

# Landscapes of Injustice

## Research News and Project Updates

## Summer 2020



### Message from Project Director

Dr. Jordan Stanger-Ross



I was taken aback by when Vivian told me about her experience of COVID-19 related racism. I'd previously read the findings of an [Angus Reid Institute survey](#), in which Chinese Canadians report assaults, verbal threats, and racist graffiti across Canada. Half (50%) of those surveyed say that they've been insulted as a direct result of the pandemic, almost as many (43%) say they've been threatened or intimidated, and 61% have altered their routines to avoid run-ins with racism. I knew also that the Japanese Canadian community was not immune. I was already aware that the National Association of Japanese Canadians was collecting reports, and I'd seen that a sign outside Hope, British Columbia which [commemorates a Japanese Canadian internment road camp](#) had been defaced. Vandals had written "they started the war" beside the words "Japanese Canadian" and "Good Job" alongside the details of the uprooting and internment. Still, I was not prepared for Vivian's story.

Vivian's experience was probably a lot like those reported by others: a verbal assault that ruptured a simple routine. She was at her grocery store, the kind of errand that has become both rare and unnerving in the shadow of disease. It was early morning, when the store opened exclusively for seniors, in consideration of their heightened vulnerability. Vivian waited in line and entered on cue. Moving through the near-empty store, she was suddenly confronted. A woman, white hair above her mask, poked a finger in Vivian's face. A barrage of insults spewed forth: "why aren't you wearing a mask? . . . you brought this disease . . . you're a killer! . . . you're all killers! . . . go back to where you belong!" By the time Vivian recovered, the woman was gone. Many other people in the store weren't wearing masks, Vivian saw, and she asked herself the simple

question that so often follows after discriminatory hatred: why me? When she got to the checkout, Vivian burst into tears.

I've come to know Vivian Wakabayashi Rygnestad over the last five years as she's served as the chair of the Community Council for *Landscapes of Injustice (LOI)*. In the spring of 2015, she delivered an eloquent and persuasive speech at the conclusion of our first major team meetings: we have work to do, Vivian said at the time, we have to learn to do this project together. And in the years since, she and I have often collaborated to do that work. Vivian is a careful listener. She's the kind of person who makes you feel heard. And she's thoughtful in response. You hear careful consideration in the pauses between her words and the precision of what she then says. But, Vivian also gives enthusiastic support. She can be a cheerleader when she chooses.

Vivian was born in an internment camp in 1943. In 2015 she learned that her father [represented the Japanese Canadian community in an unsuccessful court challenge to the dispossession of their property](#). After the war, the family returned to Vancouver to rebuild their lives. They would sometimes drive past the family home that her parents had lost; they wanted Vivian and her sisters to know that landmark. They told their daughters to study hard, and Vivian listened, graduating from UBC with a degree in education. Before becoming teachers, she and some friends travelled to Europe where, in Norway, she met her future husband, Bjorn. The couple returned to Vancouver, where they raised two daughters, "lovely daughters" says Vivian. Meanwhile, she taught in Surrey and eventually became a principal.

During the early years of Redress, Vivian gathered to exchange stories and feelings with other Japanese Canadians. Looking around those rooms, she realized it was the first time she'd gathered with her wider community. Before then, she reflects, she and many other Japanese Canadians in Vancouver had hesitated to come together for fear of the responses they might provoke. Then, one day, she joined our Community Council, to support research and the telling of Japanese Canadian history. I'm very grateful that she did.

I was shocked when Vivian told me about the racist in the grocery store. She said that I shouldn't be surprised, that this kind of thing happens all the time. Anyone who doesn't know this, she said, should just talk with their Asian Canadian friends, with people of colour. I'm sure Vivian is right. Maybe, in that sense, I shouldn't be shocked. But I was alarmed not at the existence of racism, but rather to hear its impact in the voice of a friend.

Vivian, like the rest of us, is still thinking it all through: the place of her family history in shaping her own life, the role of race and racism in Canadian society, our best paths forward. At the same time, she's deepened my own efforts, and those of many others, to do the same. Thank you, Vivian. You're a wonderful teacher still.

## The Landscapes book It's here!!



## *Landscapes of Injustice: A New Perspective on the Internment and Dispossession of Japanese Canadians*

Edited by Jordan Stanger-Ross  
McGill-Queen's Press 2020

*Landscapes of Injustice*, the book, emerges from a collective effort to observe, from a new perspective, Canada's mass uprooting and internment of Japanese Canadians on the basis of race. This perspective centres on the dispossession – by theft, vandalism, neglect, and forced sale – of property. All forms of property were taken. Families lost heirlooms and everyday possessions. They lost decades of investment and labour. As a result of the dispossession, Japanese Canadians also lost opportunities, neighbourhoods, and communities. They lost retirements, livelihoods, and educations. But, Japanese Canadians also responded. They responded by preserving and rebuilding home in the face of dispossession. They responded by sneaking aboard trains to internment more luggage and money than was officially permitted. They sometimes cultivated relationships with the officials responsible for their material well-being and sometimes exploded in outrage. Japanese Canadians responded in court, in print, and in public. They demanded an accounting of state wrongdoing that exceeded any exigencies of war.

