

Landscapes of Injustice

Research News and Project Updates



Fall 2018

Message from Project Director

Dr. Jordan Stanger-Ross



Every December the Steering Committee of *Landscapes of Injustice* meets to discuss progress and to make plans. We've just completed that process with two exciting days at the Nikkei National Museum. The project has come a long way since our most recent Spring Institute and is poised for big things. With the support of the Vancouver Japanese Language School, our Teacher Resource Cluster has begun to build a preliminary website for primary school materials, which we anticipate being able to share in the spring. The Digital Archives Cluster is also hard at work. Our archivists have finalized copyright permissions with the largest repository of our digital records—Library and Archives Canada—and with the support of funds from the Frank H. Hori Foundation are preparing files for public use. In the Narrative Website Cluster, we're developing content, working to convey this history in succinct and compelling stories online. Our Museum Exhibit

Cluster has been especially active, conducting multiple consultations, submitting applications for additional funds, and, perhaps most excitingly, creating initial sketches of the exhibit. These too will be shared in April.

The meetings were also an opportunity for intellectual engagement. Joined by distinguished scholars from outside the project—Masako Iino (Tsuda University), Brian Hayashi (Kent State), Eric Muller (University of North Carolina), and Amanda Tyler (Berkeley)—we workshopped the introductory draft of the *Landscapes of Injustice* book (which will go to the publisher in the early new year) and heard presentations of *Constitutional Stories*, work complementing that of our own legal historian, Eric Adams. The dignitaries were impressed with the diversity and inclusivity of our team and with the work we are producing. Eric Muller, who read the book introduction en-route from Chapel Hill, remarked that he wanted to “stand up and applaud . . . but I was on a plane, so that would have been awkward.” The December meetings were, in all, a model of partnership and a perfect balance of the hard administrative work necessary to a project like ours and the deep engagement with history that it inspires. A hearty thanks and congratulations to all.

Constitutional Stories Panel

On Sunday, December 2nd, 2018 an audience of over 70 people gathered at the Nikkei National Museum & Cultural Centre to learn about the efforts of Japanese Canadians and Japanese Americans in their fight against the injustices before, during and after World War II.



Here are some thoughts from audience members at the Constitutional Stories event.

It was an honour to host this at the Nikkei National Museum & Cultural Centre. For several folks even within the LOI project, this was their first visit to our centre. There was an auspiciousness to the day with many elders from the Japanese-Canadian community including Gordon Kadota in attendance who were instrumental in contributing to the development of our constitution. - Sherri K.

I really enjoyed the panel. It was very interesting to hear about the Japanese-American experience, the similarities and the differences with the Japanese-Canadian experience. Not surprising to hear about the complicity of their government which was similar to our government who also did not listen to the facts. I was surprised to hear it was FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover who said, "The necessity for mass evacuation is based primarily upon public and political pressure rather than on factual data." Unfortunately, the US president did not listen to Hoover.

More people need to know these Constitutional stories. I don't think most Canadians know about the Japanese-Canadian challenges including the NAJC delegation whose presentation in 1981 moved the government to strengthen the Canadian Charter of Rights & Freedoms. - Lorene O.

I found the information given by the speakers very interesting. There was much to learn about the law and constitution that both Korematsu and Hirabayashi challenged. There was another young Japanese American who challenged the injustice when they were told to move to concentration camps. His name was Minoru Yasui. Please google his name to read his story and watch films and videos of his courageous battle against the US government orders in 1942. - Mary K.

I truly enjoyed listening to the four law professors speak about their different perspectives on Japanese-American and Japanese-Canadian internment experiences and how the various laws and law makers failed them. It was also amazing to be watching the exact moment that Eric Adams realized that Gordon Kadota, whose picture he had used in his presentation, was sitting in the audience. - Theresa T.

*The Constitutional Stories lectures inspired and cautioned...I was inspired by the passionate work done by these scholars and by the importance of this work in aiding our understanding of the Pacific War and its impact on Japanese Canadians and Americans. We were reminded of the danger of racism, extremism and xenophobia in contemporary society, particularly in reference to Dr. Muller's stark examination of the landmark judgment in *Hirabayashi v. United States* (1943). - Mike PW*

Thinking of all the talks together - they show us why it is important to put the US and Canadian experiences in conversation - not simply to compare and contrast them but to also bring to light the incredible role both Japanese Americans and Japanese Canadians played in shaping constitutional law on both sides of the border - Eric Adams' talk in particular made visible how they were agents of change. - Mary Anne V.

I was excited to hear about the Japanese-American experience in relation to that of Japanese Canadians at the "Constitutional Stories" event. It's remarkable that both groups had such a significant impact on constitutional law in both countries. - Trevor W.

