

Landscapes of Injustice



Landscapes of Injustice Research Collective Working Paper #6

Record Group: Women in the archive

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Summary of the records and why they matter:

This summary report is an attempt to explore the roles of women in the *Landscapes of Injustice* archive. In government records, the documentation of Japanese-Canadian-owned property (and its theft) is largely confined to forms of property ownership and possession that are legible to the state and its legal understandings of what property is and who can claim it. In effect, the state's records on the dispossession are male- and settler-dominated; the majority of Japanese-Canadian real property-owners were men, and the state bureaucrats commonly seen as responsible for the treatment of Japanese Canadians were almost exclusively white men.¹ And yet, the specific roles of women in this history of property and loss are integral to how we conceptualize, remember, and communicate the processes through which Japanese Canadians were deprived of, and defended, their homes. It is necessary then, that we read the archive for what is not—and who are not—immediately apparent. We argue that the voices of women—commanding, resistant, subtle, and strategic—are indeed present in our records, and further, that these voices (and even their silences) matter to better understanding the history of Japanese-Canadian dispossession.²

Ultimately, this report aims to:

- (1) illuminate the multi-vocality of our archive in the diversity and—because of the pervasiveness of men's voices—the unexpectedness of women's perspectives in our collected sources, and
- (2) intentionally center (just some of) the roles women played, both Japanese Canadian and non-Japanese Canadian, in the history of Japanese-Canadian dispossession.

Included within are the writings, opinions, and the presences of women who held varied social, cultural, and political positions. These include:

- (1) *administrators* who carried out the banal, yet intellectual, work of dispossession for the Canadian state, including the Office of the Custodian;ⁱ
- (2) *neighbours and witnesses* who expressed both sincere concern and vehement reproach for Japanese Canadians and their experiences;ⁱⁱ
- (3) *advocates*, both individual and collective, who often organized via the church and other societies to speak in defense of Japanese-Canadian rights;ⁱⁱⁱ
- (4) and of course, *Japanese Canadian women* themselves, including labourers, educators, activists, daughters, wives, and mothers, who from the very beginning articulated

¹ Importantly, women did own property, especially moveable property. They also certainly claimed ownership over certain places and things. However, our work so far has focused primarily on real estate, rather than chattels and other forms of property which women would have more commonly owned. Furthermore, expressions of ownership outside of the state's legal framework are frequently obscured in government records.

² Women's experiences of and responses to dispossession differed from men's due to many factors, including labour, family relations, etc. It is notable that "home" and women's relationships to home might very well have been implicated and shaped by cultural norms, patriarchal structures, and gendered power relations.

their resistance in varied ways as individuals and as members of the broader Japanese-Canadian community.^{iv}

Primary source examples:

Below is a series of archival sources that serve as a starting point for focused analysis on women's voices in the *LOI* archive. They exemplify each of the four broad positions outlined above—administrator, neighbour, advocate, and Japanese Canadian.³

(1) Mrs. A.G. McArthur: “*The Secret Consciousness Of duty well performed; the public voice Of praise that honours and rewards it All these are yours.*”

Mrs. Alma Graham McArthur was an administrative assistant for the Office of the Custodian of Enemy Property from March 1942 to December 1949. Her labour is evident in the voluminous pages of Custodian correspondence, in which she wrote and acted on behalf of the office throughout the 1940s. She is quietly present in the records that help us to track the bureaucratic processes of dispossession, and at first glance, an inconsequential character within a larger narrative of injustice. Yet, in the collection of Frank G. Shears (the Director of the Office of the Custodian), a collection that contains especially pertinent records related to the forced sale of Japanese-Canadian-owned property (e.g. the entirety of the Bird Commission transcripts), her centrality—if only in the eyes of Shears—is made clear. Tucked away in the Shears collection is a certificate of appreciation for Mrs. A.G. McArthur, a seemingly innocuous token of office morale. Even so, its presence calls attention to McArthur's labour and the critical importance of her work—banal, quotidian, and discreet—to the project of dispossession.

McArthur was certainly not the only employee, or woman, who ensured the Custodian's work was successful through quiet means.⁴ But she was decidedly significant to Frank Shears. Shears actively advocated for McArthur when it came to opportunities in a male-dominated job market. Writing to A.H. Mathieu, the Assistant Deputy Custodian, in 1949, Shears writes: “It is entirely true to say that during subsequent years no one has sought more to safeguard the Custodian's interests or been more loyal in seeking to carry out the responsibilities of this office. [...] [H]er legal knowledge and technical understanding of problems beyond the range of the average employee has been of inestimable value. [...] [H]er organizational and aptitude in public speaking and public relations would make her

³ These categories are over-simplified. By creating a “Japanese Canadian” position, I do not at all suggest that Japanese Canadian women were not also administrators, neighbours, or advocates, or that they did not have nuanced positions within this history. Rather, my focus here is to identify those differences between Japanese Canadian women's experiences and those of non-Japanese Canadian women whose participation and complicity also deserves further analysis.

⁴ The Office of the Custodian of Enemy Property actually had nearly twice as many female employees than male from 1942 to 1946. See memorandum for A.H. Mathieu by K.W. Wright, 15 September 1946, LAC, RG117, Volume 1, File 1, Part 3: General Correspondence and Memoranda.

exceptionally suited for ... a position [in the Citizenship Branch].” Though these words would not ultimately land A.G. McArthur employment in the Citizenship Branch due to “the fact that there [were] still a number of returned soldiers with marital obligations who would have preference over everyone else,” McArthur gained unlikely support as a careered woman by actively, and efficiently, participating in the dissolution of Japanese Canadian homes on the British Columbia coast.⁵ See *Appendix for sources*.

