



Landscapes of Injustice

Research News and Project Updates Fall/Winter 2019

Message from Project Director

Dr. Jordan Stanger-Ross

The end of *Landscapes of Injustice* is coming into view. We've got just over a year left in the official lifetime of the project. Some important activities—including the *Canada's Internment Era Field School* and the *Broken Promises* museum exhibit—will continue after the spring of 2021, but other facets of the project—including our funding for employees—will come to an end. This will mean some goodbyes and many, many thanks. But it is not yet time for all that. Instead, while we still have some time to do so together, we might ask, what is next?

Some projects have obvious next steps, natural second acts. A project to improve services to refugees in British Columbia, for example, might be followed by a similar program in Ontario. A theoretical project—on, say, ecological planning—could be followed by one that implements its findings in practice. But *Landscapes of Injustice* has not been one of those. We've done both research and implementation. We've been national from the start. There may be next steps, but they will grow from the same kind of creative partnership that created *Landscapes of Injustice* from the start. There is no preordained path.

I've often been asked how *Landscapes of Injustice* started in the first place. Actually, the project's origins are difficult to pinpoint. There wasn't so much a single moment at which it began, but rather many moments in which it continued forward. Conversations started and had an energy behind them. People and institutions found that they shared questions and passions. A momentum emerged, and there was never a good reason to stop (whereas there were many good reasons to carry on). *Landscapes of Injustice* was created by partnership and it has only ever existed as a partnership.



For most of us, of course, the work won't end. The Nikkei National Museum will continue to be a hub for producing and exhibiting the history and culture of Japanese Canadians. The Canadian Museum of Immigration will keep telling the story of multicultural Canada. I'll keep doing my historian thing. And so on. The question is not whether the work will continue, but rather whether we will continue to do work together.

The truth is, I'm not sure what's next. But I'm delighted at everything we'll see to fruition in the coming year, very much looking forward to thanking many people at its end, and still curious to see what, in the months ahead, might still emerge.

Inventing the future, revealing the past: digital humanities open house

Monday, Jan 13 , 4:30 pm–6:30 pm
HCMC and DSC,
Mearns Centre for Learning – McPherson,
UVic Libraries



Humanities Literacy Week

A Celebration Of
What Makes Us Human

Inventing the Future, Revealing the Past: Digital Humanities Open House

Monday, January 13

4:30-6:30pm

Digital Scholarship Commons, McPherson Library, University of Victoria

Learn what happens when the Humanities goes digital! Researchers in the Faculty of Humanities and developers in the Humanities Computing and Media Centre (HCMC) regularly work together to create inventive digital projects, teaching tools, maps, and online archives. This open house event will showcase the work of 4 projects, from mapping literary place names in *The Map of Early Modern London* to revealing the unknown in *Great Unsolved Mysteries in Canadian History*. Humanities professors, programmers, and students will be on-hand to guide you through these digital resources and the rare materials, artifacts, and archives that inspired them. ***Landscapes of Injustice*** will of course be there with a large contingent of members from the research collective to answer questions about the project and upcoming public outputs. Refreshments will be served.



Testifying to Loss: The Royal Commission on Japanese Claims, 1947-50

In the 1940s, the Canadian government interned and dispossessed nearly 22,000 persons of Japanese descent. In 1947, cabinet appointed a Royal Commission to investigate Japanese Canadians' claims for losses resulting from this process. Over three years, hundreds of Japanese Canadians submitted evidence and testified in its hearings. Their claims and testimony are preserved in thousands of pages of archival documents.

This presentation examines the how loss was defined, argued, and contested in the Royal Commission on Japanese Claims (1947-50.) Cognisant of how the Commission could influence public opinion, federal officials designed the Royal Commission to provide closure to the internment-era and to mark the start of the postwar period. This narrow purview focused the inquiry on government processes and procedural accountability. As Japanese Canadians fought to expand this definition to address their losses, the proceedings became a record of contest over the meaning of property loss and the legacy of the dispossession. This contest, captured in the Commission proceedings, provides a pathway into the complex history of the postwar years as Canadians grappled with the racism of Second World War, including Canada's own race-based policies, and looked towards new approaches to pluralism.