As a partnership – comprised of academics from across Canada, museum and archival professionals, teachers, major Japanese Canadian organizations, and established and emerging community leaders – our project has fostered a specific way of knowing and sharing a history of injustice. Our work has been characterized by diverse ways of knowing that, while sometimes in tension, enrich rather than contradict one another. This history is known to some members of our collective through the sheer force of an injustice directly experienced. We are perhaps the last large-scale project that will have the opportunity to work with people who lived through these harms and can recall them vividly: Art Miki as well as Tosh and Mary Kitagawa, in particular, brought the lived experience of the dispossession to our project.

Their various responses, expressed in circumspect optimism, dark humour, and sheer outrage, have shaped our work and greatly enriched our understandings of this past. And yet, it is simultaneously the case that, until we began our work – research that recovered hundreds of thousands of relevant archival documents, digitized thousands of records of real estate sale, and recorded more than 100 interviews – very little was known about the dispossession. Japanese Canadians who lived with the loss of property understood its impacts upon their families but neither the most influential scholarly histories nor the most compelling community-based accounts explained why or how the dispossession happened, detailed the range of responses to the policy, or analyzed its effects. Our book conveys an historical understanding that has emerged from collectively holding complex ways of knowing. Our research is motivated by both the starkness of an injustice experienced and the struggle to understand a complex historical record.

-Excerpt from Introduction by Jordan Stanger-Ross

The book is organized around four major claims. These claims also structure the Nikkei National Museum travelling exhibit, which will launch at the end of August this year, resources for teachers in classrooms across Canada, and our project's new website which will also go live at the end of the summer. In each of these outputs, we describe the dispossession as a deliberate killing of home (claim #1). We point to the sustained work that it required (claim #2) and illuminate the complex rationales by which Japanese Canadians challenged the dispossession and the government defended its actions (claim #3). Finally, we argue that the loss of home is not a chapter of history that neatly closes. Instead, dispossession is permanent (claim #4). In all, we convey Canada's internment of Japanese Canadians an important history within the larger stories of 20th century racism, state violence, and displaced people.

Paperback \$39.95 496 pages

<https://www.mqup.ca/landscapes-of-injustice-products-9780228001713.php>

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Save the Date**

**Landscapes of Injustice Museum Exhibit and Book Launch event**

**Saturday, September 26, 2020**

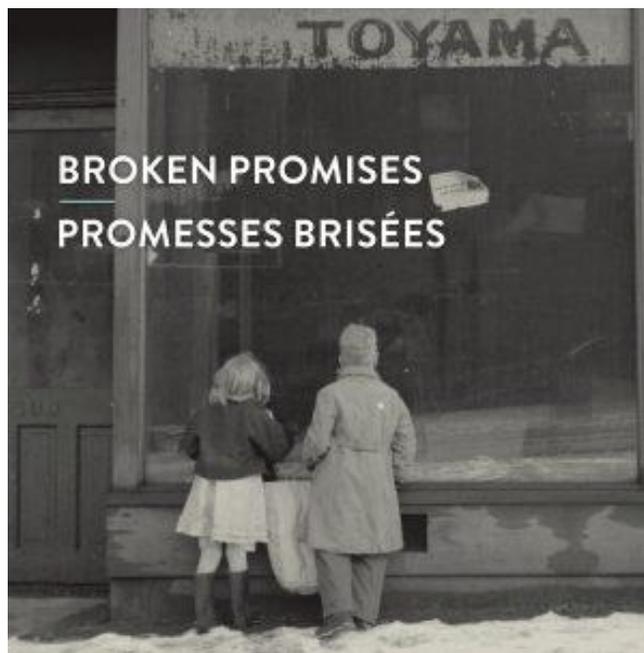
**1:00 pm PDT**

Live streamed from the Nikkei National Museum.

<https://centre.nikkeiplace.org/exhibits/broken-promises/>

Check out this 1 minute video trailer.

<https://vimeo.com/437294960>



## Powell Street Festival



Celebrate Japanese Canadian culture while giving back to your community! Join the LIVE online Telethon August 1, 2020 from 2pm to 7pm. Hosts Tetsuro Shigematsu and Yurie Hoyoyon will take you on a fun and heart-warming journey, presenting live performances, messages from festival vendors and friends, and opportunities to express your support for Powell Street Festival in its 44th year. Drop in and stay for a while! Tune in to their website with your family and friends to experience the spirit of the festival right from your home! The telethon will be raising funds to help those in need through the Downtown Eastside Community Care Program.

<https://powellstreetfestival.com/telethon/>

## Tadaima! A Community Virtual Pilgrimage



The Japanese American annual or biannual pilgrimages to the confinement sites throughout the US are postponed this year due to COVID-19. In their place is a comprehensive and interesting calendar of nine weeks of programming related not only to the experience of Japanese Americans but Nikkei from throughout the globe. Each week has a theme and each day of the week has a category.

Check out the vast array of content on the website.

<https://www.jampilgrimages.com/>

We are pleased to participate in an Elder Panel, on Sunday, July 26, 2020 11 am PDT with Keiko Mary Kitagawa and Dr. Akira Horii, moderated by Laura Saimoto and Michael Abe.