By bringing in constitutional experts from both the USA and Canada we were able to learn the differences and similarities between the experiences of Japanese Americans and Japanese Canadians. Interesting too was learning the reactions and actions of the governments of both countries before, during, and after WWII. I also was fortunate to have conversations with a couple of the panelists. Of interest was them telling me what it was that brought about their interest in Japanese-American/Canadian histories. - Vivian R.



The Lost Fleet Exhibit Launch Event
Thursday, January 24th, 2019
6:30 PM - 10:30 PM
Maritime Museum of British Columbia
634 Humboldt Street,
Victoria BC V8W 1A4

The Lost Fleet looks at the world of the Japanese-Canadian fishermen in BC and how deep-seated racism played a major role in the seizure, and forced sale, of Japanese-Canadian property and the internment of an entire people. This special event explores the legacy of these tragic events by considering the lessons that have been learned and how Canadian society has changed because of this experience.

Speakers:

Dr. Jordan Stanger-Ross,
Associate Professor, History, University of Victoria, and Project Director, Landscapes of Injustice;
Michael Abe,
Project Manager, Landscapes of Injustice; and
Keynote Speaker: Dr. David Suzuki, environmentalist with a personal connection to the forced internment of Japanese Canadians

With special guest, Maritime Museum of BC Artist-in-Residence, January to March, 2019: Marlene Howell

Ticket Prices:

Museum Member: \$70 + tax
Non-Members: \$95 + tax
Purchase a membership and save

www.mmbc.bc.ca

Membership Rates:

Seniors and Students: \$18 + tax
Adult: \$20 + tax
Family: \$30 + tax

Maritime Museum of BC
634 Humboldt Street, Victoria BC
Doors open at 6:30PM
Talks start at 7:30PM

Reception to follow at the Maritime Museum of BC. Cash bar will be open before and after the talks.

The Lost Fleet exhibit is on loan from the [Vancouver Maritime Museum \(official\)](http://www.vancouvermaritimemuseum.ca)

Canada's Internment Era: Learn Canada's Internment History in the Places Where it Happened

A Field School – 1.5 credits

Dr. Jordan Stanger-Ross will be teaching a field school in July 8 - 19, 2019. He will be taking students through an immersive learning experience about the Japanese-Canadian internment/incarceration and dispossession. It will consist of one week of intensive in-class study in Victoria and one week on the *Nikkei National Museum & Cultural Centre's* renowned bus tour of the internment sites, which will include Vancouver, Hope, Greenwood, Kaslo, New Denver, and Slocan Valley.

Discover how this history is being taught in primary and secondary school classrooms across Canada.

Program costs: \$1000 for travel, food, and accommodation on the bus tour; return transit Victoria-Vancouver; and tuition. Bursaries may be available.

Interested grad and undergrad students are encouraged to contact Dr. Jordan Stanger-Ross for more information or to enroll at jstross@uvic.ca.

Space is limited.



Being Japanese Canadian: reflections on a broken world

February 2, 2019 to August 5, 2019

Level 1, Sigmund Samuel Gallery of Canada
Royal Ontario Museum
100 Queen's Park
Toronto, Ontario
M5S 2C6



Reiko, Alberta 1945 by Lillian Michiko Blakey, acrylic on canvas, 2009.
Photo: Nikkei National Museum, 2013.57.1.6.

The **Royal Ontario Museum (ROM)** is pleased to present the contemporary art installation ***Being Japanese Canadian: reflections on a broken world***. Featuring works by eight Japanese Canadian artists from across the country, *Being Japanese Canadian* explores multi-generational responses to the exile, dispossession, and internment of Canadian citizens of Japanese descent during the 1940s. Designed as a series of artworks interspersed throughout the ROM's Sigmund Samuel Gallery of Canada, the installation opens **Saturday, February 2, 2019**.

“Being Japanese Canadian reflects on a period of Canadian history that is explored through the deeply personal narratives of eight contemporary artists grappling with the effects of the internment era,” says Josh Basseches, ROM Director and CEO. “This compelling artistic examination of our shared national history furthers the discussion on multiculturalism and belonging in today’s society.”

This installation is a collaboration between curators from the ROM and the Japanese Canadian community: Dr. Heather Read, Rebanks Postdoctoral Fellow in Canadian Decorative Arts & Material Culture at the ROM, and Dr. Arlene Gehmacher, the ROM’s Curator of Canadian Paintings, Prints & Drawings, worked with Bryce Kanbara, artist and Gallery Curator at the Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre (JCCC) in Toronto, and Dr. Katherine Yamashita, arts educator and Art Committee member at the JCCC.