(2) Mrs. Robert Arkell: “*What is happening is just what the Japs have hoped for...*”

Mrs. Robert Arkell was one of several non-Japanese Canadian bystanders who witnessed the abrupt uprooting of Japanese Canadians from the coast in 1942 and the government’s subsequent attempts to manage hundreds of vacant homes and properties. The circumstances and consequences of the state’s actions depended greatly on location. In the Fraser Valley, where Japanese Canadians were prominent berry growers and farmers, acres of farmland quickly deteriorated without proper care and many non-Japanese Canadian farmers took notice. Neighbours, including Mrs. Arkell, were frustrated with the state’s poor administration of these lands and expressed criticism in newspapers and through direct correspondence to the state. But rather than advocate for Japanese Canadians to remain on their farms (a decision which would have eliminated the problem they contested), people like Arkell saw the mismanagement of these properties as a loss of their own.

Mrs. Arkell was one of several white farmers who, upon the forced removal of Japanese Canadians, arranged leases with the Pacific Cooperative Union to take over then-unoccupied Japanese-Canadian-owned properties. But later in 1942, when the Soldier Settlement Board took an interest in these farmlands (the SSB was able to purchase the properties for soldier settlement a year later), farmers like Arkell, who had hoped to gain agricultural and financial opportunities from these suddenly-available properties, grew anxious about the security of their claims to the farms. Without the promise of being able to remain on these lands (because of a likely SSB takeover), tenants could not invest the labour and resources necessary to maintain the farms. As a result, the properties fell into disrepair. Framing herself and other non-Japanese Canadian farmers as victims and the most-deserving beneficiaries of Japanese-Canadian loss, Arkell contested the state and SSB’s intervention. She resented the state for threatening to dissolve the benefits her family would have received by acquiring new property and suggested that government policy was

⁵ Historians have interrogated the understated position and complicity of women (particularly white settler women) within histories of violence and injustice before, particularly with regards to “feminist” practices going hand-in-hand with the oppression of various communities. See for example, in the American context, Margaret Jacobs, *White Mother to a Dark Race: Settler Colonialism, Maternalism, and the Removal of Indigenous Children in the American West and Australia, 1880-1940* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), and Peggy Pascoe, *Relations of Rescue: The Search for Female Moral Authority in the American West, 1874-1939* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993). Importantly, many women’s reform organizations that have been considered ally organizations for the Japanese Canadian community have been implicated in practices that have been particularly destructive for Indigenous families and communities.

responsible for the ruination of crops in the valley. As a wife and mother, Arkell was steadfast in her position when writing to the Undersecretary of State:

“You will perhaps wonder why a woman is writing instead of farmer himself well in my case the largest part of the responsibility falls on my shoulder and I am not going to be beat. I want one of these farms for our home and I’ll get it if it is the last thing I do. The farm is security for my family and I don’t care how hard I have to work for it. Weather or war can’t stop us producing once we are assured that we will not be turned off these places.”

Importantly, Arkell saw herself as a firm, motherly protector of her family, even if the protection she sought depended on the unjust disappearance of Japanese Canadian families. *See Appendix for source.*

(3) Woman’s Missionary Society of the United Church of Canada: “*Isn’t there a basic principle of British justice that no one is dispossessed of his property or subjected to punishment unless he has been convicted of offence against the laws of the land?*”

Protestant churches frequently appear in the historiography on Japanese Canadians, both because of the proliferation of Japanese congregations in Canada and the church’s well-acknowledged support of Japanese-Canadian civil rights. As some of the most organized and outspoken advocates for Japanese Canadians, churches have been widely seen as “allies” for the community as it faced intense racism, and eventually, dispossession and deportation.⁶ Importantly, women’s church organizations and missionary societies were critical contributors to the cause. As respected (and relatively powerful) voices, women’s organizations attempted to appeal to the Canadian public’s “democratic principles” through discourse that was rooted in maternalism and that focused on the importance of education, family, and particular notions of “British justice”.

In an educational pamphlet published by the Woman’s Missionary Society of the United Church in 1943 titled “What is the Truth About the Japanese-Canadians,” author Constance Chappell (a missionary) writes a fictional dialogue between a number of women who hold various associations with the church. Aiming to “mak[e] the facts known,” this publication is geared toward diffusing discriminatory opinions within the Canadian public and garnering sympathy for Japanese Canadians who are described as “thoroughly Canadian.” Importantly, the logics expressed in Chappell’s programme are rooted in particular ideologies about what makes (and does not make) a proper “citizen”—ideologies that tend to be inclusionary for Japanese Canadians, but are deeply exclusionary for others.⁷ Nevertheless, publications like this one are some of the most amplified non-Japanese

⁶ See for example, Stephanie Bangarth, *Voices Raised in Protest: Defending Citizens of Japanese Ancestry in North America, 1942-49* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008).

⁷ See footnote 6. Given Canada’s settler colonial context, citizenship and Canadian-ness has often been predicated on the denial of Indigenous sovereignty and has required particular expressions of respectability (e.g. “hard work” and “politeness”) that have been used against specific communities.

Canadian women's voices in government records. Building on missionary rhetoric, this work demonstrates how women used their unique positions and knowledge strategically in defense of fellow "citizens". See *Appendix for source*.

(4a) **Aya Suzuki:** *"That property is one place I do not want to see sold as most of us were born there and the fruit trees Mother went to a lot of hardship in getting them and planting them and seeing them grow..."*

In 1944, Aya Suzuki penned two letters to protest the sale of her family's home. One in January, and an additional in September, Suzuki's letters are incisive and deeply personal. Aya was one of several Nisei daughters who, being more practiced with the English language, wrote on behalf of her family to government officials.⁸ In the context of incarceration, dispossession, dispersal, and protest, the work of letter-writing was critical for Japanese-Canadian families and communities both amongst themselves and with the state. The series of protest letters found in Library and Archives Canada captures the genre's significance; even if these letters did little to change policy, they capture expressions of betrayal, frustration, and resentment that are frequently obscured in the monotony of government records.