In contrast to the Japanese American situation, the Canadian government forcibly sold all of the possessions of the Japanese Canadians throughout the 1940s. Because of the dispossession, they had no homes to return to when restrictions were finally lifted in 1949. Because of the dispossession, there is no historic Japanese Canadian neighbourhood in Vancouver or anywhere in Canada. It transformed individual lives and the broader landscapes of Canadian life. Former property owners and their descendants still feel the shock of the forced sales, the destruction of their neighbourhoods, and the betrayal of the promise that the Canadian government would “protect and preserve” their land and possessions.

Listen to the stories of two prominent elders in the Japanese Canadian community as they recall the memories and experiences of the forcible uprooting and incarceration of Japanese Canadians. Over 22,000 Japanese Canadians within 100 miles of the west coast were forced to move to internment camps, self supporting, prisoner of war camps, road work camps, sugar beet farms and other places far from the homes and lives that they had worked hard to build and become part of the Canadian fabric.

Keiko Mary Kitagawa's family was incarcerated in virtually all of these locales and conditions and Dr. Akira Horii's family was confined to a self supporting site.

They welcome questions and discussion about their experience and how this education can help build a more just society today.

Keiko Mary Kitagawa was born on Salt Spring Island, BC. She was seven years old when her family was incarcerated in Hastings Park, sites in the interior of BC and on sugar beet farms in Magrath, Alberta. They were the only family to return to the Salt Spring Island despite the virulent racism. Mary graduated from Trinity College, University of Toronto in 1959, taught at Kitsilano Secondary school, married Tosh Kitagawa, had two children and moved to Tsawwassen almost 50 years ago. After their children became of school age, she became a substitute teacher in the Delta School District. Mary is the recipient of the Order of BC and recently received an honorary degree from the University of British Columbia for her work in activism and social justice.

Dr. Akira Horii, a Nikkei Nisei was born and grew up in Vancouver British Columbia, where his father was a fisherman before World War II. With the forced uprooting, Dr. Horii's family went to the self-supporting site of East Lillooet confined until 1949. He was accepted to the University of BC, receiving a BA Honours Degree in Biology in 1955 and graduated from medical school in 1960, getting married two weeks later and travelling to Ontario to do a one-year residency at Toronto Western Hospital, his wife Hamako working as an RN. They returned to Vancouver where he practiced medicine for 48 years, from 1961-2009. They now have 9 grandchildren.

Wed. July 29, 2020

Landscapes of Injustice will also have two pre-recorded presentations by Jordan Stanger-Ross and Michael Abe on the dispossession, the project and the outputs.

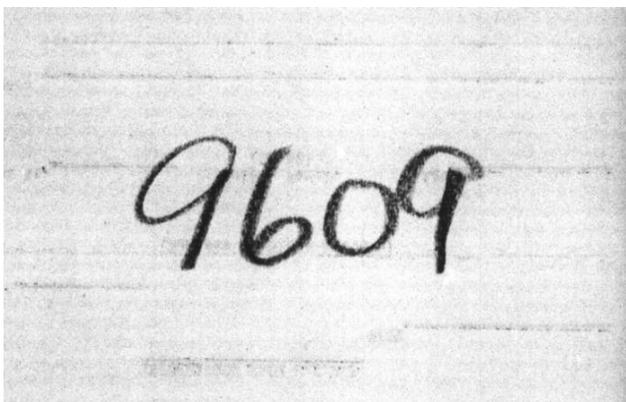
Here is a link to the 15 minute video presentation <https://youtu.be/FIG6mAn11bM> on the Digital Archive database with a sneak peek of what documents it contains, and examples of how they have helped members of the Japanese Canadian community explore their family internment history. Some of the stories are expanded below.

In addition here is a link to the Exploring Japanese Canadian History sessions in the NAJC Chat Series on May 27 and May 31, 2020. The community members talking about their files in the second half of each session are different. <http://najc.ca/online-programs/>

Claim #2 Dispossession required the sustained work of many.

## **9609: Meeting my *ojii-san* (granddad)**

By Laura Saimoto



When I first opened my grandfather's case file (about 500 pages) from the Office of the Custodian, there was a handwritten number: 9609. What did this mean? It dawned on me that 9609 was my grandfather's Internee number, assigned by the Office of the Custodian, the government authority that organized and implemented the Internment and Dispossession of Japanese Canadians from 1942-49. Out of the 15,000 case files on every single Japanese Canadian adult who was interned, grandfather Kunimatsu Saimoto was 9609.

I had heard stories about my grandfather, but had never met him. Both he and my grandmother died before I was born. I had seen family photos of his 4 seiner boats, of the family, of his house and car in Steveston before the war. Like every granddaughter, I wanted to know more about who my grandfather was.



Then I thought, what could these government documents tell me? As I read every page, tears began streaming down my face. Like any government authority that aims to systematically erase a people while telling themselves they were doing nothing wrong, they took meticulous, detailed records to an astonishing degree. The Internment and Dispossession of Japanese Canadians was a machine of organization and administration, and everything was documented.

As I continued to read, I started to read into the mountains of legal, financial and administrative details - the measurements of his boats, the age of the new diesel engine he had bought just prior to the war, how many lots the family house in Steveston sat on; the number of bedrooms, etc. Gradually, as I connected the dots, a clear picture started to emerge about who my grandfather was as a person.