The works in *Being Japanese Canadian: reflections on a broken world* tell powerful, personal stories varied in approach, technique, and emotional tone:

- [Lillian Michiko Blakey](#) (Newmarket, ON) expresses the pain and injustices her family endured with mixed media works *Taking The Nancy, British Columbia 1942* and *Canadian Born, Alberta 1943*, and the painting *Reiko, Alberta 1945*.
- [David L. Hayashida](#), ceramic artist (Kings Point, NL), confronts racism and its reverberations throughout generations in *Low tea in '43 (BRITISH Columbia) still boils*.
- [Emma Nishimura](#) (Toronto, ON) investigates memory, loss, and meaning in her etchings and photo-based print sculptures entitled *An Archive of Rememory, Collected Stories, and Constructed Narratives*.
- [Steven Nunoda](#)’s (Calgary, AB) *Ghostown* and *Ladder to the Moon* is a striking memorial to internment sites in British Columbia that pays homage to the struggles and aspirations of Japanese Canadians.
- [Laura Shintani](#)’s (Toronto, ON) project, *Emissaries of Mission '42*, encourages curiosity and engagement with the past, to ensure the history of the 1940s is known and understood by younger generations.
- [Norman Takeuchi](#), painter (Ottawa, ON). In *Interior Revisited*, Norman reflects on the conflicting duality of the reality of life in internment camps and a sense of “Japanese-ness” imposed on him by others.
- [Marjene Matsunaga Turnbull](#) (Onoway, AB) explores the anger and hurt of racism, the history of Japanese Canadians and her particular family’s story with her ceramic sculptures *Jerry, Army Cadet* and *Continuum: A Cake History*.
- [Yvonne Wakabayashi](#) (Burnaby, BC) honours the strength and resilience of her parents in coping with exile, internment and dispossession with her textile piece *Tribute*.

Being Japanese Canadian also includes a selection of hand-crafted objects and artwork created during the period, and copies of the official acknowledgment that was a part of the 1988 Redress agreement between Japanese Canadians and the Canadian government. These historical references provide context for the contemporary artworks.

Research for the installation was conducted with support from the Landscapes of Injustice Research Collective and the Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre in Toronto.

Being Japanese Canadian: reflections on a broken world will be included with ROM general admission and will be on display until Monday, August 5, 2019. The ROM will present complementary programming throughout the installation’s engagement. ROM Members receive free admission and exclusive opportunities to experience exhibitions and programs. For details, visit <https://www.rom.on.ca/en/join-us>.

Using the Teacher Resources

An interview with Laura de la Salle

Natsuki Abe

Hi Laura, would you like to tell the readers a little bit about who you are and what you do?

I am a grade 6/7 French immersion teacher at Sherwood Park School in North Vancouver. I met Mike and Natsuki Abe when my daughter started her studies at UVic and they were kind enough to give her a tour of the campus and history department. When I heard about their project, I asked if they would share the module with me to try in my French immersion class. I ended up collaborating with my teaching partner, Sarah McCurdy to have our classes study the Japanese-Canadian internment together.

Jumping right in, how familiar were you with the subject of Japanese-Canadian internment and the dispossession? How did the LOI teacher resource package help you conceptualize, and then create, your classroom module?

I was already very familiar with the Japanese-Canadian internment but have never taught an in depth unit on it. In fact, my daughters who are in their teens, have never learned about this subject in school.

The resource package was a fantastic guide and launching pad for the unit. We basically followed the same ideas and integrated multiple disciplines into our unit.

Your lesson plan distinguishes itself from the provided resource in that the neighbourhood simulated in your classroom was one in Steveston rather than in Powell Street. What was the reasoning behind that choice? Did you feel it worked well? Would you recommend fellow teachers consider adapting a similar model if they are located near another study site, such as Haney or Salt Spring Island?

I chose Steveston because of my connection with my neighbour, Linda Ohama*. We had talked about bringing my class to Steveston a few years ago. A personal connection was key to the success of the unit. Linda came to our classrooms and saw the work we had done in preparation for our field trip. I highly recommend other teachers finding a way to make the unit their own with any people or places they can find so that the unit is as authentic as possible. At the Britannia Shipyards National Historic Site, Linda gave us a personal tour of the Murakami home and showed her film, *Obaachan's Garden*. It was very meaningful to the students to view the film in the actual place where the Murakami's story begins. I recommend visiting the site. The school programs are worthwhile and it is also open to the public.



How did your students react over the course of the module? Did any activities or discussions in particular resonate with them? Were there any surprising responses/reflections?