At times incredibly composed, and at others, severely critical, Suzuki's letters emphasize a Japanese-Canadian woman's perspective amidst the upheaval of the 1940s. Disrupting any dominant narrative of Japanese-Canadian "forgiveness" or "shikata ga nai," her writings suggest that the experience of dispossession cannot be reduced to just one response to injustice.⁹ Contesting the sale of her family's home, Suzuki appeals to the reader's sympathies by discussing her mother's pain, though she does not shy away from making cutting remarks about the state's actions: "Mother's heart & soul is in to get back to that house yet I am trying to wean her away from the re-location centre to go east for awhile. Yet you still insist it is Ottawa's Orders and take a dictatorial hand and not a democratic way. Please do not try us any further." It is reasonable to suggest from such letters that Suzuki and her mother were central figures in effectively and affectively protesting the dispossession and articulating feelings of betrayal. In short, Suzuki's writings—as testimony to women's relationships to home—prove that the legalities of property ownership fail to address the depth and breadth of dispossession's effects. See *Appendix for source*.

(4b) Mrs. Chieno Kuroyama's Bird Commission claim

⁸ For another example of women's letter-writing in this context, see Ariel Merriam, "Our Appreciation for All Your Goodness and Kindness': Power, Rhetoric, and Property Relations in the Dispossession of Japanese Canadians" (BA Honours Thesis, University of Victoria, 2016), especially p. 11.

⁹ For a discussion on the complexity of women's responses, see Pamela Sugiman, "Memories of Internment: Narrating Japanese Canadian Women's Life Stories," *The Canadian Journal of Sociology* 29, no. 3 (2004): 380-81. See also, Jordan Stanger-Ross, Nicholas Blomley, and the Landscapes of Injustice Research Collective, "'My land is worth a million dollars': How Japanese Canadians contested their dispossession in the 1940s," *Law and History Review* 35, no. 3 (2017): 711-751.

Mrs. Kuroyama's claim was just one of the approximately 1500 that the Japanese Property Claims Commission (also known as the Bird Commission) heard from 1947 to 1950. In 1948, in Kamloops, BC, Kuroyama presented a claim for the financial losses (\$2500.00) she incurred as a result of the forced sale of her property—a boarding house—in Port Alberni on Vancouver Island pre-1942. Typical of most of the Bird Commission case files in the government records archive, Kuroyama's file includes a transcript of her hearing, accounts of the claimed losses, and various pieces of evidence to support her case. Yet, Kuroyama's case file is also atypical in that she was the one making a claim; Japanese-Canadian women are few and far between in government records that focus strictly on real-property owners.¹⁰

Having purchased the house in 1932, Kuroyama and her case are important for telling stories of dispossession outside those of men alone. More than that, her file tells a story that transcends the parameters of real-property ownership. In her file are two photographs of the boarding house used as evidence—"together they make one photograph of the length of [the] house." Yet, the foreground of these images tells us more than just the house's physical dimensions. A woman, likely Kuroyama, sits near a path with five small children. In the second photo, a young girl peers through the tall grass. Unexpectedly, and perhaps unintentionally, these photos provide us evidence of loss and "home" beyond finances and property, and begin to capture the intimate lives of Japanese-Canadian women as businesswomen, caretakers, homemakers, mothers, and resisters before 1942. It is even possible that these photographs, as representative of a woman's experience, may have influenced how her case was perceived by officials—whether it would garner their sympathy or dismissal. Though marginal in the archive, the diverse experiences of women and the way they were shaped by women's relationships to place, home, and property, are far from absent. *See Appendix for source.*

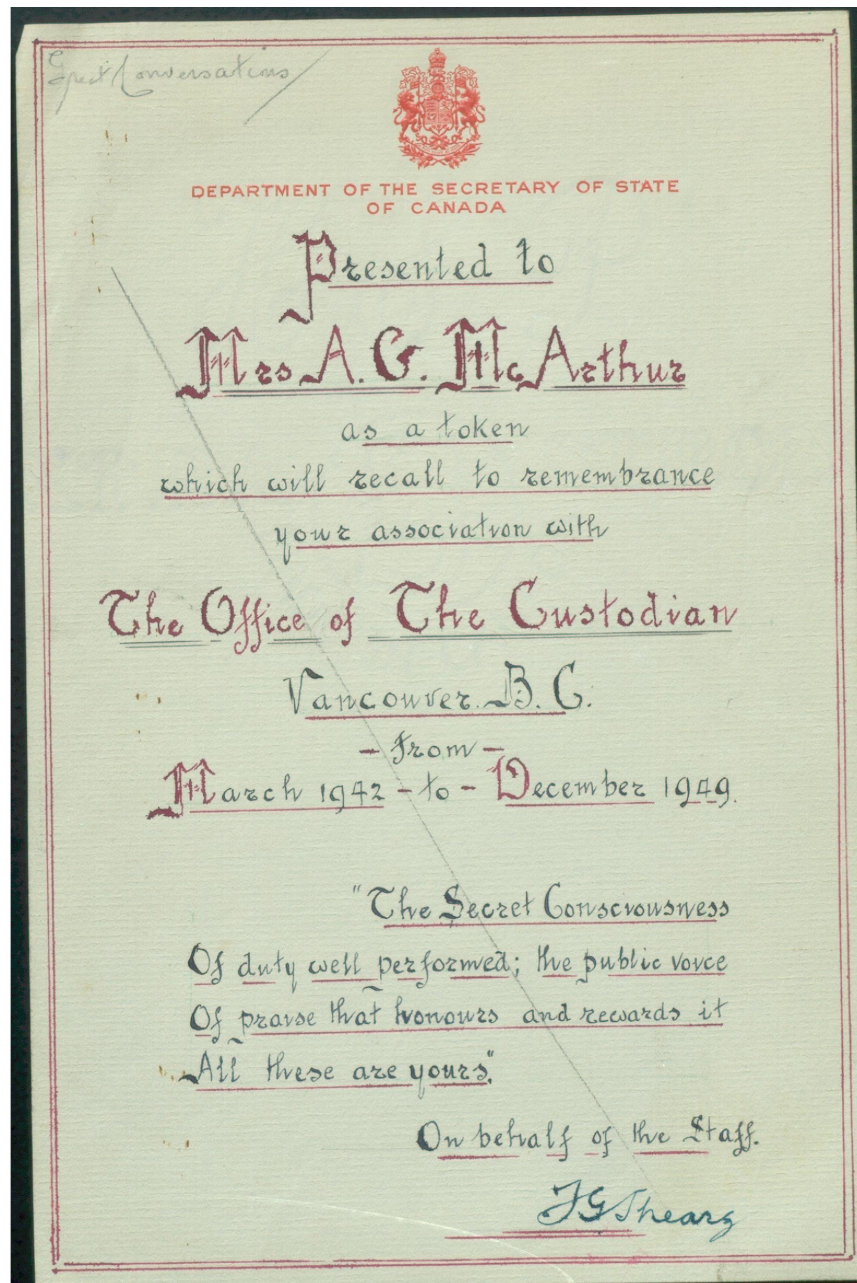
¹⁰ For more on women's representation in the Bird Commission, see Kaitlin Findlay, "The Bird Commission, Japanese Canadians, and the Challenge of Reparations in the Wake of State Violence" (MA Thesis, University of Victoria, 2017), especially p. 49-50, 146-47.