What I knew from my family was that Kunimatsu was born in 1890 in a tiny poor fishing village in Wakayama prefecture. His older brother, who was a torpedo gunner in the Japanese navy, advised him to immigrate to Canada at age 16 in 1907 to avoid conscription and to build a fortune in the land of opportunity. With a grade 6 education and not knowing a word of English, he settled in Steveston and became a fish buyer, owning 4 seiner boats, and having 200 fishermen under contract working for him. As a fish buyer, he bought and consolidated individual fishermen catch to sell by volume contract to the

canneries. He married my grandmother and had 10 children. They lived in a detached house in Steveston and he drove a new 1939 Dodge. He sponsored many friends from his hometown to immigrate to Canada. He had guts, he was business savvy; he was honourable, and he was a family man.

As I continued to read, what emerged was that Kunimatsu was an activist. Not in the modern sense, holding up placards chanting anti-this or "Occupy Powell Street". He did not riot in the streets, loot stores, nor burn down police stations, although I'm sure he felt the same kind of anger at the injustices being perpetrated. As a new Canadian, he thoroughly learned and adapted to Canadian power structures and institutional systems rooted in democracy. He was street smart, stood up for what he believed in, and had a strong and embodied sense of his own value and the value of what he had built. For him, this was manifested in the incredible detail and deep knowledge he had on how the Canadian 'system' worked. He used the system to peacefully stand up for himself, for what he believed was fair, for what he believed was just. Bottom-line, he did not become a victim to injustice. By using the system within the system, he valiantly challenged it.

Kunimatsu took meticulous business records of his assets. He knew the power of information and its documentation, not just costs and revenues, but insurance for replacement costs, valuations, appraisals, landlord tenant arrangements with notarized lease agreements, depreciation etc.. He understood what Canadian business, financial and legal structures were built on. He understood what citizenship was built upon.

In 1948, he and other Japanese Canadians, sued the Canadian Government in what was called the Bird Commission. These are extraordinary records of Japanese Canadian activism, of my grandfather's activism. They did not directly challenge the government for the confiscation of their properties and forced sale of their assets in and of itself. The claimants challenged the devaluation of their assets and the low compensation received for them. For my grandfather, this was their house in Steveston, his 4 boats, his car and his biggest asset was his largest boat, the May S.

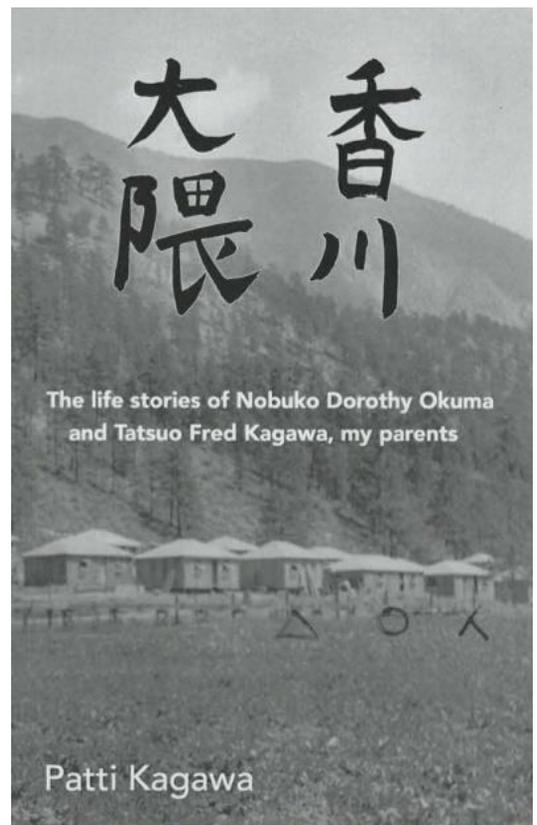


My dad's family had lived in Vancouver. During the war, his mom, dad and three younger brothers were evacuated to Sandon, close to New Denver. Apparently, Sandon was where the Buddhists were sent. My dad, older sister and eventually one brother all moved to London, Ontario. My dad also had a stint in Schreiber road camp and wrote a journal while there.

Sandon was not open very long; maybe for 1 year or 18 months. After Sandon, my dad's parents and two youngest brothers went to Greenwood BC and were there for 6 months before moving to London ON to meet up with the rest of the family. So, again, their home in Vancouver was lost.

My dad, as a veteran of WWII, felt happy to have made the decisions he did to volunteer to serve Canada in the army, which led to the opportunity to go to university which led to a healthy career. He also kept a journal of many sections of his life including road camp and the war experience. This led me to interview both parents in ~1997, which led to publishing a book about their lives.

[https://www.amazon.ca/s?k=patti+kagawa&ref=nb\\_sb\\_noss\\_1](https://www.amazon.ca/s?k=patti+kagawa&ref=nb_sb_noss_1)



## Claim #1 Killing of Home

Here is an entry in the series on the four claims that is food-related.

The forced uprooting and dispossession of Japanese Canadians during the 1940s destroyed a community on the west coast, dispersing it across the country in subsequent years. Generations later, we try to piece together remnants of this home. One way, of course, is through food and their traditions.