Kaitlin Findlay
Research
Coordinator,
Landscapes of
Injustice project;
MA, UVic History



Discussant:
**Mary Anne
Vallianatos**
PhD Candidate,
UVic Law

A free public event brought to you by



**University
of Victoria**
Centre for
Asia-Pacific
Initiatives

15 January 2020
Clearihue Building
Room A308
3 - 4 pm

capi.uvic.ca

Learn Canada's Internment History in the Places Where It Happened

2020 Field School Call for Enrollment Applications

Victoria-Vancouver-Hope-Greenwood-Kaslo-New Denver-Slocan Valley

Landscapes of Injustice in partnership with the University of Victoria, Nikkei National Museum & Cultural Centre, NAJC and the Howard Green Foundation are pleased to offer the 2020 Canada's Internment Era Field School July 12-24, 2020.

Taught by:

- Jordan Stanger-Ross, Associate Professor of History and Project Director of Landscapes of Injustice and prominent leaders from the Japanese-Canadian community
- One week on the Nikkei National Museum's renowned bus tour of BC sites of internment
- One week in-class at the University of Victoria

• Enquire: Jordan Stanger-Ross jstross@uvic.ca

www.landscapesofinjustice.com

Check out the website of one of the teacher/student group projects.

<https://landscapesofinjus.wixsite.com/mysite>

I would tell a teacher to go for it, even if it is your summer break. Having this first-hand learning experience is really different than anything I have ever seen in a university class. It's such a great experience to be able to work with the primary sources because we analyze them in class afterwards, but having been there, I think it gives a whole other perspective on the subject matter.

Roxanne C. Joseph-Hermas-Leclerc School Quebec



Roxanne and Susan O. at Christina Lake



James and group in Lillooet

As a teacher, getting the chance to speak with Japanese Canadians who were interned or whose family were interned was an invaluable learning experience. Their honesty and willingness to share how this difficult history impacted their lives and their families will stay with me for a long time. The field school experience also gave me the knowledge and inspired me to teach this history to my students in a way that I think is meaningful and essential for citizenship education.

James M. West Vancouver School District and PhD candidate Curriculum, Teaching and Learning University of Toronto

One of the most valuable parts of this experience was having the unique opportunity to visit sites that were significant to the history of Japanese-Canadian dispossession and internment. Sharing space with those who endured these injustices first hand brought historical experiences to life for me in a way that no textbook or documentary ever could. Historical information, emotional insight, and physical spaces all came together to produce powerful learning. This was made even more meaningful by hearing the memories and perspectives of Japanese Canadians who lived through the experience of internment personally. This deep learning and historical empathy is of vital importance and is something that I want to share with my teaching colleagues as well as my students.

Natasha S. Lester B. Pearson CI, Toronto



Kimiko Y. and Natasha S. on the Sites of Internment bus tour

Photo credit: Greg Miyanaga

As a teacher I always look for ways for my students to learn through personal events and experiences that are relevant to them. The bus tour and in class lessons were exactly that. This was something that had an impact on me emotionally and intellectually. Touring the camps and visiting with people who had lived through internment, left impressions on my heart and mind that I will never forget.

Dawn Tambourine T. St. Thomas of Aquinas Middle School Red Deer AB

Digital Archive Cluster Update

Stewart Arneil

The Digital Archive cluster is well on its way to creating a useable reference website out of the wide range of material gathered by the research clusters.

We have integrated thousands of documents from numerous community and government archives, thousands of real estate transactions, thousands of entries from phone books, ledgers of a thousand fishing boats, hundreds of court trials, hundreds of letters of protest, and other material. We are almost finished processing all those datasets into an integrated whole so they all work together. In addition, students and community volunteers are about 1/5 of the way through hundreds of oral histories created by the project and about 1/5 of the way through creating a digital version of the Office of the Custodian file for each of 14,000 Japanese-Canadian persons.

One large well-organized pile of files is better than a lot of smaller unco-ordinated piles, but is still only so useful. We are writing programs and interfaces to help ordinary people or researchers interact effectively with all that information. For examples, you will be able to enter a name and see all the records from all the different sources that mention that name (maybe a court record, a directory entry and a protest letter), or you will be able to choose a street and see the names of people that lived on that street, or having found a real estate transaction, you can find other transactions for that property. For researchers, we're building features to allow you to download large sets of data so you can do further work. We have built basic test versions of some of the interfaces and are working on the rest.

We aim to have something to show the rest of the project team in the spring. In the summer we'll hire students to complete the individual case files and oral histories, and continue testing improvements to the programming and interfaces until ready for public use as soon as possible after that.