Appendix:

(1) Records relating to Mrs. A.G. McArthur

Frank G. Shears certificate of appreciation presented to Mrs. A.G. McArthur on behalf of the Office of the Custodian and staff

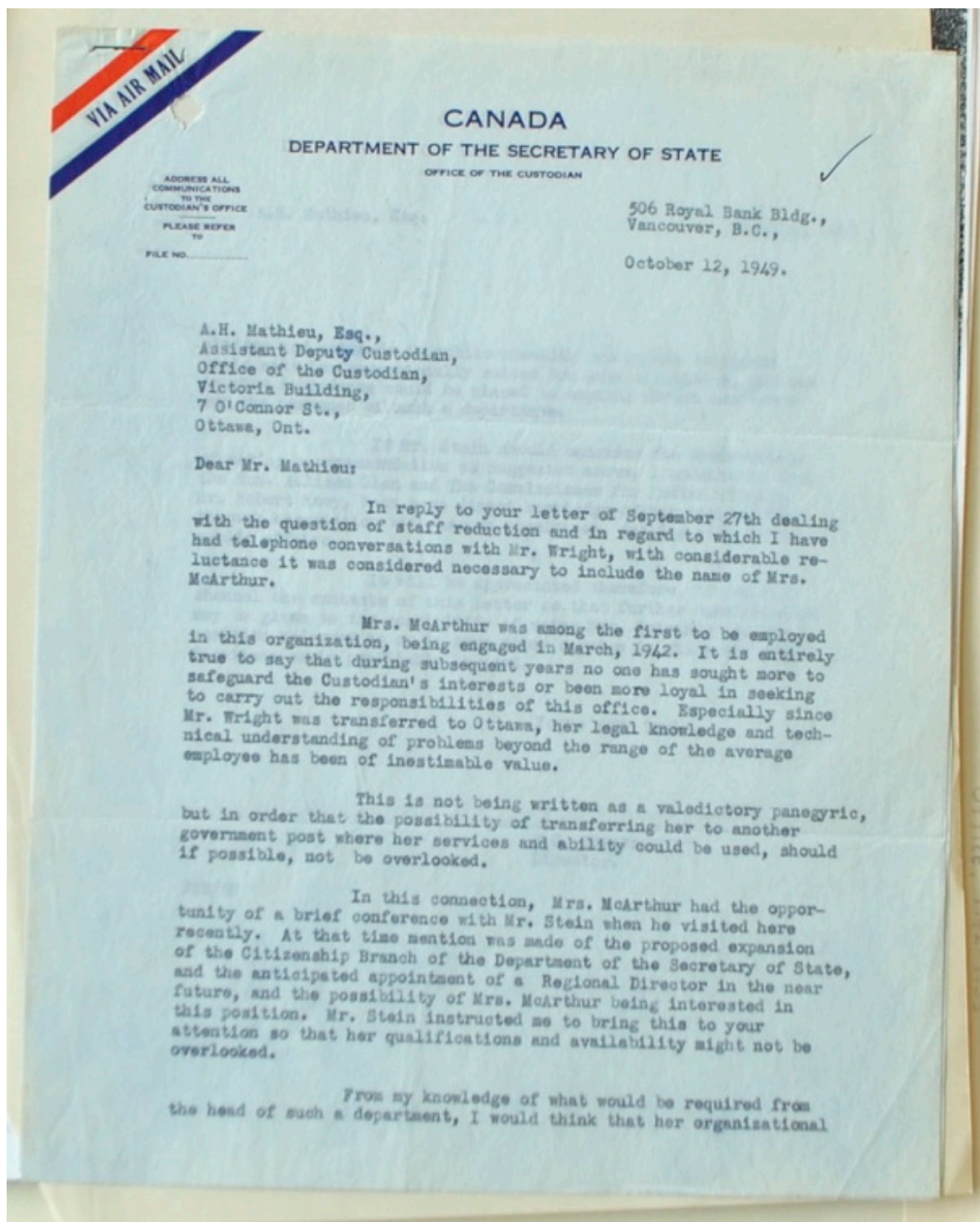
Find on Zotero: CA > TFRBL > F.G. Shears Collection > Box 17 > File 2: Canada. Office of the Custodian of Enemy Property., [Certificate of appreciation to Mrs. A.G. McArthur], [1949?].



See also, TFRBL, F.G. Shears Collection, Box 11, File 10, .pdf page 25, for more from Shears relating to McArthur.

Frank G. Shears to A.H. Mathieu regarding staff reduction and Mrs. A.G. McArthur, 12 October 1949, and response, 19 October 1949

Find complete file on Zotero: CA > LAC > RG117-C-1 > Volume 1 > File 1, Part 1: Correspondence Re Various Staff Members > .pdf pages 60-62.