## Preserve-d in History

By Michael Abe

I remember the first “Japanese English” riddle I ever made up back in my youth. *Baachan* rolled her eyes, some siblings and cousins giggled, others carried on in oblivion.

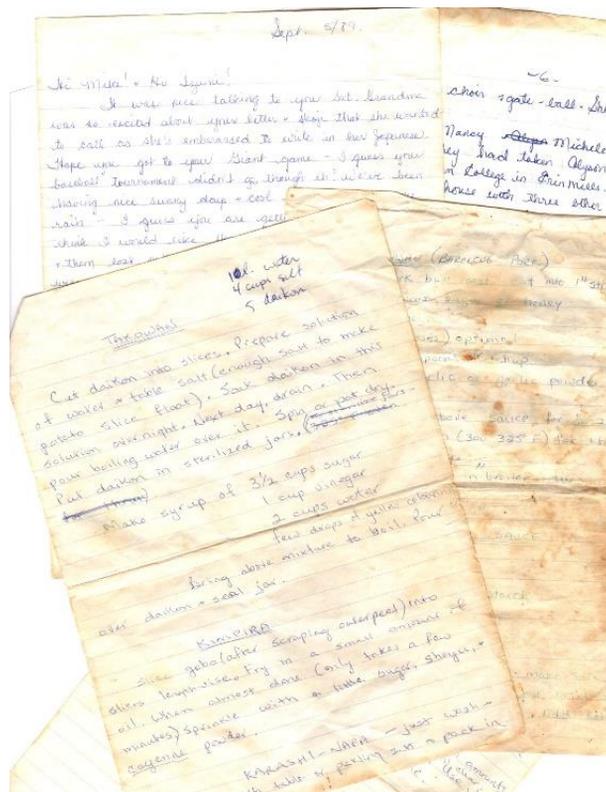
What happened when the octopus fought the squid? The tako won.

Ah, yes. The ubiquitous and formidable yellow and equally smelly, *takuan*. Bright yellow, crispy, crunchy, tasty morsels of pickled daikon, Japanese horseradish, dispensed rather surreptitiously from a jar passed around the table as people quickly lifted the lid, took their portions, replaced the lid and relayed to the next. The original social distancer. It has come a long way from the shiplap shacks of New Denver.

There are so many foods and smells that remind me of growing up Japanese Canadian in a dual world of *nihonjin* and *hakujin*. New Year's was special with foods that *Baachan* Abe, mom, and aunts lovingly prepared and the dozen-picnic-table-long potluck of Japanese food at the annual Toyota picnic. It was also hybrid dishes that had made it into our regular meal circuit, Cumberland chow mein, *chashu* and sweet and sour chicken balls. Desserts like *mochi manju* and *sembei* are so much more appreciated now as our dear Nisei continue to depart. Luckily for some, they had recipes left behind or were taught how to make these cherished dishes.

When I was living in Japan, I remember going to the grocery store and was awed by the variety of *takuan* that was available and hurried home with my treasure. I was, however, met with disappointment. It was crunchy yes, but not crispy, it was salty but not sweet at all, and it really wasn't all that smelly. After a while I wrote home, desperate for the recipe, to fill that need for something that reminded me of home.

A few years ago, I came across a letter from my mother, dated September 5, 1989, with 6 pages of updates on the family and their three young grandchildren and the aunts, the uncles, the cousins, and the Blue Jays, etc. And the last few pages were well worn, *shoyu*-stained pages with the recipes for Takowan (*Takuan*), *Kimpira* (fried *gobo*, burdock root) *Karashi napa*, *Chashu* (barbecued pork), Sweet & Sour Sauce and *Sumono* (*sunomono*, vinegared vegetables). These comfort foods would make up many a late night snack accompanied with a bowl of rice and *ochatsuke* and maybe some fried wieners. Oh, and *umeboshi*, that I have previously written about.



I showed the recipe for mom's "*Takowan*" to my daughter, Natsuki and we laughed at the ingredients. Cut daikon into slices. Prepare solution of water & table salt (enough salt to make potato slice float)... "How big is the potato slice, how much water?" she asked until her brother, Kento reminded us of the principles of buoyancy. In any case, I see my handwriting in the corner, 10 l. water, 4 cups salt, 5 daikon.

Such is the way of handing down recipes. A recipe for *Udon* from my Auntie Nancy several years ago revealed a ladleful of powdered *dashi*, a thumb sized piece of ginger... and cousin Michele, noted that when making black beans for New Year's *o-seichi*, "rusty" nails were to be added to the water while simmering. (apparently the iron oxide reacts with the tannins to give it the dark black colour).

Reminiscing about Japanese food with others reveal other humorous and nostalgic stories. I recall a funny story from Lisa Uyeda and the role of *takuan* in her family.

"*Takuan* is a family favourite in our house and we usually call it daikon, yellow pickle, or stinky pickle. You can always find a good stash of it in the fridge. Back in my dating years, if I brought a potential suitor to the house they had to pass "the yellow pickle test." I think my Dad started it as a joke but successfully eating a piece of *takuan* continued on whenever friends made it to the dinner table. It was also a good indicator for me to know if these potential suitors could appreciate my favourite pickle! Thank goodness my partner Kevin passed the test."

