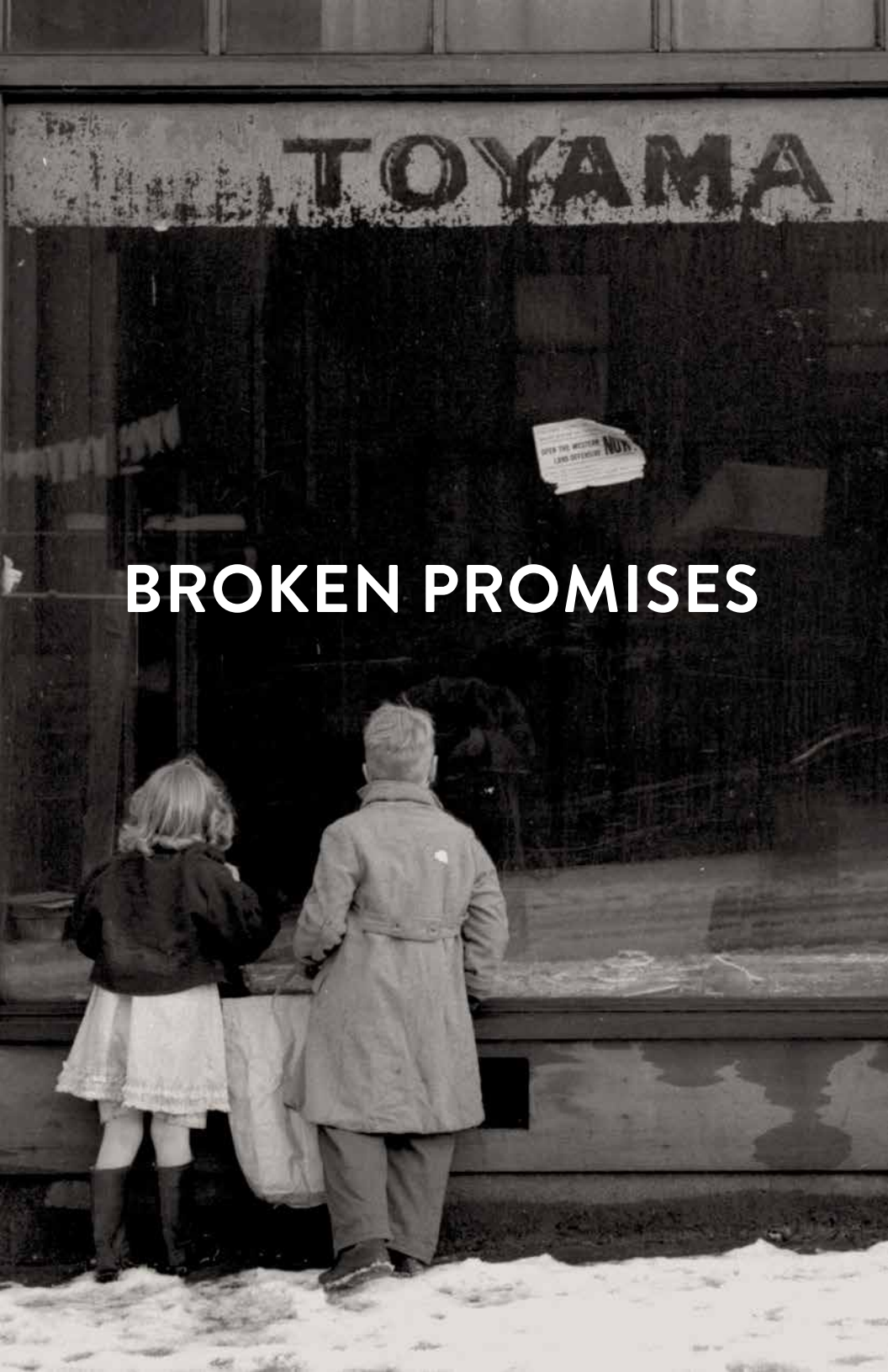


TOYAMA

# BROKEN PROMISES

OVER THE MOUNTAIN  
LAND OFFSHORE

NO



Title: Broken Promises

Format: Digital

ISBN: 978-0-9950328-9-7

Publisher:

Nikkei National Museum & Cultural Centre

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# *Many* STORIES, *many* VOICES

**Broken Promises** is curated by the Nikkei National Museum and the Royal British Columbia Museum in partnership with **Landscapes of Injustice**.

*Landscapes of Injustice* is a research project headquartered at the University of Victoria, with collaborators across Canada. The team includes researchers, community leaders, elders, archivists, and teachers dedicated to revealing the history of the Japanese Canadian dispossession. Each of us inherits these histories of injustice as well as the responsibility to tell them.



# FOREWORD

Jordan Stanger-Ross, PhD, Project Director,  
Landscapes of Injustice, University of Victoria

In 1942, the Canadian government uprooted and interned all people of Japanese descent living in coastal British Columbia. The following year, it authorized the sale of everything that the people had been forced to leave behind. As a result, when Canada's internment era finally ended, in 1949, Japanese Canadians had nothing to return to. Their homes, farms, businesses, fishing vessels, cars, family pets, personal belongings – in short, everything that they had been unable to take with them – were gone.