CANADA

DEPARTMENT OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE

OFFICE OF THE CUSTODIAN

ADDRESS ALL
COMMUNICATIONS
TO THE
CUSTODIAN'S OFFICE

PLEASE REFER
TO

FILE NO.

A.H. Mathieu, Esq.

- 2 -

Oct. 12, 1949.

ability and aptitude in public speaking and public relations would make her exceptionally suited for such a position, and one in whom dependence could be placed to capably direct and carry out the purposes of such a department.

If Mr. Stein should consider the desirability of making a recommendation as suggested above, I understand that the Hon. Allison Glen and The Commissioner for Indian Affairs, Mr. Robert Hoey, both have direct knowledge of her capabilities through association with her on committees, dealing with various public affairs.

It will be appreciated therefore, if you will channel the contents of this letter so that further consideration may be given to the possibility of using Mrs. McArthur for the position referred to or in some other service in which her qualifications could profitably be used.

Yours very truly,

F.G. Shears,
Director.

FGS/GH

Compliments arranged satisfactorily

AHM/G

PERSONAL AND
CONFIDENTIAL

Victoria Building,
7 O'Connor Street,
Ottawa, Ontario.

October 19th, 1949.

F. G. Shears, Esq.,
Director,
Office of the Custodian,
506 Royal Bank Building,
Vancouver, B.C.

C
O
P
Y

Dear Mr. Shears,-

I refer to your two letters of October 12th,
one relative to reduction of staff and the other re the case
of Mrs. McArthur.

Both these letters were placed before Mr.
Stein who now instructs me to inform you that your suggestions
for the gradual reduction of staff appears to him to be in order.

As to Mrs. A. G. McArthur, he is sorry but
advises that she is not considered quite the suitable type for
the position of Regional Citizenship Officer or Liaison Officer
(classified by the Civil Service Commission as Administrative
Officer, Grade 3). He states further that even if we wanted
her he is afraid that the Civil Service Commission would not
pass her on account of her being a married woman and of her age.

You understand, of course, that while we
have retained some of our married women taken on during the
war years because of the special work they were doing, we as a
general rule have to follow the practice of other Departments,
and we could not now engage a married woman particularly where
the husband is alive and working. This is more so because of
the fact that there are still a number of returned soldiers
with marital obligations who would have the preference over
everyone else.

It is regretted, under the circumstances, that
because of these restrictions nothing can be done for Mrs. McArthur.

Yours sincerely,

"A. H. MATHIEU"

A. H. Mathieu,
Assistant Deputy Custodian.

(2) Mrs. Robert Arkell letter to Mr. Everam [sic] Coleman, 16 July 1942

Find complete file on Zotero: CA > LAC > RG38 > Volume 403 > File V-8-10, Part 1: Japanese and their Farm Properties > digitized part 3 .pdf pages 28-29.

COPY/GH

Whonock, B. C.
July 16th, 1942.

Mr. Everam Coleman,
Under Sect. of State,
Ottawa, Que.

Dear Sir,

I am writing to you personally for I feel sure you will direct this letter to the proper parties, that is if you have not changed since you left Winnipeg.

The situation of the berry farms in the surrounding districts is coming to a drastic end and some immediate action must be taken by Ottawa to save these farms and future crops, under the present arrangements. What is happening is just what the Japs have hoped for and we (my husband and I) are determined it won't, we have fought crop failure, shortage of hands this far besides many fifth columnist acts this is the reason we are appealing to Ottawa for help. Not being used to writing business letters to bring out the points in as short a manner as possible I trust you will overlook this point of a long letter and stay with me and realize the situation and why it needs immediate attention.

Taking you back to the first week of May (I am only giving you a detailed account of our own leases) we leased a berry farm through Pacific Cooperative Union Mission B. C. of which we paid six hundred dollars plus fertilizer from Y. Tachuchi a Japanese farmer who was been evacuated and in June we took over small place owned by S. W. Uyeno another Japanese farm under the same form of lease paying three hundred and fifty dollars. These leases were drawn up by J. M. Campbell, Barrister & Solicitor, commissioner for taking affidavits within B. C. Mind you these leases are government sealed and witnessed. Now it seems the Soldiers Settlement Board steps in after legal steps have been taken and takes control of said farms and refuse to recognize said leases or sale of any of said land, through them (S.S. Board). I personally went to the Board in Vancouver and was told by them they did not know what they were going to do with these farms, they could give no satisfaction as to what was going to be done, they refuse to recognize our leases yet they will put the matter on file for further review, what satisfaction is this for any farmer. This sort of arrangement is certainly not going to cause berry farmers to care for future crops and it is not being done. What is happening these farms are growing up to weed patches and inside of a month if some action is not taken to recognize our leases the only thing can be done with these farms is to plow them under and start again and it will be two years before there would be a crop for market providing enough new plants could be supplied. After hearing how quickly these berry farms can be ruined what earthly use are they to S. S. Board for future use if they are not properly cared for now. It seems that ordinary common sense is lacking in our whole set up of Government these days. The steps Ottawa takes into regards to situation she does not fully understand is playing right into our enemies hands, ruination of crops. J. B. Schimik of Pacific Cooperative Union realized this early this year and did the best to his knowledge to save these crops and some have an idea he was trying to help the Japs. Ordinary common sense anyone fool can see he stripped the Jap of his farms and thus saved the fruit crop by turning over to the white man in a smooth a manner as any human is capable by doing this do you realize he has done far more for his country than anyone realized. Had the Japanese been allowed to harvest this years crop do you realize all this fruit could have been poisoned by our enemies and as you know our fruit is shipped to all parts of the world especially under the new S O2 process and in jams and jellies. Mind you the P.C.U. has spent thousands of dollars to do its best to cope with a situation that no onelse realized what immediate action meant and the white farm is right behind this union but the way S. S. Board has stepped after these farms have been settled you will find we will all step off these farms just as ^{fast as} we stepped on because no man is fool in enough to work himself and family and pay wages to keep these farms in shape for future crops unless he knows were he stands. The biggest majority want to buy one of these farms and are quite willing to keep.....

all farms we have leased in good shape but not under present circumstances won't.