I love how the unit begins with the simulation where students make homes and develop character avatars. (In future I would like to spend more time at this stage for students to get a better understanding of life in the 1940's with some personal anecdotes so students could develop their avatar characters and storyline more). Rather than just learning the facts around a subject, students began to empathize more and more with the people.



Students were encouraged to make personal connections throughout the study. They were appalled at the propaganda posters of the time. That led into a big discussion about current events and “Fake news”. Another section that resonated with students was the section we added about the Japanese Canadians being sent to Hastings because that location was closest to our homes in North Vancouver. The students had been on a field trip to Playland last spring so were familiar with the area. Looking at photos of rows of beds at Hastings, students also made connections with Residential Schools and the treatment of Aboriginals. The lesson on the apology also touched on Reconciliation with First Nations. There are so many important facets of this module that transcend time and place.

We were so fortunate to have Linda personally share her story. Most surprising were the student responses in their thank you letters to Linda. She had told them that this wasn’t just her family’s story, but a human story. Here are some of the student messages to her:

“Thank you for sharing your incredible story and showing me miracles are real.”

“...I feel it would help people have a little more hope in things that seem impossible.”

“...My family went to residential schools and was put on reserves. I'm happy Canada is a better place now.”

“...My dad knows what it is like to be kicked out of his country. He came to Canada as a refugee.”

“... I learned how Pearl Harbour affected so many lives.”

Are there any changes you would like to implement after completing the module for the first time? Are there any suggestions you would make for the LOI teacher resource package? Do you have any advice for teachers looking to try the resources themselves?

It is a fantastic resource and easy to follow. Teachers may say that the subject of the Japanese-Canadian Internment is a minor suggestion in the new BC curriculum and there isn’t enough time to cover the event in detail. What’s important to note is that the whole module doesn’t cover only one Social Studies’ concept. It is truly a multi-disciplinary unit that touches a huge range of competencies (skills). In our unit, I added in all the big ideas and competencies that we touched from almost every subject. It was helpful to teach the unit with my teaching partner, Sarah, but we could have used more time to collaborate as we bounced ideas off each other and translated some of the lessons in French.. We often team taught both classes together.

The only thing I would change is add personal anecdotes from Japanese-Canadian families as much as possible. Here is one Linda told us that my students could empathize and connect with:

“The children were never given money for candy in those days but before going to the Internment, her grandfather gave 25 cents to each of his kids. That was a fortune then. My mom, about 12 years old at the time, bought 2 boxes of Ritz crackers. She made them last quite a while in the camp.”

Thank you to you for sharing the resource with me. The students and I were very engaged in this study which is still very pertinent today. I hope our extensions are of benefit to your team.

*Editor’s note: Linda Ohama is an award-winning Japanese-Canadian independent documentary filmmaker, writer, educator and visual artist. Known for her docu-drama, Obaachan’s Garden, Linda has an extensive history of integrating community, historical, and social justice initiatives in and around her films.

Teachers: Please contact us at info@landscapesofinjustice.com if you have used the teacher pilot lesson plans. For those interested, we aim to have them available in Spring 2019.

Community Council Update and Report

Vivian Rygnestad

Community Council member Mary Kitagawa has just received two prestigious awards.

Part of the citation for the Order of BC reads:

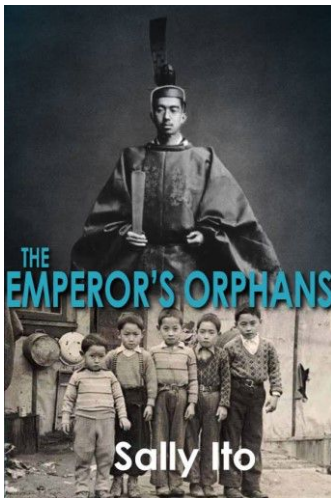
“Mary Kitagawa is an educator and human rights crusader who has helped dismantle society’s systems of racial apartheid and legalized discrimination, creating a more inclusive and just world and demonstrating it is never too late to make right a wrong.”

The citation for the “Wallenberg-Sugihara Civil Courage Award” reads:

“The Wallenberg-Sugihara Civil Courage Award will be presented to Keiko Mary Kitagawa, a leader in the effort to raise awareness of the injustices suffered by Japanese-Canadians during the Second World War. Overcoming indifference and discrimination, she has helped to ensure that this history is recognized and taught to future generations. Her persistent efforts persuaded UBC in 2012 to present honorary degrees to the 76 Japanese-Canadian students who were interned in 1942 and prevented from completing their degrees.”