Digital Archives Cluster at ASA 2019

Gord Lyall

This past November, I represented the archival website cluster of *Landscapes of Injustice* at the annual *American Studies Association* (ASA) conference in Honolulu. The ASA, created in 1951, “promotes the development and dissemination of interdisciplinary research on U.S. culture and history in a global context. Its purpose is to support scholars and scholarship committed to original research, critical thinking, and public dialogue.” [<https://www.theasa.net/about>] In the past decade, a greater emphasis has been placed on LGBTQ and Indigenous studies. This year’s event was themed “Build as We Fight” and it featured Kanaka scholars who are openly critical of their University (and host of this year’s conference) for ignoring Indigenous protests over a proposed telescope installation on a sacred volcano known as Mauna Kea. This movement ties into a larger call for Indigenous sovereignty over the Hawaiian Islands which I found, as a Canadian familiar with similar politics here at home, to be a welcomed but sobering counter-point to all the tourist activities surrounding the conference which was located in the heart of Honolulu.

On an ASA Digital Caucus panel entitled, “Building Digital Archives as We Fight,” I presented the archival website cluster’s progress over the year concerning the handling of sensitive material in archival records and oral histories. My fellow panellists, who are also creating digital repositories dedicated to the history of marginalized communities, presented very intriguing projects that ranged from collecting oral histories of the LGBTQ community in Indiana, to archiving documents from a university-based feminist movement and documents from an Asian-American organization in New York dedicated to fighting police violence and gentrification of their community.

Landscapes was by far the largest project on the panel and many in the room were excited to hear about the travelling museum exhibit when I mentioned it during the Q and A session. After laying out the history of forced removal from the coast and dispossession of Japanese-Canadians’ property with comparisons and contrasts to the American experience, I outlined the steps I had taken in preparation for this presentation talking to other Canadian academics and archivists, and going to similarly-themed panel discussions to gain insights on how we can better approach the matter of disseminating material that may be considered sensitive. This research, along with discussions the collective had at the last *Spring Institute*, and correspondence with partner institution *Canadian*



Gord Lyall 4th from right on conference panel.

Museum of Immigration at Pier 21, has led to the creation of a risk matrix. What to do with the results of the risk matrix is still to be determined by the project in conversation with the community, but I can report that the idea of the matrix was well received by the ASA audience. Most questions were directed to myself, and fellow panellists found language in our matrix to be useful for their own work. In one case, a group had decided to redact portions of oral histories but had no clear language to explain why. They appreciated us providing ideas for them. Similarly, a professor from Western Carolina University shared that he has a new project in development and sees that he could really use a risk matrix of his own.

Overall, it was an exciting conference to be a part of and I am grateful to the *Landscapes* project office for having the confidence in me to be sent as our representative. I met a few like-minded scholars during the event and exchanged contacts which will hopefully contribute to recognition of *Landscapes* work south of the border.



Gord and taiko drum at the conference centre
Photos courtesy of Gord Lyall.

Here are some more stories in our series about the four claims of the project. In this story, Lorene Oikawa, president of the National Association of Japanese Canadians and Vice-chair of the *Landscapes of Injustice* Steering Committee relates her father's story and the community that they created on Oikawa and Sato Islands. Claim #1 is the killing of home and Lorene's story truly reflects the effects of the dispossession and forcible uprooting of the Japanese Canadians during the 1940s.

The Story of Oikawa Island

Lorene Oikawa

My mother's side of the family came from Japan to Canada in the 1800s, and my father's side of the family came in 1906. I know more about my father's family's journey because of a journal and other documents which were translated into a book, *Phantom Immigrants*.

There were 83 Japanese, most of them from Sendai Miyagi Ken, who left early around 7:30 a.m. on August 31, 1906 on a ship called the *Suian Maru*. They would arrive on October 19, 1906 in Beecher Bay near Victoria on Vancouver Island. After a deal to provide labour in exchange for the right to remain in Canada was made with the government, they would eventually make it to Oikawa Island in the south arm of the Fraser River, part of Richmond BC. There was a colony already established there in 1901 by a previous Oikawa who arrived in the late 1800's.

The passengers from that 1906 voyage would settle on two islands. Oikawa Island was the larger island, and Sato Island was the smaller island. The colony grew and at its peak, there were several hundred residents. They fished, and exported fish and roe of which the white fishers did not see any value. They also brewed sake and milled rice. My father's family were fishers and boat builders. They developed a strong Japanese Canadian culture and lifestyle. Racist restrictions on Japanese Canadian fishers started a decline in the community. Everything ended in 1942, when all Canadians of Japanese ancestry were uprooted, dispossessed and interned. My father's family were sent to Kaslo, a small town in the interior of BC. My grandfather died during internment and never saw his home or fishing boats again.