Now there is another situation that occurs the houses on the farms are unfit to live in one is full of bugs of every description and the other the roof leaks like a sieve and if we go ahead and repair this roof and building fit to live in and this farm is taken away from us by S. S. Board who will compensate us for material used to put these building in shape. We do not mind standing the cost if we get the satisfaction that our leases are recognized and we are given first chance to buy one of these farms. It is immaterial to us if these farms are not for sale till after the war but I am sure you can understand why no one feels like improving land or buildings if he or she can't move over night. Perhaps we should feel different and go ahead and do so but when has small children to raise he does not feel like taking a long gamblers chance. Surely the fact that we who settled these Japanese farms under most trying conditions have and will done their best to carry on and take best care he or she knows to the land etc. under his care but not unless he or she is guaranteed by Ottawa that it can be their home either by lease or buy sale and that if any said farm under the same party is taken over by anyone Govt or private party improvement and sale of crop will be compensated to parties now operating these farms. We might as well quit now and get in on some of these big pay jobs if we at least can't have security of the crops, and homes we are working. Farming in any form is one of the hardest and biggest gambles in life besides only those who love the soil and what she can produce stay with it. To the average farm money is not thought of, his crop means as much to him as his wife and family, take these away from him and he loses interest and the country loses her most important war industry. If I could only talk with you I am sure I could explain our situation here and you would see the necessity of giving the farmer who has taken the Japanese farms over the proper assurance of security so to enable him to put his heart and sole in his farm work again. There will be plenty of farms for any soldier who may want one after the war for a large majority of us have taken two or more over with idea in mind to keep production up and farms in shape for the boys who want farm when he comes home. This is our war effort and it is not a one day job but every day with long hard working hours. I like many other Mothers have been on the end of a hoe, horse cultivator and picked and still working through the worst rainy season B. C. has known for forty years since my youngest baby was fifteen days old. He is just two and half months now. Our little girl of eleven cooks etc. for us and looks after pickers children up to as many ten who range up to six years. Surely when families are working like this for our country we can have some security granted us. My husband is unfit for heavy labor and has been for over seven years and only on two occasions for a very short period when two of our children were born have we ever asked for assistance. You will perhaps wonder why a woman is writing instead of farmer himself well in my case the largest part of the responsibility falls on my shoulder and I am not going to be beat. I want one of these farms for our home and I'll get it if it is the last thing I do. The farm is security for my family and I don't care how hard I have to work for it. Weather or war can't stop us producing once we are assured that we will not be turned off these places. Now what are you going to do about it? Personally we won't give up but mind you under the present circumstances there is every reason to believe of no future crops from the largest majority of farmers on Japanese farm. Do something now before it is too late.

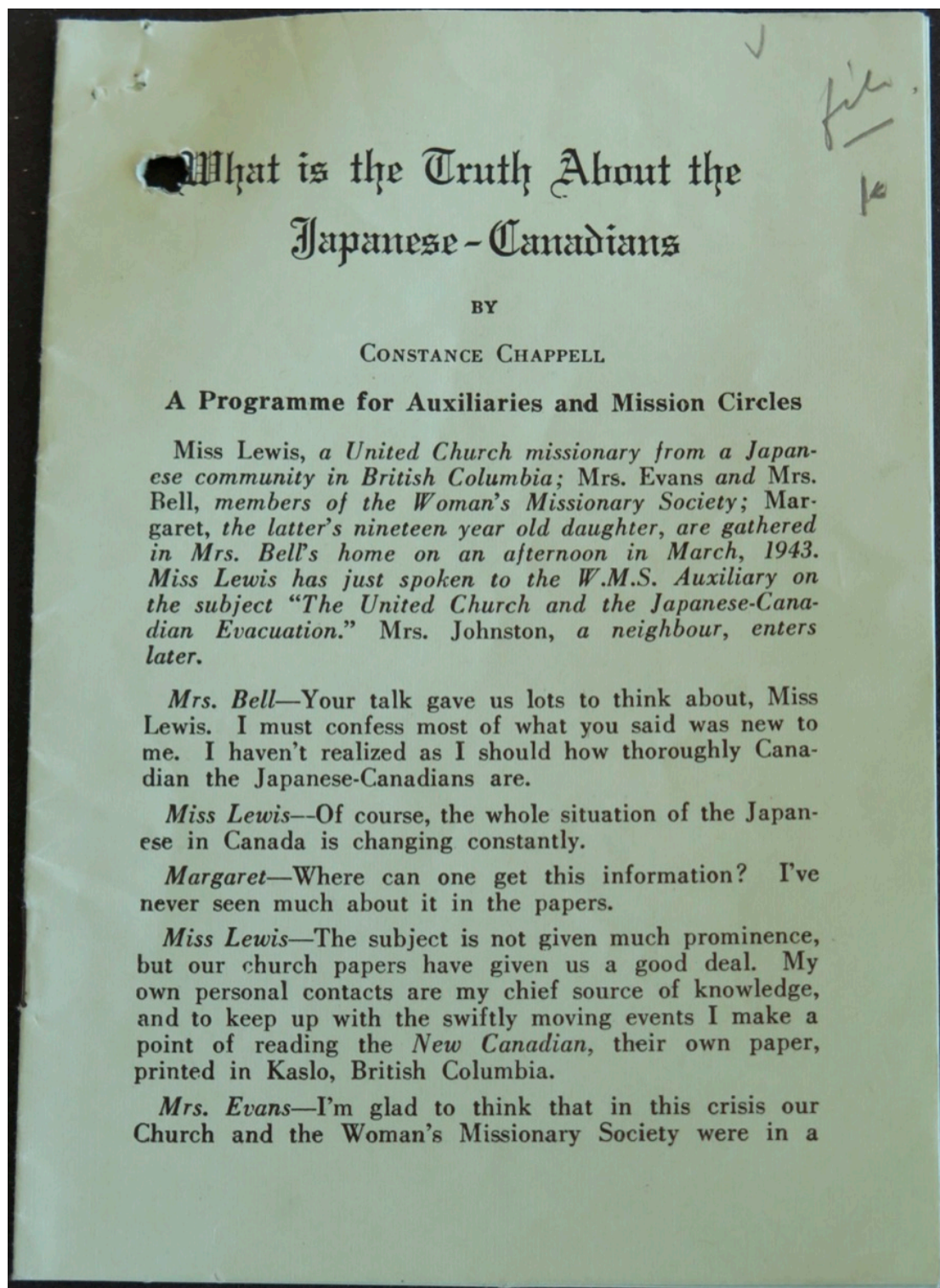
Thanking you for staying with and I trust in God you see fit to alter the situation as it stands. God bless you.