The presentation of this award will be at 1:30 on Sunday, January 20, 2019 at the H.R. MacMillan Space Centre in Vancouver. A full story can be read at <https://www.ubyssey.ca/features/our-campus-mary-kitagawa/>

Mary has spent many decades bringing to light past injustices against Japanese Canadians. She is committed to righting wrongs and has spoken to and continues to speak to audiences of all ages. She believes strongly that Canadians need to learn that “this is what happened to Canadian citizens”. As always, Mary is humble about her many accomplishments and says that she shares the accolades with Tosh who has been her main advisor, supporter, and chauffeur on this journey.



The Community Council also congratulates Sally Ito on the publishing of her latest book “The Emperor's Orphans”, chosen by CBC as one of the Canadian books to watch for. Sally has won scholarships/awards for her work in three genres: poetry, short fiction, creative non-fiction and as a translator or Japanese poetry in go English. She has just completed a writing residency in China coupled with a holiday in Japan.

Thank you to all the clusters for keeping the Community Council up-to-date. See you in April!

Congratulations to the Landscapes of Injustice Project on receiving an Award of Excellence from the Canadian Race Relations Foundation!

The Awards of Excellence are the Foundation’s “flagship program that recognizes and pays tribute to . . . excellence and innovation in combating racism and hatred, and promoting positive race relations in Canada.”

Project Director Jordan Stanger-Ross accepted the award on behalf of the project at the Gala Dinner in Winnipeg this weekend. Thanks to the whole collective for your work to achieve this shared recognition.



NAJC AGM Report

Greg Miyanaga

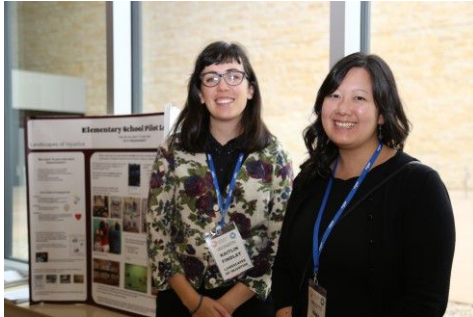
I joined the NAJC events on Saturday morning. The day's sessions were held at the awe-inspiring Canadian Museum of Human Rights in Winnipeg. There were two panels that day. The first dealt with redress as a source of healing, from the perspectives of panelists representing the Chinese Head Tax, Ukrainian Internment, and Residential Schools. (Niigaan Sinclair used his "bathroom story" as a way of describing the effects of colonialism on First Nations people, and I have used it since to give elementary students a sense of why we are going through the process of Truth and Reconciliation). The second panel session dealt with what happens after redress from the point of view of young adults from different ethnic communities. Another highlight of the day's sessions was the showing of the documentary "Facing Injustice: The Relocation of Japanese Canadians to Manitoba." The filmmaker and some of the interviewees were in attendance so we were able to ask them questions about their experiences.

The Gala dinner was held at a stark but beautiful hall at the museum. One of the highlights of the evening was hearing author Mark Sakamoto talk about and read from his novel/family memoir *Forgiveness*. We were all captivated by what he had to say. The other highlight was being on hand to watch Art Miki receive a lifetime achievement award for his part in the 1988 redress agreement. *Landscapes (LOI)* was well represented by having several members on hand. Kaitlin Findlay and Kara Isozaki also set up the poster boards for LOI and were on hand to answer any questions.

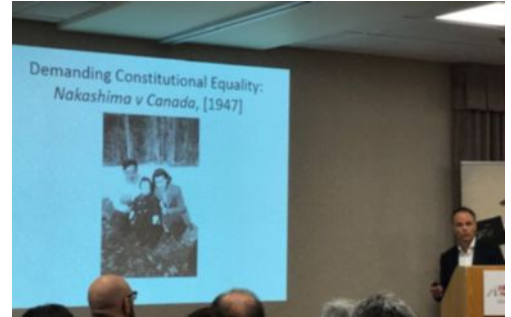
Early Sunday morning, LOI kicked off the final day's events. After a brief introduction from Jordan, Kara Isozaki gave a report as the Hide Hyodo-Shimizu Fellow, and ending with an enthralling presentation of constitutional law (!) by Eric Adams. The rest of Sunday's sessions included a workshop about the future of the NAJC followed by some very honest feedback and dialogue coming from the impressive Young Leaders group of the NAJC, including Kayla Isomura and LOI's Carolyn Nakagawa.



Art Miki and Greg Miyanaga
Photo: Sandra Shibata



Kaitlin Findlay and Kara Isozaki
Photo: Sandra Shibata



Eric Adams
Photo: Yukari Peerless

After some cheerful and tearful goodbyes, some of the NAJC members were shuttling us out to the airport for our afternoon flights while some LOI members stayed to tour the museum. It was a fast, but packed weekend filled with outreach and networking for LOI.