During the Second World War, the hatred for anything Japanese extended to the names of the islands which were stripped of any reference to the Oikawa and Sato families. In 2005, the City of Richmond recognized the historical names, Oikawa and Sato Islands, and found there wasn't any significance to the English names Don and Lion Islands. However, the English names of the islands continue to be in the nautical charts and maps to this day.



Cake of the Suian Maru and Oikawa sake at the 100th anniversary celebration of the Suian Maru in 2006
Photos courtesy of Lorene Oikawa.

Claim #2: Dispossession is Hard Work

Kaitlin Findlay

Continuing in our series of short essays relating to the four claims of Landscapes of Injustice, this one comes from Research Coordinator, Kaitlin Findlay Claim #2: Dispossession is hard work. In Canada, the dispossession required years of bureaucratic labour and the complicity of thousands of people. It took a decade of administration to dispossess Japanese Canadians. Hundreds of government workers produced over 250,000 documents. Thousands of civilians attended sales of their belongings. Japanese Canadians felt the burden of this daily administration for an entire decade.

Over the course of the uprooting in 1942, each Japanese-Canadian adult— from emerging business owners and established farmers to millworkers and university students—registered their property with the Office of the Custodian, the department responsible for its protection during internment.

Eiko Henmi, a contributor to *The New Canadian*, described a fictional “tete-a-tete” with the custodian when a young woman, “Cinderella,” registered her few belongings with the officials at Hasting’s Park.

The agent asked details about taxes, occupancy leases, title deeds, and “real property occupied.” His next question surprised her.



“Did you say safety deposit boxes?” Cinderella repeated. “Now, sir, you couldn’t be serious. I haven’t anything I could place in such a box. Everything of value, I’m taking with me.”

To internment, Cinderella planned to take her education, faith, hope (“somewhat tarnished during the last few months”), memories (“they’re so comfortable to have around!”), and tolerance (“just because others have discarded it, it’s no reason why I should be there, sir?”)

It was a courageous imagining of a young woman with little to her name. These values would undoubtedly serve Henmi in the coming months, but had no place in the government’s forms. And when Henmi sat to list her belongings to an official, she could not know that her community would soon be dispossessed. Had she known, the conversation may have unfolded quite differently.

Officials filed away the completed forms in individual manila folders and filing cabinets in their headquarters, the 5th floor of the Royal Bank Building in downtown Vancouver. At its height, the office staffed over 120 people. Over 300 people worked for the Vancouver Office of the Custodian, administering before it closed in 1952.

The Office of the Custodian’s strategy to survey and protect Japanese Canadians’ property was improvised and tenuous. Officials never fully committed to their task and their strategies quickly fell apart. Vandals and thieves ransacked the homes of Japanese Canadians and officials did little to prevent them. Local agents across British Columbia neglected Japanese Canadians’ homes and lost their belongings.

Total sale became the administratively tidy solution to a miserably failed project of protection. Accountable procedure, in the eyes of officials, remained a priority and, even as the federal government auctioned tens of thousands of Japanese Canadians’ belongings, they kept detailed records. A just government, federal officials would maintain, was an administratively accountable one.

The forced dispossession of Japanese Canadians required years of hard work. Throughout this, officials refused to consult Japanese Canadians about what mattered most to them—just as Cinderella’s values had no place in the custodian’s registration form—and instead sold it all.



Claim #2: Dispossession Required Sustained Work

This article in our series also highlights Claim #2 with a slightly different phrasing, Dispossession Required Sustained Work. It comes to us from Laura Saimoto from the Vancouver Japanese Language School, one of our partner institutions. Congratulations to the hard work to have their school and Japanese Hall designated as a National Historic Site.

Laura Saimoto, Community Relations Committee

With the help of Landscapes of Injustice's former post doc, Eiji Okawa, and the Nikkei National Museum's Collections Manager, Lisa Uyeda, I spent the day at the museum archives to look at the original source documents from Principal Sato's collections. This was to prep our materials for our National Historic Site Announcement. I found the letter from Principal Sato, who was Secretary on the Board, to the School's lawyer who helped us navigate through the internment and keep the building.

