. Lehman just outside of Abbotsford.

to be continued...

Right: Stanley with his cousin, Chizuno Okabe on their family farm in Mission, BC. 1940. Fukawa family photo. Left: Stanley "helping" to pick strawberries on their family farm in Mission, BC. 1940. Fukawa family photo.







### Treasures from the Collection



### Kinori Oka's Tanka Poem

by Nigel Town

Throughout this past year, the Nikkei National Museum & Cultural Centre has collaborated with the Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre to produce the forthcoming exhibit Women of Change: Celebrating Japanese Canadian Leaders, which highlights the activities and achievements of Japanese Canadian women and brings to light the strength, resilience, and contributions of these

writers, activists, scientists, and more. A standout among them is the poetry of Kinori Oka, who came to Canada as the 23-year-old picture bride of Sanzo Oka – a man she had only briefly met before coming to Canada – in 1927.

Her arrival in the Canadian wilderness was challenging: she felt loneliness being apart from her family who had returned to Japan, and she, of a family that had domestic help and who did not enjoy domestic labour, would come to work as a farm hand, camp cook, and housekeeper while tending to her family. Three years after the birth of her first child, Nancy Miyuki, Kinori was hospitalized with tuberculosis. During this time, she took to writing poetry and wrote some pieces while

she recovered. This was the beginning of what would become a successful publishing history. After the family was uprooted to Hastings Park, Kinori and her weeks-old third child, Peter Eiichiro, fell ill. After being refused from leaving the campground and a long delay in obtaining permission to see a pediatrician, Kinori contacted the Nisei Mass Evacuation Group. They publicized Kinori's case as a civil rights issue and Peter finally received medical attention. Four months after moving to Lemon Creek, Kinori was once again hospitalized from illness.

Over the next decades, Kinori became involved with several poetry organizations, including the Fort Williams Poetry Group; the Kisaragi Poem Study Group, which published her poetry in MAPLE: Tanka Poem by Japanese Canadians with English Translations in 1975, in which this poem appears; the Lemon Creek Haiku Club; and the Minozuki Haiku Club.

Kinori Oka's tanka poem is not merely beautiful: this poetry style often used by Japanese Canadians to express nostalgic sentiments and soothe yearning for their homeland is a reflection and expression of her resilience and strength of character as a Japanese Canadian woman and adventurer who contended with the loneliness and uncertainty of a new country; survived internment hospitalization twice raising three children; and became an accomplished poet. For all of her hardships, Kinori "did the best she could for the people she loved, and provided kindness to many, in her unassuming way," according to her daughter, Betty Masako Stillwell. This

kindness included small acts such as recording minutes for church meetings in New Denver and her generosity to customers of her grocery store with little money. In all aspects of her life, including her family, her community, and her writing, Kinori Oka exemplified strength, grace, and accomplishment in the face of adversity. For these reasons, her poem is one of our treasures.

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Nigel Town is Assistant Archivist at the Nikkei National Museum & Cultural Centre. Their background is in museum and collections work, having worked for the Prince Albert Historical Society in Saskatchewan, the University of British Columbia as a Graduate Academic Assistant in Metadata, and the Vancouver Police Museum & Archives (VPMA) here in B.C. They are pursuing dual Master of Library and Information Studies and Master of Archival Studies degrees at UBC.

Tanka poem written by Kinori Oka. 1975. Oka Family Collection. NNM 2001.28.4.2.1.173. p.156, MAPLE: Tanka Poem by Japanese Canadians, © 1975 by Kisaragi Poem Study Group, The Continental Times, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.