And one final story that has stuck in my head since I first read it is a story from writer, Sally Ito, who in a series of short vignettes about her great Aunty Kay during the internment, shares a story about Japanese *tsukemono* (pickles).

### Pickling Stone by Sally Ito

In 1942, Japanese Canadians like my great aunt and grandmother were forcibly moved out of their homes into internment camps in interior B.C. My aunt and grandmother with her five boys were rounded up by the R.C.M.P. and taken to the temporary holding facility at Hastings Park in Vancouver before being shipped out by train to the Kootenays. They were allowed only a few items to take and these were stored in a central location at the park.

My great aunt and grandmother went to this storage location to make sure that the items they brought – namely their sewing machines – were safe. (There is a story about how these sewing

machines were procured but that is for another time.) When they got there, my great aunt noticed a large stone with a family's name tag attached to it.

"Who would have thought to bring *that*?" My aunt wondered aloud.

"It's their pickling stone," my grandmother said. Pickles in Japan are made in vats with a disk of wood placed over the fermenting, salted vegetables pressed down with a large stone. Clearly, this family thought this stone was of such importance that they must bring it along with them wherever they would be going.

The sisters looked at the stone, then at one another and burst into laughter.

You can read other stories like this about Sally's aunt at <http://cowbird.com/grdvph/>. Sally has also published a memoir, *The Emperor's Orphans*, where her Auntie Kay features as a narrating voice in the book. <https://www.turnstonepress.com/books/non-fiction/memoir/emperors-orphans-the.html>



## ***Opening the Memory Chest: How to Research and Write Your Family Story***

**ONLINE WEBINAR with Sally  
Ito & Linda Kawamoto Reid  
Saturday, July 25, 11am PDT  
(Registration is by  
donation).**

[REGISTER HERE](#)

### **About the Webinar**

During the past months under lockdown, many of us have found ourselves more often on the phone or on Zoom with family members. Stories from the past have emerged to help us interpret events today. If you have a family story you would like to research, then this webinar with poet and novelist Sally Ito is for you.

Sally Ito's spring 2020 author residency at Historic Joy Kogawa Historic House went virtual when — due to Covid-19 — she was unable to travel from her home in Winnipeg to Joy Kogawa's childhood home in Vancouver. Sally Ito had planned to host this family research workshop while in Vancouver. Now we're online and Kogawa House is pleased to partner with [Nikkei National Museum](#) to present this webinar, which we hope will motivate some people to discover your own family history. Listen to Sally Ito read from her novel, *The Emperor's Orphans*, and then share how she researched her family history to write the book.

Linda Kawamoto Reid, research archivist, will talk about how she can help you research your family history.

# Landscapes of Injustice Movers and Shakers Congratulations

## Zoë-Blue Coates

If you recall the article in the last newsletter, *Freedom or Safety: Lessons from Japanese Canadian Internment to COVID-19* by Zoë-Blue Coates, we were pleased to hear that it was picked up and led to this article in French <https://www.rcinet.ca/patrimoine-asiatique-fr/2020/05/26/securite-et-covid-19-lecons-a-tirer-de-linternement-des-japonais-canadiens/> by Paloma Martinez at Radio Canada International. They have requested an interview with Zoe and hopefully we can feature that in a future newsletter.

## Honorary degree for Mary

Congratulations to Community Council member Mary Kitagawa on being a 2020 honorary degree recipient from the University of British Columbia.

Keiko Mary Kitagawa, Order of B.C., and her family were among the more than 22,000 Canadians of Japanese descent uprooted, disposed, dispersed, incarcerated and enslaved during and after the Second World War. A tireless social justice and anti-racism leader and activist, her work was perhaps best highlighted in 2008 when she initiated a process at UBC to retroactively grant university degrees to 76 Japanese Canadian students who had not been able to complete their education due to forced removal and incarceration in 1942, ultimately leading to the conferral of honorary undergraduate degrees in 2012.



## Kaitlin Findlay off to the Ivy League

**Kaitlin, you've been an integral part of Landscapes from the early stages. What brought you to our project?**

Thank you for this opportunity Mike! I feel very privileged to work on *Landscapes of Injustice*. Over the past five years, my appreciation of the importance of this history has only deepened.

When I applied to Master's programs, the opportunity to work with Jordan and for *Landscapes of Injustice* seemed like a perfect fit. My interest came from three directions. First, I was interested from an academic perspective. In my undergraduate degree at McGill, I became fascinated by historical memory and the politics



L-R Yasmin Railton, Mary Kitagawa, Kaitlin Findlay,  
Jordan Stanger-Ross

Photo credit: Tosh Kitagawa

of commemoration. I spent a semester in Eastern Europe, exploring the culture and practices of public memory.

Second, I was interested from a personal viewpoint. The summer before that exchange, I went on a road trip with friends in B.C. We stopped for a break in a small town -- New Denver. The history of internment collided with my summer adventure. That unexpected visit made an impression on me. While I was in Europe, I thought of New Denver, and what other 'dark chapters' seemed to be forgotten in mainstream Canadian history.