*Broken Promises* is the capstone exhibit of Landscapes of Injustice, a project to unearth and tell the history of the dispossession of Japanese Canadians. Our research collective is united by the conviction that this history still matters. The dispossession is a story about the violation of human and civil rights at a time of perceived insecurity, about measures taken in the name of national defence that made no one safer, about the enduring harms of mass displacement and the loss of home, and about the resilience of people confronting injustice.

# INTRODUCTION

**Sherri Kajiware**, Director|Curator,  
Nikkei National Museum, Exhibition Co-Curator

**Leah Best**, Head of Knowledge,  
Royal BC Museum, Exhibition Co-Curator

The Landscapes of Injustice (LOI) project thoroughly investigates the forced dispossession of Japanese Canadians coinciding with Canada's participation in the Second World War. As described by the project: *It was an epitomizing moment in the history of twentieth-century Canada: a core principle of liberal society—ownership in fee simple—colliding with racial ideology.* When the members of the LOI research collective drilled down through the rich and extensive academic findings, the key building blocks of the story emerged. What was taken and what was lost? Where did this all take place? Who were the key perpetrators? What are the lasting legacies?

But to truly contextualize all of this, we also needed to understand life for the community from the first arrival of Japanese people to Canada and the enduring legacies of this

history. Japanese Canadians had been citizens of this nation for half a century by the time these events occurred. The forced dispersal of over 22,000 Japanese Canadians from their homes is often remembered as an unfortunate but necessary result of war management. But promises made by the state that asked for an entire community's cooperation, promises to keep them safe, promises to keep their belongings safe, were shattered within months of being made. Every promise was broken.

The journey to develop this exhibit has been rich with collaborations both within and beyond the Landscapes of Injustice research collective. The story of Japanese Canadian dispossession in the 1940s is complex. Our challenge as curators was to unpack four years of academic research and turn it into an engaging visitor experience that could resonate beyond scholastic inquiry. We needed to focus on why we needed to tell the story, how to connect that story in a meaningful way to audiences, and what the major take-aways would be for visitors. After two years of rigorous exhibit development, extensive community consultation, additional

Canadian Heritage grants, and last-minute nimbleness prompted by the global pandemic, we respectfully present *Broken Promises*.

Researchers from the LOI project have made invaluable contributions throughout the curatorial process. Dr. Eiji Okawa was instrumental in illuminating the early life of Japanese in Canada. Dr. Trevor Wideman's analytical expertise helped to ensure that our selection of narrators was diverse in age, geography, livelihood, and gender. Kaitlin Findlay was the connective tissue between Phases 1 and 2 of this seven-year adventure. Kaitlin's graduate work mining the Bird Commission files and her ability to think creatively about massive amounts of data provided the framework for the Offices of Loss section of the exhibit. Dr. Yasmin Amaratunga Railton, our curatorial post-doctoral fellow, was instrumental in managing the exhibition development process, from securing grants, to translating research into meaningful exhibit displays, to orchestrating community consultations. Truly, this was a team effort.

Dr. Jordan Stanger-Ross, who has led the Landscapes of Injustice project from day one,



was a contributing writer along with Kaitlin Findlay, and an active participant on the curatorial team. Invaluable advice and insight were provided by two dedicated members of the project's Community Council: Mary Kitagawa and Vivian Wakabayashi Rygnestad. Finally, the creativity of our designers Doug Munday, Ria Kawaguchi, and Kirsti Wakelin helped us to bring the exhibit to life.

The hope of *Broken Promises* is that lessons can be learned from a difficult and messy history and made actionable in the present day. We invite you to follow the seven narrators, identify what home means to you, dive into the bureaucratic mire located in the Offices of Losses, review a sampling of case files that offer snapshots into lives administrated by the state, listen to first person experiences, and grapple with the legacies that remain.

**PERTES**

Protection, soon broken. The evacuees were interned in their homes. At first, some prevented the thefts, but their efforts were in vain. Public and political pressure to the government authorized the seizure of property in January 1942. The Japanese created to protect property in the headquarters of disposition. The sale of real estate and tens of belongings were sold without consent.

l'annonce de premier tour.  
 Après l'annonce de l'absence  
 de vote en plus ou moins  
 certain nombre de votants  
 les dix-neuf autres députés  
 du premier groupe ont voté  
 à l'appui du gouvernement  
 de gauche. Les députés  
 de gauche ont voté pour  
 les deux propositions de loi  
 et ont voté contre la loi  
 de 1966. Les députés  
 de gauche ont voté pour  
 la loi de 1966 et ont voté  
 contre la loi de 1966.