Japan Studies Association of Canada

Kaitlin Findlay

In October I attended the Japan Studies Association of Canada 2018 Annual Conference, hosted by the Prince Takamado Japan Centre for Teaching and Research at the University of Alberta. I presented *Landscapes of Injustice* research on the Bird Commission case files. I shared a panel with Dr. Masumi Izumi (Doshisha University) and Drs. David Sulz and Daiyo Sawada (University of Alberta). Dr. Izumi presented on exiled Japanese Canadians and recent reunions and storytelling facilitated by Facebook groups, and name, shared their recent efforts to document and archive the history of Edmonton's Japanese-Canadian community. Though seemingly desperate, the presentations lent to a fascinating conversation about diaspora, identity, and who gets to define community in the question period. In all, the four-day conference was intellectually stimulating and enlightening. Thank you to the Prince Takamado Japan Centre for travel support to attend this conference.

Hamilton and Toronto Presentation Report

Yasmin Railton

In November, the *Landscapes of Injustice (LOI)* team convened a well-attended public consultation in Ontario to share updates about the project's transition from the Research phase to the Knowledge Mobilization phase. Coinciding with the 30th Anniversary of Redress, the Greater Toronto Chapter and the Hamilton Chapter of the NAJC (National Association of Japanese Canadians) hosted two talks, the first on Saturday November 10 at the Canadian Japanese Cultural Centre in Hamilton, and the second on Sunday November 11 at Japanese Canadian Culture Centre in Toronto.

Project manager Michael Abe gave an engaging overview of the LOI project, outlining the research that has been undertaken to date and informing the audience of the plans to disseminate results of the primary research to the Nikkei community and general public. Michael also spoke to his own family experience, and how community members can use the archival resources to research their own history.

Curatorial postdoctoral fellow Yasmin Railton spoke on the process of integrating four years of LOI research into a nationally touring museum exhibit. Yasmin has been working with directors of the Nikkei National Museum & Cultural Centre and the Royal BC Museum, along with academics, designers, and community council representatives. Yasmin reflected on how community consultation has been central to developing content intended to resonate with the Japanese-Canadian community, and broad audiences across Canada. She then shared early conceptual drawings of the exhibit design that highlight artefacts, and new research findings. This museum exhibit will be on display at the Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre, Toronto, one of the founding partners of the *Landscapes* project.



To close, Ilana Ross, an elementary school teacher based in Toronto, was invited to speak on her experience piloting a lesson module on dispossession in her Grade 5 class. The school children were told they would learn about an immigrant neighbourhood. They were assigned property ownership cards for Powell Street and lovingly reproduced properties, businesses and homes on paper while populating the landscapes with family, pets, and household belongings. The children then witnessed family members being moved and relocated to the camps along with the dispossession of personal effects. Ilana shared firsthand her experience with this unique interactive classroom activity. She presented a short video about some of the extraordinary results, which moved the audience to tears.



From the President of the Canadian Studies Network

The adjudication committee for the Best MA in Canadian Studies prize has announced that due to the outstanding high quality of the nominations received for Best MA Prize this year the interdisciplinary prize panel wishes also to make honourable mention of the thesis of Kaitlin Findlay from the University of Victoria *"The Bird Commission, Japanese Canadians, and the Challenge of Repatriation in the Wake of State Violence"* Congratulations, and best wishes.

Meiji at 150 Digital Teaching Resource

UBC Library and the Centre for Japanese Research at the University of British Columbia are proud to announce the launch of the [Meiji at 150 Digital Teaching Resource](https://meijiat150dtr.arts.ubc.ca/) (DTR).

<https://meijiat150dtr.arts.ubc.ca/>

Curated and co-edited by Tristan Grunow and Naoko Kato, the Meiji at 150 DTR presents new research and digital materials on modern Japanese history in a free, public format for easy adoption in the classroom, while featuring extensive archival and special collections at UBC Library and the Museum of Anthropology.

The DTR promotes the study of Japanese history and culture through [visual essays](https://meijiat150dtr.arts.ubc.ca/essays/)

<https://meijiat150dtr.arts.ubc.ca/essays/> and numerous digitized materials on modern Japanese history available at UBC, including the [Meiji at 150 collection](https://open.library.ubc.ca/collections/meiji150) <https://open.library.ubc.ca/collections/meiji150> through UBC Library's Open Collections.

The DTR has also been reformatted into an e-textbook, openly available as

[Digital Meijis: Revisualizing Modern Japanese History at 150](https://pressbooks.bccampus.ca/meijiat150/).