Yours truly,

(Sgd) Mrs. Robert Arkell

(3) Constance Chappell, "What is the Truth About the Japanese-Canadians," 1943

Find complete file on Zotero: CA > LAC > RG25 > Volume 2798 > File 773-B-1-40, Part 3: Treatment of Japanese in Canada - Proposals of various persons. 1941-1945 > .pdf pages 122-133. (Note: pages of this pamphlet have been omitted for length. The pages included discuss dispossession directly.)



biological inheritance. Hundreds of these young people wish nothing more than to be loyal Canadians, and to identify themselves completely with Canadian interests.

Mrs. Johnston—We'll never make Canadians out of them. When the war is over the only thing to do is to ship them all back to Japan on the first boat. That's the only way we'll ever solve the Japanese problem.

Miss Lewis—That is no solution at all, in my opinion, Mrs. Johnston, for the injustice of it would be something we could never escape. Isn't there a basic principle of British justice that no one is dispossessed of his property or subjected to punishment unless he has been convicted of offence against the laws of the land? About 500 Japanese are interned now, some because they were listed as suspects before the outbreak of war, and some because they refused to co-operate in the evacuation. Otherwise, we have no charge of disloyalty against these people, and yet we are asked to treat them as enemies. Don't you think this is perilously close to Hitlerism?

Margaret—It makes me think of what the minister said last Sunday. We must fight the Hitler spirit both outside and inside the country.

Miss Lewis—I'm glad he said that. This issue, it seems to me, is so apt to be approached in a spirit very similar to Hitler's, race hatred. The danger is that the wholesale deportation of all the Japanese race would tend to line up the nations against each other on the basis of race and colour. Many people believe it would be just sowing the seeds of another war following this, which would be a colour war. Surely we must look ahead as far as that.

Mrs. Bell—Indeed, we must. If we don't, we shall find ourselves and our children overwhelmed by an even more disastrous war.

Miss Lewis—Yes, for terrible as the present war is, it is after all a war of ideas, not of colour. White men are fighting white men, and Asiatics are fighting Asiatics. A colour war would be more terrible still, and we must do everything to avoid it. And certainly such deportation

working as a cook. These people are not all labourers, they represent every grade of culture and education. the University of British Columbia there were sixty students of Japanese parentage at the time of the evacuation. Then the school question.

Margaret—But in a democratic country every child is assured an education.

Miss Lewis—That is our ideal, but the problem of schooling is very acute in the interior settlements of British Columbia, where most of the people with families are still living. Neither the provincial nor the federal government has yet assumed adequate responsibility in this regard. The Nisei themselves, however, have risen to the challenge and are doing their best to remedy the situation. A leading young woman with teacher training has been given general oversight and, under her, many Nisei, untrained, are working as teachers, very inadequately paid, and with the poorest sort of equipment, both as regards buildings and text books. But they are determined their children shall not go untaught. They have really accomplished wonders.

Margaret—Our government would never tolerate such a condition for long.