# MANY STORIES, MANY VOICES:

## Community Consultation in the *Broken Promises* Exhibit

**Yasmin Amaratunga Railton, PhD,**  
Curatorial Post-doctoral Fellow,  
Landscapes of Injustice

In many ways, museum curation can be thought of as a form of storytelling. Extending this metaphor, curators are not so much authors as translators of knowledge. The story of the dispossession of Japanese Canadians in the 1940s at the hands of the Canadian government is not a singular narrative. Research undertaken by the Landscapes of Injustice project illustrates how the violence of the dispossession unfolded over years of bureaucratic work, and in the daily experiences of those being administered for a decade. It required the complicity of thousands. Losses of home and place were specific harms to which Japanese Canadians made complex and varied responses. These losses are still felt today.

In *Broken Promises*, we have endeavoured to translate new research on this topic while remaining rooted in community knowledge networks. To effectively do this, we adopted what is known as participatory exhibit-making,

an approach to curation that promotes consultation with experts and enables those with lived experiences to tell their own stories. We conducted community consultation at every stage of the development of the exhibit, often moving beyond consultation into collaboration.

Intrinsic to good storytelling has always been the practice of good listening. Hours of discussion went into the selection of thousands of archival documents, photographs, letters, and oral histories to best convey the personal and collective experiences of Japanese Canadian families. I've been honoured to sit in the homes of our narrators and to listen to their stories. To understand the story of Masue Tagashira, research coordinator Kaitlin Findlay and I spent a day with three generations of the Tagashira family. Over tea and biscuits, Donald, Charles, and Emma Jinnouchi shared stories and dozens of family photo albums.

To ensure the translation of research to visitors, we sought the advice of the Royal British Columbia Museum, the Nikkei National Museum, the Canadian War Museum, and the Canadian Museum of Immigration. We circulated draft text with the Landscapes of Injustice Community Council, as well as with historians, geographers,

and legal scholars. Canadian primary and secondary teachers tested interactive elements for usability. We hosted public sessions at the Powell Street Festival and invited the public to give feedback on schematics and to respond to specific stories and images. I was particularly moved by Emma Nishimura's artwork, which encapsulates so poignantly her family's history and her response to learning about it. These artworks now form part of the Legacy section of the exhibit and you can hear Emma talk about her work in the oral history theatre.

Like any community consultation, ours had its limitations. We are sensitive to the fact that there is not always consensus within the broader Japanese Canadian community on subjects ranging from language and euphemisms to the ethics of making research findings public. To meet the challenges of telling this story, we adopted a number of tools to engage different voices. These included convening a research integration committee of academics and holding regular meetings with our Community Council, a committee composed of Japanese Canadian advisors from across the country. I feel privileged to have worked with, learned from, and developed deep friendships with

Mary Kitagawa and Vivian Wakabayashi Rygnestad in this process.

Storytelling also supports dialogue for social change. The public consultations we held across British Columbia performed an important educational function in communicating this history and promoting dialogue about racism. Further stories emerged from these discussions. In a community consultation session in the Gulf Islands, Rose Murakami, whose sister Mary is a narrator in our exhibit, shared with us the experience of finding her family's belongings at yard sales for years after returning to Salt Spring Island after their forced uprooting.

As with all collaborative processes, participatory exhibit-making is an opportunity to acknowledge and express differing values and offers a safe space for discussion. This theme is expressed at the end of the exhibit itself in the form of a feedback feature. We invite you to reflect on this difficult history, and to join the conversation with researchers and the Japanese Canadian community. It is our hope that this exhibit will foster a personal connection to this history and will allow for the continuation of the story.



## Chatter at breakfast. Store opens for the day.

Vancouver's Ebisuzaki Shōten, or store, served Japanese Canadians across coastal British Columbia. Its motto was "Thin Profit, Thick Trust."

Teiji (b. 1903) owned the store with his older sister, Hide Ebisuzaki, and her husband, Masatarō. All lived and worked together. Teiji's daughter remembers a "crazy" busy home, "a big house with lots of people in it."

## Causerie au petit-déjeuner. Ouverture du magasin pour la journée.

L'Ebisuzaki Shōten de Vancouver, ou magasin, a servi des Canadiens japonais sur la côte de la Colombie-Britannique. Sa devise était « Petit profit, grande confiance ».

Teiji (né en 1903) était propriétaire du magasin avec sa sœur aînée, Hide Ebisuzaki, et son mari, Masatarō. Tous vivaient et travaillaient ensemble. La fille de Teiji se souvient d'une maison occupée « folle », « une grande maison avec beaucoup de monde ».

FOLLOW  
MY STORY  
SUIVEZ MON  
HISTOIRE



TEIJI MORISHITA





# BROKEN PROMISES

## The Dispossession of Japanese Canadians

Can you imagine someone taking your home,  
all your possessions, and your freedom?

In 1942, the Canadian government forcibly  
removed 21,460 Japanese Canadians from  
British Columbia's coast. People boarded trains  
bringing only what they could carry. Officials  
promised to protect the rest.

Instead, Japanese Canadians were  
dispossessed: everything was stolen or sold.