<https://pressbooks.bccampus.ca/meijiat150/>

This e-book collates the DTR content into a single volume available to students and educators openly through the BCcampus Pressbooks platform.

Swimming Upstream: The Japanese-Canadian Struggle For Justice in BC

At the 30th Anniversary Redress Gala in Toronto on November 8th, Judge Maryka Omatsu introduced the new film, *Swimming Upstream* - a fifteen minute documentary on Japanese-Canadian incarceration.

Here is a link to view.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZDvnO-ljC7E>

Facebook

Like us on Facebook and stay updated on news and events on the project and in the Nikkei community

<https://www.facebook.com/LandscapesofInjustice/>

and follow us on **Twitter**: <https://twitter.com/landscapesinjus?lang=en>

And now on **Instagram** <https://www.instagram.com/landscapesofinjustice/>

Touched By Dispossession

We would love to hear your stories. A section on the project website conveys stories that readers have submitted. These include firsthand accounts from Japanese Canadians, stories from neighbours of Japanese Canadians as well as memories passed down through generations. The stories of people touched by the dispossession are an important resource that we hope to preserve.

<http://www.landscapesofinjustice.com/touched-by-dispossession/>

Art, Memory, and Graphic Novels

Kaitlin Findlay

This November I had the privilege of participating in Charlotte Schallie's Visual Storytelling Colloquium & Workshop. Co-hosted by the Technical University of Berlin (Germany), the University of Haifa (Israel), and UVic, the colloquium began with presentations in Berlin. There, I presented on the history of the dispossession of Japanese Canadians and described the *Landscapes of Injustice* knowledge mobilization initiatives. Following these sessions, we travelled to Ravensbrück Memorial, a former concentration camp that now functions as an educational centre.

Our group from Canada joined delegations from Germany, France, Greece, and Israel. Together, we comprised educators, researchers, Holocaust practitioners, visual artists, and graduate students. The potential of graphic novels in Holocaust education was at the centre of the colloquium, but the sessions and our conversations included wider topics like exhibit curation, prisoner artwork, and the politics of commemoration.



Left: Here I am giving my presentation in Berlin. Centre: The group reflects on our first impressions and conventional representations of Ravensbrück. Right: The Colloquium poster, beside an anti-Nazi sticker, at the Ravensbrück Memorial education centre. (Photos: Charlotte Schallie and Noga Yarmar)

On our second day in Berlin, when visiting the Monument to the Murdered Jews of Europe, I learned that in German there are two words, each with a distinct meaning, that translate into the English term “monument.” The first is *denkmal*, which derives its prefix from the word for “to think,” and the second is *mahnmal*, which derives its prefix from a word meaning “to urge,” “to warn,” or “to remind pressingly.”

In some ways, this distinction—between commemoration for contemplation and commemoration for a future action—wove throughout our conversations that week.

Underlying many of our discussion was a fear that Holocaust education might become banal; that, with repeated sayings and images, the gravity of the history might fail to register with younger generations. Witnessing the rise in right-wing politics and fascism in Europe in recent years, members of the group firmly felt that the history of the Holocaust had vital lessons for today's society.

So, then, how do we evade banality? How do we have our students recognize the warning (the *mahn*) in our commemoration?

Furthermore, if we connect a history (like that of Ravensbrück), to a contemporary occurrence, do we risk losing historical specificity?

Much of the group's excitement about graphic novels stemmed from their capacity to convey challenging histories, and difficult concepts, in innovative ways. A combination of words and images, their visual artwork engage readers in dramatic moments of tension and empathy. At best, they are inclusive and appealing. (Critics, of course, see them as “just comics,” a genre unsuitable for the subject matter.)



Graphic novelists Tina Fetz and Sophia-Louise Hirsch presenting on graphic novels, collage, and visual storytelling. (Photo: Kaitlin Findlay)

Some participants hoped to use graphic novels as a basis to foster dialogue. One educator from Israel, for instance, explained that Arab students will refuse to learn about the Holocaust, since it is so entwined with ongoing violence in their lives. For that educator, the intimate storytelling that shines in graphic novels holds an opportunity for student engagement. Conscious of a singular narrative taught in Israeli state education, another educator envisioned students reading graphic novels, drawing their own conclusions and interpretations, and then entering dialogue with their peers, to exchange viewpoints and learn from different perspectives.