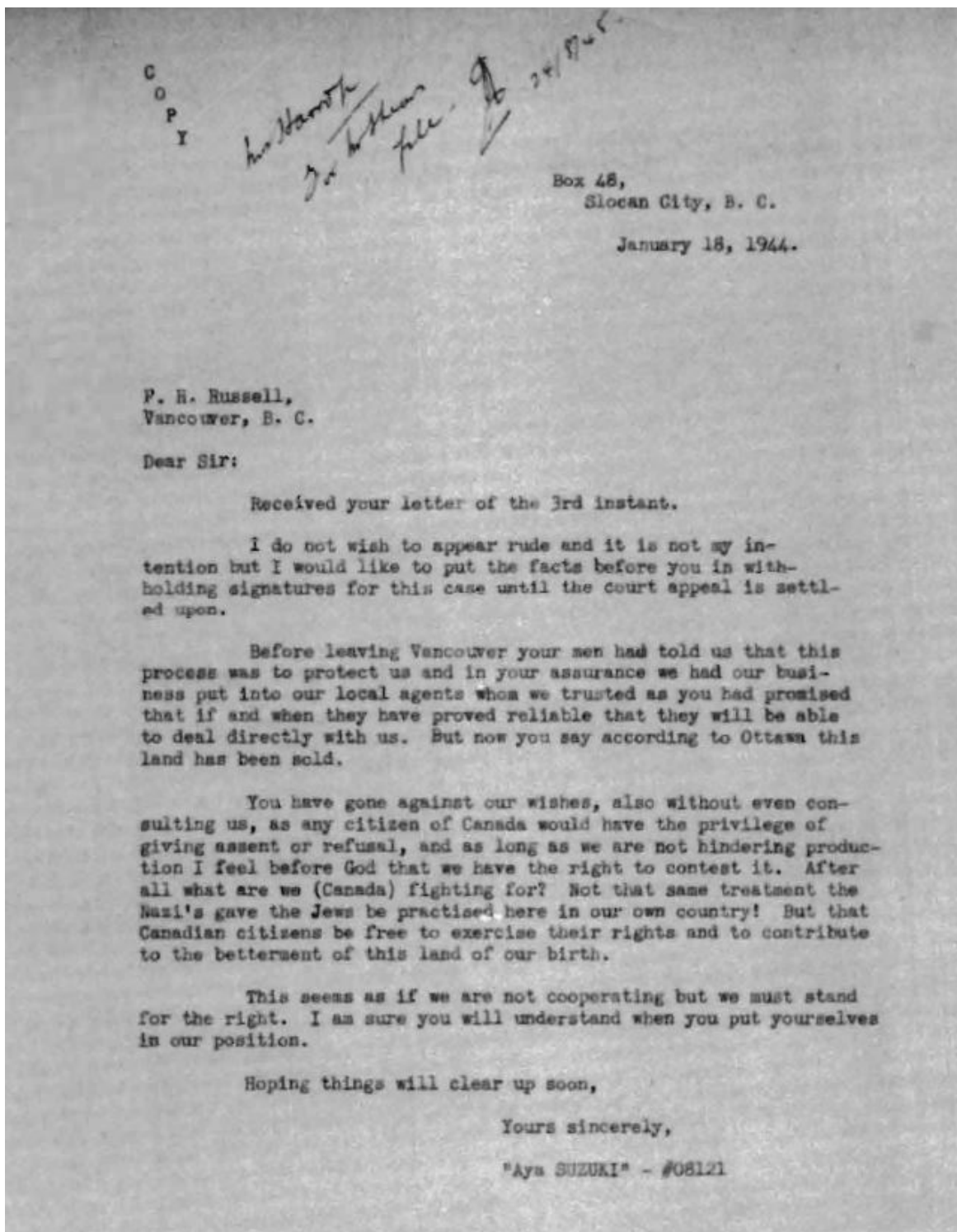
Miss Lewis—We must be on the alert to see that real injustice is not done. Just a few weeks ago, from very high quarters in British Columbia, the intention was announced of making it legal to bar Japanese from British Columbia schools, and I understand a movement is under way to sell all urban property owned on the Pacific coast by Japanese. This seems to them a particularly heavy blow as when they left they were given to understand that their property would be held for them by a Custodian for the duration of the war. In fact they were urged not to sell it and told it would be protected.

Margaret—But surely that sort of thing can't happen in Canada.

Miss Lewis—When questions of this kind arise and are discussed in the press the Japanese-Canadians feel a

(4a) Aya Suzuki letters of protest, 18 January 1944 and 23 September 1944

Find complete file: Image 1334 and 1499, Microfilm Reel C9476, Office of the Custodian of Enemy Property, Vancouver Office: Office Files, Héritage Project, Canadiana.org.



C
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September 23, 1944.

Mr. George Peters,
Administration Department.

Dear Sir:

Received your letter of the 18th instant. File No. 9957.

That property is one place I do not want to see sold as most of us were born there and the fruit trees Mother went to a lot of hardship in getting them and planting them and seeing them grow and the house itself though old is a symbol to us and to the old Parents. Also we have a family plot in Vancouver, isn't that enough to assure you that our hopes are to grow with Canada and die on her soil? "Be there a man whose soul so dead who never to himself hath this is my own my native Land". Mother's heart & soul is in to get back to that house yet I am trying to wean her away from the re-location centre to go east for awhile. Yet you still insist it is Ottawa's Orders and take a dictatorial hand and not a democratic way. Please do not try us any further.

Re: Titles - I am sorry to inform you I have not got them as we obeyed your orders implicitly. You know where they are more than we as we heard that you took them all.

So I am sorry I cannot help you, but I felt to be polite I must answer you.

I hear the Custodian has taken our piano. I hope you get a good price so that I could get another where-ever I go.

Sorry I can't be more helpful, but I would like to know where it is too - please inform me.

I am

Yours truly,

for "Aya Suzuki" #08121

For Dad "Sentaro Suzuki" #08209.

(4b) Mrs. Chieno Kuroyama Bird Commission case file

Find complete file on Zotero: CA > LAC > RG33-69 > Volume 5 > File 86: Kuroyama, Mrs. Chieno (Note: pages of this case file have been omitted for length. Only photograph evidence is included. Quotes used in explanatory paragraph above are found within the case file.)



ⁱ For an additional example outside this report, see lengthy comparative memo on US and CA policy by M. Bridges in External affairs, LAC, RG25, Volume 5761, File 104(s, Part 1.2, p. 136-62.

ⁱⁱ See extensive examples in RG25, Volume 2798, File 773-B-1-40, Part 1-5: Treatment of Japanese, Proposals of Various Persons, for example Part 1, .pdf pages 60-63. For other examples in Provincial Records, see letter from an Alicia M. (?) to Halford Wilson, BCA, MS0012, Box 1, File 3, .pdf page 4-5, and from Mrs. Ryan to Halford Wilson, BCA, MS0012, Box 1, File 3, .pdf page 8-9.

ⁱⁱⁱ See also, letter from the Alberta Provincial Women's Christian Temperance Union to W.L.M. King, LAC, RG27, Volume 656, File 23-2-11-1, Part 3, digitized part 3, .pdf page 33; and letter from the Women's Missionary Society of the United Church of Canada to W.L.M. King, LAC, RG25, Volume 5761, File 104(s), Part 2.2, .pdf page 158. A notable example is Grace Tucker (LAC, MG30 D200), whose involvement in with the Cooperative Committee on Japanese Canadians has been reflected in our records. Other women of particular importance in their work with the CCJC is Donalda MacMillan and Thelma Scrambler. Correspondence can be found in the Grace Thompson collection, LAC, MG30-C160, File 1.

^{iv} A number of protest letters were written by Japanese Canadian women. See for example, letter from Mrs. N. Mitsunaga, Image 1472, Microfilm Reel C9476, Office of the Custodian of Enemy Property, Vancouver Office: Office Files, Héritage Project, Canadiana.org. More Bird Commission claims by Japanese Canadian women (many of whom were widows), can be found in LAC, RG33-69.