# DISPOSSESSION *is* *a* STORY *of* PEOPLE

A mother, banished from home, struggles in winter to feed and clothe her children.

A fisher, his boat stolen, starts again far from the sea. A family, forced apart by their government, longs for reunion.

Dispossession was fuelled by racism. Politicians wrote it into law. Officials enforced years of unjust policy. Others took what they could for themselves.

This history is a resource.  
It calls us to create a more  
just Canadian future.





# LAND *of* BROKEN PROMISES

The homes taken from Japanese Canadians stood on land earlier taken from Indigenous peoples.

British law promised to protect Indigenous lands until treaties were signed. In BC, this promise was ignored. Indigenous peoples were dispossessed.

The struggle against this injustice continues today.

# ONE STORY WRITTEN OVER ANOTHER

- The largest former Japanese Canadian neighbourhood in Vancouver, Powell Street, has been known from time immemorial by the Musqueam, Tsleil-Waututh, and neighbouring First Peoples as *q̓əm̓q̓əm̓əɬəp̓*.
- Thousands of Japanese Canadians fished in Steveston. It is also known as *q̓w'eya'xw* in Hul'q'umi'num', the Island dialect of this Salishan language.
- A powerful Hul'q'umi'num' creation story takes place on the highest peak of Salt Spring Island, near former Japanese Canadian farms.

The Survivors Totem Pole, located in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, pays tribute to the diverse communities who have defied racism and injustices. It represents community survival and is a lasting symbol of resistance and inclusion.

Learn more at [<https://bit.ly/3aC5SZr>]

# HOME

## Life before dispossession

By the early 1940s, Japanese Canadians had lived in British Columbia for decades. They put down roots in Canada, while preserving connections to Japan. Despite racism and discrimination, they flourished.

Canada was home: a place of hard work, belonging, and dreams.

Japanese Canadian immigrants (*issei*) and their children (*nisei*) built lives of community and connection. They fished and farmed, grew gardens, and opened stores. Families pooled their skills and resources. Communities founded language schools, cooperatives, churches, and temples.

Half of Japanese Canadians were born in Canada.

Here, you will meet seven Japanese Canadians whose experiences narrate this exhibit.







# KAORU ATAGI

Laughter, gull cries,  
scent of cedar shavings

Kaoru (b. 1912) grew up in Steveston, a thriving fishing town. He watched his father, Tsunematsu, fish in the summers and build boats in the winters. The Atagi Boatworks opened in 1905. Kaoru understood that one day it would be his.

The family remembers Kaoru's father as a master of his craft. "It was amazing what he could do with those tools."





# EIKICHI KAGETSU

Saws rip through giant trees.  
The canopy opens to blue.

Eikichi (b. 1883), an immigrant labourer, slowly built a logging empire on Vancouver Island. He became a community leader. In 1936, he laid a wreath for fallen Japanese Canadian soldiers at Vimy Ridge, France.

Eikichi's wealth was hard-won. "The tree trunk can be my pillow," he wrote in his diary, "while I go into the woods to survey the trees."





# TEIJI MORISHITA

Chatter at breakfast.  
Store opens for the day.

Vancouver's *Ebisuzaki Shōten*,  
or store, served Japanese Canadians  
across coastal British Columbia.  
Its motto was "Thin Profit, Thick Trust."

Teiji (b. 1903) owned the store  
with his older sister, Hide Ebisuzaki,  
and her husband, Masatarō. All lived  
and worked together. Teiji's daughter  
remembers a "crazy" busy home,  
"a big house with lots of people in it."





# KEIKO MARY MURAKAMI

## Feast and field fit for royalty

When the British King and Queen visited Victoria in 1939, they were served Murakami strawberries. The farm, on Salt Spring Island, was cleared by Mary's father. He used dynamite on the largest stumps, and built their home by hand.

For Mary (b. 1937), it was an "ideal" childhood of comfort. "We were free to roam."







# HIROSHI OKUDA

Roaring crowds, rain in the air

Hiroshi (b. 1914) inspired his Cumberland classmates with his sportsmanship.

A letterman athlete at school and a varsity player at the University of British Columbia, he continued to shine. Hiroshi earned two degrees. By the 1940s, he was an accountant.





# MASUE TAGASHIRA

Walking home at dusk.  
A streetcar clatters.

Masue (b. 1908) was an immigrant mother widowed by a logging accident in 1933. Her mother urged Masue and her two children to return to Japan. Instead, Masue stayed, telling herself, “I’m struggling now, but someday the springtime of my life will come. Then I can smile.”

For years, she worked at Vancouver’s Tagashira tobacco and candy shop. In the Powell Street neighbourhood, she met her future husband, Rinkichi.





# TSUMA TONOMURA

Chopped cabbage,  
pickled radish, warm broth

Tsuma's (b. 1898) mother died when she was ten. She lost contact with her father. With few opportunities in Japan, she married a Canadian, Moichiro Tonomura.