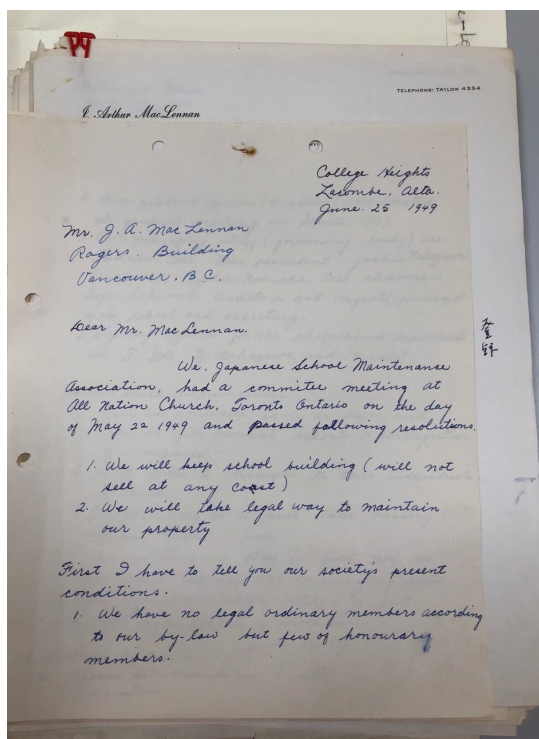


Photo: Source: Sato Fonds, Nikkei National Museum Archives

I pieced together the timeline based on the original source letters in the Sato fonds, and now have a much better understanding of what actually happened. It was definitely a zigzag miracle that we are still here. There are Custodian original documents and also the board's responses, collected from the directors. The board of directors, who were scattered in various internment sites, did everything through our lawyer, Norris MacLennan to manage all issues dealing with the property and organization. Really, when you look at it, it's against all odds that the property wasn't sold. The Custodian waited until 1946 to announce the sell-off of Society & Association properties. The board told the Custodian they would only sell for \$35,000. It cost \$40,000 to build the building in 1928. What is very interesting is that the 1949 property value assessment of 475 Alexander was \$2250. This is very undervalued. No buyers bit. In the meantime, the building was under lease to the Department of National Defence and then the Army & Navy Department Store. All transactions were being managed through our lawyer.

The next hurdle: because of the internment, we were in default from 1942 - 49 with the Company of Registrar for not filing our Annual Reports and Financial Statements and not holding AGMs. Somehow, with the help of the lawyer and getting all the documentation together - all the director lists, the financial statements or Custodian financial statements, and then holding meetings via post and the AGM within BC - they managed to get in good standing with the Company of Registrars by 1952. There was no membership during the internment since no one paid fees. According to our bylaws, because the fee was 50 cents/month and you became a voting member when you paid 3 months, they collected \$1.50 retroactively or \$5 for annual member fees so that lapsed members due to being interned could vote at the first post-internment AGM. In 1952 the Society once again came into good standing with the Registrar. Thanks to the community making the building usable again - fixing and cleaning while they themselves were again starting their lives from scratch, the School reopened in 1953. An unbelievable story of community resilience, which includes our trusted lawyer, J. A. MacLennan, who used the system to beat the system!

A snippet of the timeline:

How VJLS-JH kept property

Source: Sato Fonds

				Still continued to pay property tax throughout the Internment years through lawyer
	File #1580	Property address: Lots 20 to 22 and Lots 23 and 24, Block 38, D.L. No. 196, Group 1, New Westminster District		
Fonds #	Timeline	Addressed to:	From	Content
	May 3, 1941			Last general meeting before war started (officers elected) Equipment list of School loaned to Hastings Park Clearing Station.
71996.170.1.8	June 10, 1942	Sato	M.L. Brown, Office Manager, Security Commission	374 desks; 377 benches; school bell 1; blackboards 8. Crown paid \$400 to borrow equipment. Custodian gets permission from board to lease building to Department of National Defense
	July 1942			

1996.170.1.8	October 21, 1946	Ide, Tadasu (Ingersoll ON	A.G. McArthur, Office of the Custodian	"You are aware that Japanese owned real estate in the protected are has been subject to sale under the Government policy of liquidation. Properties owned by or registered in the name of an association or society have so far not been advertised for sale. . . With the present demand for every type of building, this would appear to be an opportune time to dispose of such properties." Liquidation announcement letter
	October 28, 1946	A.G. McArthur, Office of the Custodian	Sato	Executive mtg held on Oct. 21 File No. 10526. States: "That if it is the policy of the government to dispose of the property, then we will be obliged to sell. However, we would like to sell it for not less than thirty-five thousand dollars."
	October 31, 1946	A.G. McArthur, Office of the Custodian	Ide, Nakazawa, Sato	Original letter in response to Custodian announcement to start liquidating
1996.170.1.1	June 11, 1947	Sato	Norris & MacLennan	Extend lease to Department of National Defense another 5 years; Would they accept \$2266 for damages incurred during their lease