

A Yonsei Experience

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Presenting at the Memories of Internment and Dispossession Panel, January 2017. Photo credit: Tosh Kitagawa

My experience with *Landscapes of Injustice* has been (and continues to be) an invaluable one. On both academic and personal levels, this work invigorates, motivates, and challenges me in ways I would not have thought possible before stumbling upon the project in March of 2016. There are few moments that seem overwhelmingly “meant to be” – for me, discovering *Landscapes* was one of them.

My academic career prior to joining *Landscapes* was limited to three years of undergraduate studies spent at three different universities between two different provinces. This wasn’t because of a lack of love for learning, but rather, a lack of both direction and inspiration. At the University of Toronto, I (finally) started building a foundation in the Book and Media Studies program (with minors in History and Music History & Culture), but it wasn’t until the opportunity with *Landscapes* arose that I started to feel like my passions – for social justice, for greater historical understanding, for communication and community – could be both realized and utilized.

Last summer, I had the privilege of taking on my first term of research in the Land Title and Government Records cluster as the recipient of the Hide Hyodo-Shimizu Research Scholarship (offered jointly by the NAJC, *Landscapes of Injustice*, and the Shimizu family). I met the incredible folks of the *Landscapes* research collective at the project’s annual Spring Institute and I began working closely with historical records, looking for some answers to the project’s big questions: why did the dispossession of Japanese Canadians occur? Who benefitted from it? How has it been remembered and forgotten? I became gripped by the policies and stories of the dispossession, particularly of Eikichi Kagetsu, a well-established logger in Fanny Bay on Vancouver Island. I explored the complexities of his property loss and the diverse conceptualizations of value evident in his story, developing my own questions along the way: how are we, as members of Canadian society, honouring different understandings of value? Are we disregarding value’s diversity when we neglect to see value, for example, in a house which is someone’s home? And if we are, what are the consequences of that? I remain motivated by these questions today.

While *Landscapes of Injustice* is foremost an academic research project, it has also offered me an entry-point into Japanese-Canadian, student, and activist communities. I am indebted to the peers and colleagues I’ve met through *Landscapes* (who have all revealed to me the strength of collaboration), to my fellow members of the *Landscapes* Scholarship & Activism forum (whose dedication to making scholarship that *matters* inspires me daily), and to the Japanese-Canadian community, especially the JC Young Leaders (who have provided me, as a *yonsei*, a place to begin understanding myself).

As I embark on my second term of research with *Landscapes*, I find myself reflecting on the troubling, yet important relevance of this project. I also find myself recognizing the significance this work has had in my life, both academically and personally, in less than a year. I am so very grateful for this project and everyone I have encountered through it. *Landscapes of Injustice* is incredibly worthwhile and I strongly encourage students to apply for this year's Hide Hyodo-Shimizu Research Scholarship – it is an exceptional opportunity.



Nicole relaxing with Jeff Tanaka, and Angela Kruger during some downtime at the NAJC AGM and Conference in Calgary, September 2016. Photo credit: Angela Kruger



Nicole, Alissa Cartwright, Mikayla Tinsley and Anna Gooding meeting for lunch – members of the Land Title and Government Records cluster, summer 2016. Photo credit: Nicole Yakashiro