In 1928, Tsuma joined the Tonomura clan, the first Japanese Canadian farmers in Mission, a rich plain near Vancouver. She cooked for everyone. Steaming *sukiyaki*, a Japanese hot-pot, was a family favourite.



# *The* **INTERNMENT ERA**

Seven years of internment,  
most in peacetime

Canada declared war on Japan after it attacked British and American bases on December 7, 1941.

To the RCMP and Canadian generals, Japanese Canadians posed no threat. But politicians still decided to uproot all “persons of the Japanese race” from coastal BC.

After the war’s end, officials pressured thousands of Japanese Canadians into exile in Japan. Those who refused to go were told to move east of the Rockies. The violation of their rights continued until April 1, 1949.



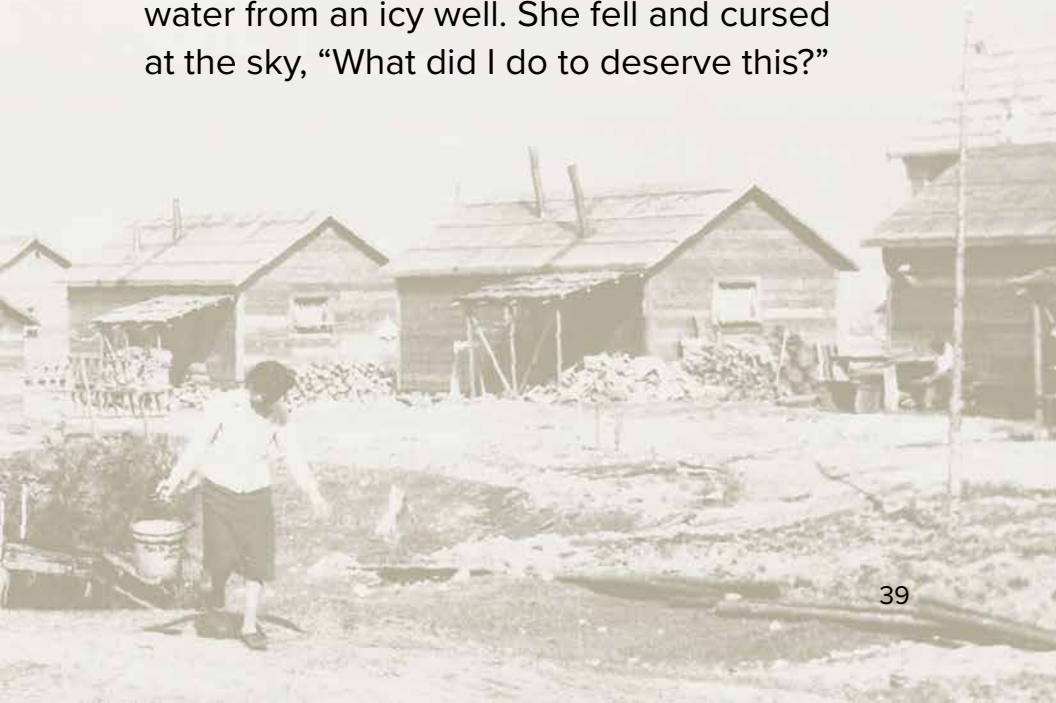


## FAR FROM HOME

Between March and October 1942, thousands of Japanese Canadians were forced into camps in BC's interior. Others were pushed into road work, farm labour, and prisoner-of-war camps across Canada.

Winter came early. Temperatures fell to record lows. Japanese Canadians shivered in tents, makeshift shacks, and abandoned buildings.

Betty Umakoshi grew up in Vancouver. Her family was forced into a tent in the BC interior. With no indoor plumbing, she drew water from an icy well. She fell and cursed at the sky, "What did I do to deserve this?"



# *An* OLD STORY

The internment followed decades of racist law.

BC needed workers in the 1870s. Japanese Canadians arrived. But, along with Chinese, South Asians and Indigenous peoples, they faced hostility and racism. Many thought BC should be a “white” province.

Japanese Canadian men were barred from voting or holding public office. BC laws forbade jobs in industry, public works, law, and pharmacy. Japanese Canadians were excluded from desirable neighbourhoods.

The dispossession is part of a much longer history.

## QUICK THINKING

Officials restricted what Japanese Canadians could bring to internment. Japanese Canadians packed what they could, then stored, sold, loaned, buried, or destroyed the rest. Today, many Japanese Canadians still remember the chaos of these moments. Careful choices allowed them to endure.