A third hope for graphic novels was to convey lesser known elements of the history, to add to the visual vocabulary of representations (that is, to avoid, for instance, the gates Auschwitz representing all Holocaust narratives.) Ravensbruck was well suited as a site to consider these questions. The only camp exclusively for women in Germany, it held political prisoners and was primarily a labour camp (the majority of long-term prisoners being of Polish-Catholic origin, as Jewish women who arrived in the camp were transferred to death camps.) Further, much of Ravensbruck had been destroyed when Soviet forces took over the camp in 1945.



Different perspectives from the shoreline at Ravensbruck Memorial centre. (Photos: Charlotte Schallie and Kaitlin Findlay)

For many of our group visiting the former concentration camp, however, the most immediate distinction was visual: the setting of Ravensbruck was beautiful. You could stand twenty metres from the crematorium, facing the site where fifty thousand people were murdered, and turn to face, only twenty metres away, the shoreline of a placid lake, which reflected the sunset each evening. “How could there be beauty in a place of such horror?” many of us asked. (Meanwhile, it was the town on the other side of the lake, the church steeple directly across from the smokestack, that jarred me.)

The fantastic education team at the Ravensbruck Memorial centre drew these contradictions into their programming. They shared their approaches to countering the ideology of National Socialism and commemorating the history of Ravensbruck. In one exercise, students use prisoners’ artwork to learn about the history. They first select drawings (of a single woman, for instance, in a single moment) to form the centre of their story, and then visit the onsite museum exhibit to find evidence to serve as a foundation for their creative stories. In the process of creating a fictional narrative and artwork, grounded in historical materials, students become invested in the stories and fill the spaces of Ravensbruck with the memory of the prisoners (their wishes for freedom, family, or home.)



Ravensbruck Memorial educator
Angie Meyer shows our group
activities using prisoner artworks.
(Photos: Noga Yarmar and Kaitlin
Findlay)

In another instance, the Ravensbruck Memorial centre invited an American hip-hop artist to rap a survivor's poetry, both commemorating and amplifying her words, and helping them to connect with youth delegates visiting the centre from around the world. These projects brought the (sometimes visual) storytelling of former prisoners into contemporary conversations in moments that engaged younger generations. While seriously weighing the ethical dimensions of these projects prior to implementation, the Ravensbruck team embraces creative forms of representation to teach the history of site and to counter the Nazi ideology that led to the creation of that place.

I am left mulling over two dichotomies (that, perhaps, I have construed): of *denkmal* ("to think") and *mahnmal* ("to warn"), and of conventional representation and new forms of representation. It seems to me these all flow together. New methods of storytelling might allow what has become banal to resonate with us anew, thereby prompting action in the present.

In bringing forward new research on the dispossession of Japanese Canadians, we encounter both risk and opportunity in relation to prior representations of the internment era. As Jordan has previously pointed out (following scholars like Mona Oikawa), we feel this history diversely.

For some, new representations (and new information) might disturb healing or closure. In making accessible archival materials, we bring forward a range of new information. The state's case files, detailing the management and sale of each Japanese Canadian's property, offer those individuals most affected by the history details relating to their family's past. That knowledge—hand-written or typed, dated and situated in place—may sit separately from their existing knowledge of the past. It may confirm or counter (or, perhaps, complicate) their relation to this history. And it carries a risk unsettling, wherein those who have already lived with this history for decades are asked, again, to confront a harsh past. (Conversely, however, archival materials may be an opportunity for closure.)

The risk of unsettling, however, is an opportunity when it comes to audiences like myself in relation to this history. Bringing forward this new research offers the chance to upset harmful notions of this history (such as it being a "dark chapter," which is now closed.) The story of dispossession may allow other Canadians to see the injustice of the 1940s, the harms Japanese Canadians endured, and their resilience more clearly. Communicating the nature of state racism in accessible ways may help the *mahn* (the warning) of this history resonate more clearly.

These are all considerations in how to communicate a difficult past. Though most things are more complicated in practice than in theory, I found myself reflecting on our Knowledge Mobilization initiatives with some relief. In the media we are working (teacher resources, museum exhibit, and a public website), I think there is room to both commemorate and confront, to pay respect and to warn about the future. Without a doubt I will draw on my experience at the Visual Storytelling Colloquium in the coming months as we consider communicating the history of Japanese Canadians' dispossession in effective and responsible ways.

I owe an incredible amount of thanks to Drs. Charlotte Schallie, Arie Kizel, and Marcus Funck for organizing and inviting me to the Visual Storytelling Colloquium. Tremendous thanks also go to Landscapes of Injustice for supporting my travel to the event. Final thanks go to the team at the Ravensbruck Memorial Centre for sharing their thoughtful and inspiring experience in Holocaust education. For more about the conference, visit the website here: <http://holocaustgraphicnovels.org/>