The final piece that led me to *LoI* was learning about public history. Public history presented the opportunity to work in meaningful and creative ways with people outside the university. The oral history and public history project coming out of Concordia University simply inspired me. In my eyes, this was much more exciting than simply publishing academic papers. I also thought that public history could be an avenue to pursue my creative bent.

*Landscapes of Injustice*, and studying with Jordan, fulfilled my best hopes. I feel incredibly lucky that the match worked, and that I have had an even better experience than I expected.

### **What were some of your roles on the project in the research phase?**

I held many roles in the research phase! I'll focus on the first, because it has been on my mind recently. I joined *LOI* in time for its first Spring Institute, in 2015. While we met in Victoria, Black Lives Matter protests unfolded in Baltimore.

The next week, I began digitizing records at Library and Archives Canada, in Ottawa. In total, Monique Ulysses, Adam Kostrich, and I worked well over 1,000 hours in the archives that summer. We lugged our tripods to the archives, sweating, and then digitized records in the climate controlled consultation room, shivering. We digitized court proceedings, cabinet memoranda, personal correspondence, and commission testimony.

That entire time, in the quiet consultation room, I tried to fit together what I had learned at the Spring Institute, with what I was seeing in the records, and with the news that was unfolding in the United States. At the Spring Institute, the Community Council urged careful consideration of voice in telling a history of injustice. In the records, I saw egregious and blatant discrimination that angered me. In the news, I watched as Black Lives Matter protests continued and then I watched, in horror, the coverage of the Charleston Church shooting. I tried to solve how I could responsibly and respectfully contribute to anti-racism efforts.

I didn't find a tidy answer that summer, but these reflections pushed me to hold myself to a higher sense of accountability. This wrestling characterized much of the experience of working for *LOI* over the past five years and it continues today.

Since 2015, I've worked in various capacities for *LOI*. I supported data collection, research publications, and media releases. I undertook a co-op term at the Nikkei National Museum and learned about archival practice and gained experience in a community museum. I designed an undergraduate module that had students delve into the records of the dispossession to create their own podcasts.

In short, the opportunities I had with *LOI* soon exceeded what I imagined was possible to achieve in an MA degree. And while I feebly maintain that I sought out the project based on my interests, the incredible opportunity that I have had to grow and gain experience can only be attributed to the strength of the project and generosity of the folks involved.

### **How did your involvement in the project affect the route of your academic career?**

The short answer is that my involvement in the project seriously improved me as a scholar. I doubt the quality of my MA Thesis would be the same without the rich research community and opportunities that the project created.

When I started my MA Thesis, I had the opportunity to delve into the records that I had spent the previous summer digitizing. The opportunity to work with records that I was already familiar with allowed me to focus on analysis and writing.

Simultaneously, participating in project meetings exposed me to the current and pressing concerns of scholars and community members about this history. I considered and often heeded these concerns

as I crafted my research. This influence might not be obvious, but I believe that listening in on project debates thoroughly improved the quality of my thesis.

Finally, *LOI* created a remarkable intellectual community for me. It was a privilege to work alongside such outstanding students and to pick the brains of established scholars. And -- equally as important -- was the chance to connect with Community Council members. I won't name anyone here, Mike, but the list of people I'm grateful to have worked with is long.

Subsequently, my position as Research Coordinator has given me a mountain of experience that I'm really grateful for as I go forward in my career. But, for me, working with *Landscapes of Injustice* hasn't been about career building. I've felt very privileged to contribute to meaningful and important work. Learning this history, and building these relationships, has affected me at a personal level too.

### **Can you tell us a bit about what you are working on this summer for the project?**

This summer, I have two main tasks. The first is to deliver the content of the teacher resources and narrative website to our web developers. This is the final step of a long process. The teacher resources reflect the experience, creativity, and dedication of Greg Miyanaga and Mike Perry-Whittingham. The narrative website reflects Jordan Stanger-Ross's dedication to making the research findings of *LOI* accessible. None of these outputs would have been possible without the hard work of many RAs. I'm excited to see the websites up and running.

At the same time, I'm working on the early stages of a grant that aims to make the contributions of *LOI* permanent. Over the past year, we have had many discussions about legacies. How can we ensure that teachers use our resources in classrooms across the countries? How will we support Japanese Canadians as they research their family histories? A new grant seemed like it could help us achieve a goal of a permanent legacy for Japanese Canadians. We began brainstorming sessions in June and aim to have a first draft by the end of August.

### **What does life after *LOI* look like? I understand you've been accepted to prestigious Cornell University in New York?**

Yes! I burst into tears when I found out. I really want to thank everyone on the project again -- including you! -- because *LOI* has been so obviously critical to that accomplishment.

I proposed a project that would investigate the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) inspection tours of civilian and POW internment camps during the 1940s. I will analyze how ICRC officials conceptualized and documented violence, how host nations responded to their standards and inspections, and how the targeted communities have used the reports produced (and specifically the photographs) in subsequent commemoration. My starting point is the inspection tours in the United States and Canada. The ICRC Archive in Geneva, however, contains the records of hundreds of tours in the 1940s and offers the opportunity to bring additional case studies into dialogue.

The program is long -- six years -- and my project will likely change, but I really hope to bring some helpful insights back to Canada along the way. You'll be seeing me again!