# **NOTICE TO ALL JAPANESE PERSONS AND PERSONS OF JAPANESE RACIAL ORIGIN**

**TAKE NOTICE** that under Orders No. 21, No. 22, No. 23 and No. 24 of the British Columbia Security Commission, the following areas were made prohibited areas to all persons of the Japanese race:—

**LULU ISLAND**  
(including Steveston)

**SEA ISLAND**

**EBURNE**

**MARPOLE**

**DISTRICT OF  
QUEENSBOROUGH**

**SAPPERTON**

**CITY OF  
NEW WESTMINSTER**

**BURQUITLAM**

**PORT MOODY**

**IOCO**

**PORT COQUITLAM**

**MAILLARDVILLE**

**FRASER MILLS**

**CORPORATION OF  
THE DISTRICT OF  
NORTH VANCOUVER**

**CORPORATION OF  
THE DISTRICT OF  
WEST VANCOUVER**

**AND FURTHER TAKE NOTICE** that any person of the Japanese race found within any of the said prohibited areas without a written permit from the British Columbia Security Commission or the Royal Canadian Mounted Police shall be liable to the penalties provided under Order in Council P.C. 1665.

**AUSTIN C. TAYLOR,**

Chairman

**BRITISH COLUMBIA SECURITY COMMISSION**

## CAREFUL DECISIONS

“We had come originally, way back, from a warlord family of samurai. And the only thing that my mother vowed was that she did not want to give up the sword that had been in our family . . . there’s no way she was handing that in after all these generations. One night, my mother and our relatives that lived in North Vancouver, that were the boatmakers, they came over and said, “OK, we’re going to row out into the Straits.” She threw it overboard. She didn’t want to hand it in to the RCMP because she didn’t think she’d ever get it back anyway.”

Jean Ikeda-Douglas

# PROMISE *of* PROTECTION

In March 1942, the federal government promised, in law, to hold Japanese Canadians' belongings "as a protective measure only."

Overseeing the work of the Custodian of Enemy Property, Deputy Minister of State Ephraim Coleman wrote: "I do not think it was ever contemplated . . . that [we] would deprive the Japanese owners of their property."

Then he and his colleagues did just that.





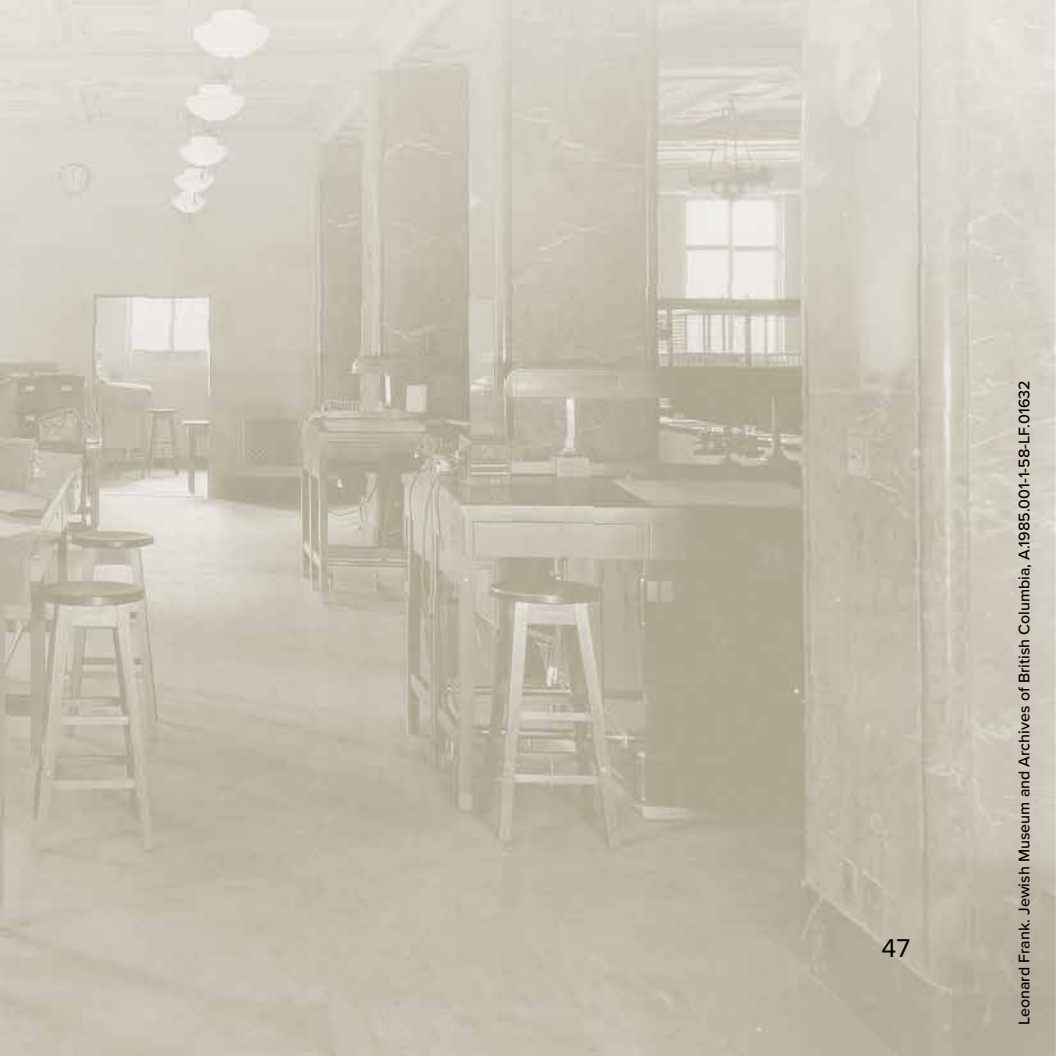
# *The* OFFICES *of* LOSS


## Promise of protection, soon broken

After Japanese Canadians were interned, neighbours looted their homes. At first, some officials tried to prevent the thefts, but their efforts were not enough. Public and political pressure to sell mounted. The government authorized the sale of all remaining property in January 1943.



Government offices created to protect property instead became the headquarters of dispossession. Over 1,700 parcels of real estate and tens of thousands of belongings were sold without consent.





## Empty buildings, stolen homes

In 1943, officials photographed  
vacant buildings to justify  
their low sale prices.

Years later, Japanese Canadians  
contested the sales using family photos.  
The photos also show the rich histories  
lived within each home.



# *Who* **BROKE** *the* **PROMISE?**

Large-scale injustice requires  
many hands

People made dispossession happen.  
Politicians signed it into law.  
Senior officials decided the details.  
Local agents put policy into practice.

Imagine warehouses of furniture,  
clothing, musical instruments, and books.  
The Custodian of Enemy Property,  
a federal office, controlled everything  
Japanese Canadians were forced to leave  
behind. By 1942, 120 employees worked  
in Vancouver's Royal Bank Building, filing  
documents and cataloguing belongings.

Real estate agents inspected houses.  
Government workers priced farms.  
Auctioneers chanted bids to thousands  
of eager buyers.





# WHO WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR DISPOSSESSION?

The policy targeted all “persons of the Japanese race.” Yet, each policy maker had their own motives and ideas.

**EXPLORE THIS CHART** to learn who was responsible for the policies.



## GOVERNOR GENERAL OF CANADA

### PRIME MINISTER



United States Library of Congress's Prints and Photographs  
Division, LC-USZ33-09079-D

**WILLIAM LYON MACKENZIE KING**, war-time prime minister of Canada  
Publicly, King said that no Japanese Canadians had shown disloyalty. Privately,  
he distrusted them. "No matter how honourable they might appear to be," he wrote in 1941,  
"every one of them... would be saboteurs and would help Japan when the moment came."

### PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE

Assistant Private Secretary

### PRIVY COUNCIL

Clerk of the Privy Council

### CABINET

### CABINET COMMITTEES

Cabinet Committee on Japanese Questions (Est. 1942)  
Cabinet Committee on Repatriation and Relocation (Est. 1945)  
Cabinet Committee on Japanese Problems (Est. 1946)

### SECRETARY OF STATE OF CANADA

### OFFICE OF THE CUSTODIAN

### VANCOUVER OFFICE OF THE CUSTODIAN



Joseph Alexandre Castonguay,  
Library and Archives Canada, e006581360



Courtesy of Leslie Barnwell

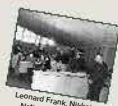
**GLENN MCPHERSON AND  
FRANK SHEARS**, heads of the  
Custodian of Enemy Property, Vancouver  
McPherson urged politicians to authorize  
forced sales. Shears felt he had no  
choice: his role was "carrying out...  
Government policy... not making or  
suggesting what the policy should be."

Multiple departments within  
the Office of the Custodian  
managed, and then sold  
Japanese Canadian's Property.

### MINISTER OF LABOUR



Jack Long, Library and Archives  
Canada, e99900293-0



Leonard Frank Nokes  
National Museum,  
1994-69-3-35

### BC SECURITY COMMISSION

The Commission oversaw the  
internment. Money from forced  
property sales went to accounts  
the Commission controlled.  
Japanese Canadians had to use  
these funds to pay for basic needs.  
"We are quite within our rights in  
refusing" provisions in the camps,  
said one official.

### MINISTER OF PENSIONS & NATIONAL HEALTH

### MINISTER OF VETERAN AFFAIRS



Jack Lindsay, City of Vancouver Archives, 1184-198

**IAN MCKENZIE**, BC's only  
federal cabinet member. McKenzie  
argued strongly for dispossession.  
"Their country should never have been  
Canada," he said, "I do not believe the  
Japanese are an assimilable race."

### SOLDIER SETTLEMENT BOARD

**IVAN BARNET**, Soldier Settlement  
Board Superintendent Barnett oversaw  
the appraisal of Japanese Canadian  
farms. He tried to buy them for less  
than their full value. "We must maintain  
the Pacific Coast as a white man's  
country," he said, "and... educate the  
white man to realize that he can make  
a comfortable living" by farming.

### FAMILY HEIRLOOMS

Some friends and neighbours  
saved the personal belongings of  
Japanese Canadians, returning them  
when they could. Most, however, looted  
and stole. Rather than stop the looting,  
the government decided to sell  
what remained. Between 1943 and 1946,  
it held 255 auctions and sold  
over 90,000 belongings.