## **Successful defences**

### **Jonathan Ballin**

#### **Title: *Stopping the "World's Greatest Threat": Canadian Policy and Rhetoric towards the Iranian Nuclear Program during Stephen Harper's Conservative Government, 2006-2015***

I examined Canadian policy and rhetoric towards the Iran nuclear program during Stephen Harper's administration for my Masters thesis. I wanted to see if there was a difference between rhetoric about the nuclear program in parliament compared to in direct public addresses. Also I wanted to find out what motivated Canadian policy and rhetoric towards the Iranian nuclear program.

**Reason:** I studied this topic because I wanted to pick a topic that intersected nuclear proliferation, Canadian foreign policy and the Middle East. I am very concerned about the proliferation of nuclear weapons and the degradation of current non-proliferation treaties, and am considering getting involved in nuclear non-proliferation advocacy in the future.

**Currently in LOI:** I have been developing and testing lesson plans for secondary school. The lessons have been designed, and now need testing and streamlining, which will be more difficult to do now that face-to-face classes have been suspended. My time as a Research Assistant has recently come to an end, but I will stay with the project in my capacity as a practicing teacher.



Simon Fraser University, a partner institution with Landscapes of Injustice held virtual graduation ceremonies in June that included two distinguished members of the research collective.

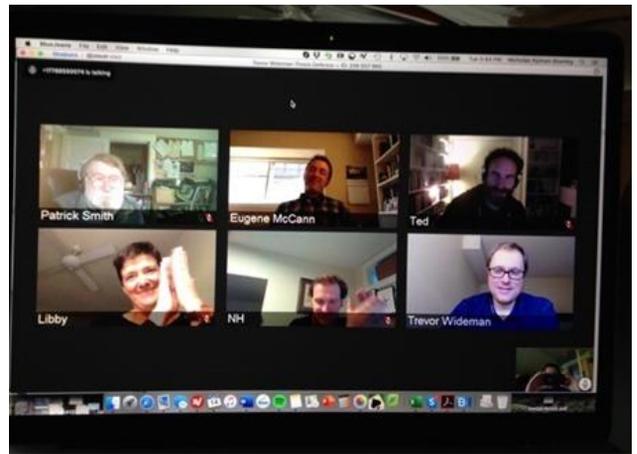
## Trevor Wideman

Trevor Wideman, a veteran RA with the Landscape of Injustice (LOI) project, successfully defended his PhD on April 16, 2020 while maintaining physical distancing. His dissertation was entitled: *Land Use, Planning, and Private Property: Waste and Improvement in Early 20th Century Winnipeg and Vancouver, Canada.*

Trevor has been invaluable on the team of LOI's Museum Exhibit cluster that has developed a traveling exhibit titled *Broken Promises*, set to launch at the Nikkei National Museum in September before touring across Canada.

Further, he has secured SSHRC funding for a postdoctoral fellowship, starting this fall, at the University of Toronto.

Trevor began his PhD studies after completing an MA in Geography at Queen's University, where he first became involved in the Right to Remain project to address planning and housing issues in the Downtown East Side, and where he became a valuable member of the collective working to obtain better housing conditions.



## Samantha Romano

By Nicholas Hedley, Supervisor

It is with great pleasure that I recognize Samantha Romano's completion of an outstanding MSc thesis. In her previous role as an LOI RA, you all know Samantha as a solid spatial analyst. I would like to tell you a little more about the exciting work she has done for her own MSc thesis.

Samantha's work examined the opportunities that lie within emerging interface technologies: to engage, communicate, perceive and experience human narratives in historical GIS (Geographic Information Systems). One of our key aims with her thesis, was to create a bridge between HGIS research and human narrative approaches using 3D, virtual reality and mixed-reality technologies. Her desire to support productive advances in urban narratives and interpretation were at the heart of this work. It came as no surprise that she chose to focus her spatial interface research and scholarship on ways to elevate the historical



narratives of Vancouver's Powell Street Neighbourhood, and the historical narratives of social injustice experienced by Japanese Canadians during World War II. Her research produced two main contributions: a review of the evolution of HGIS and uses of GIS with historical research, and the emergence of 3D visualization and interface in this domain; and the design and implementation of a suite of new spatial interfaces (web-based story maps, immersive virtual environments, 360VR, and tangible augmented reality interfaces) to demonstrate and critique their potential as meaningful mediums for informative, immersive, and experiential engagement of human narratives and empathy. Speaking as someone with 25 years of spatial visualization, and 20 years of 3D interface research experience, I can tell you that Samantha's work was (and is) incredibly important. Almost nobody has applied the often-hyped technologies of VR, AR, etc., to social justice in such a considered, meaningful way. Samantha did this not only by building a repertoire of innovative demonstrators, but by developing a sophisticated critical theoretical engagement of how these technologies offer new mediums through which to elevate dialogue, engagement, empathy and social awareness of the Japanese Canadian story.

In her final MSc thesis defence, Samantha gave an excellent presentation of her work, demonstrated technological expertise and conceptual sophistication, and a deep engagement with their application to elucidating narratives of social injustice. The Examining Ctte unanimously passed Samantha's thesis with no revisions. Reuben Rose-Redwood (Ctte Member) and Eugene McCann(Extl Examiner) were outstanding examiners. Massive congratulations to Samantha.