### FARMS

Most Japanese Canadian farms  
were sold to the Director of the Veterans'  
Land Act in 1944. These 769 farmlands  
were deliberately underpriced by  
officials. They wanted the lands to  
benefit soldiers returning from war.

# LIVING *with* STATE POWER

## Records of injustice: the Custodian case files

Remember the seven narrators you met earlier in this exhibit? They received notice from officials while interned: their homes were gone.

One read that her friend had betrayed her. Another learned that a competitor bought his business. A third was told that his home was ransacked.

All seven narrators tried to keep control of their lives and protect their families' well-being. Outright protest carried risks. For the Tonomuras, it meant imprisonment. Filling out forms and reasoning politely with officials often seemed a better choice. At every turn, Japanese Canadians felt the limits of their freedom.







Japanese Canadians are ordered to register with the RCMP in early 1941.

## HIROSHI OKUDA

April 13, 1942  
Hiroshi Okuda registers with the Custodian of Enemy Property.

June 28, 1943  
An official thanks Hiroshi for his service establishing education in the Tashme Internment camp.

November 22, 1943  
Hiroshi undergoes a medical inspection to travel to Montreal.

January 25, 1944  
Hiroshi describes his experience in Montreal to a sympathetic Parliament.



Tsuna, her children, and her mother-in-law are employed in the Tashme Creek internment camp. The RCMP agent Tsuna's husband, Moichiro, for protesting, he is imprisoned in Ontario.

## TSUMA TONOMURA

Spring 1942  
Tsuna and her husband, Moichiro Tonomura, register with the Custodian of Enemy Property.

September 25, 1942  
Moichiro refuses to leave his farm and is incarcerated in a prisoner-of-war camp.

December 3, 1943  
Tsuna's mother-in-law, Kuni, asks a neighbour to send the ashes of her late son to her in internment.

1944 - 1946  
Government officials disagree over what department is responsible for sending the ashes to the Tonomuras.

February 16, 1946  
Tsuna's mother-in-law, Kuni, pleads with the Custodian to release funds.

August, 1946  
Officials in Japan record the circumstances of Tsuna's deportation from Canada.



The Ragusa family lives in the Mirko Hotel for the first years of internment.

March 31, 1942  
Eikichi seeks labourers to continue operations at Deep Bay Logging Company on Vancouver Island.

April 8, 1943  
Eikichi's timber is advertised for sale.

November 8, 1948  
Eikichi challenges the sale of his property at the Royal Commission on Japanese Claims.

March 30, 1950  
The Commission issues its final decision on Eikichi's case.



Kaoru (left glasses) and his family on a farm in the interior of Columbia as they wait out the war.

August, 1942  
A watchman reports that the Atagi home in Weston has been "broken into and pilfered."

April 17, 1943  
Kaoru Atagi requests a shipment from a secret compartment in his home.

May 19, 1943  
Officials search his property.

January 2, 1944

EN

EIKICHI KAGETSU



Masue and her children were first interned in the Shocun Valley. They sleep in tents. As soon as they can, they join Rinkichi in Revelstoke, a nearby town.



EN

Spring 1942  
Masue and her partner, Rinkichi Tagashira, register with the Office of the Custodian.

September 28, 1942  
Rinkichi arranges the temporary management of his tobacco shop.

1942 - 1944  
Rinkichi fights to protect his home and business from government control.

December 27, 1944  
The Office of the Custodian seizes and sells the tobacco shop.

February 16, 1948  
Masue and Rinkichi challenge the sale of their property at the Royal Commission on Japanese Claims.

KAORU ATAGI



Family live in British Columbia internment.



Mary, her mother, and her siblings in the Greenwood internment camp in July, 1942.

MARY MURAKAMI

March 29, 1942  
Acting on behalf of the Custodian of Enemy Property, a family friend, Gavin C. Mouat, inventories the Murakami property on Salt Spring Island.

August 19, 1942  
Agent of the Soldier Settlement Board appraises the farm.

February 25, 1943  
Mary's father, Katsuyori, inquires about the protection of his farm and belongings.

June 26, 1943  
sister, Alice, accuses Mouat of betrayal.

July 5, 1943  
official, H.F. Green, promises investigate and questions Mouat.

September 18, 1943  
requests funds "for clothes for winter."

1948  
receipt for the forced sale of his farmland.

MASUE TAGASHIRA

EN



Retourner pour la France

property records  
Ebisuzaki store in Vancouver.

Spring 1942  
creates a file on Teiji Morishita.

April 27, 1942  
Officials takes control of the Ebisuzaki store.

September 29, 1942  
The Custodian holds an "exceptional auction" of Ebisuzaki merchandise.

1943-1945  
The Custodian

TEIJI MORISHITA

# PROTEST

## Japanese Canadians fought for justice

Japanese Canadians protested the forced sale of their properties.

In letters to officials, owners described years of work to build their homes. These were places they had raised their children, set down roots. They could not accept sales made without consent.

Japanese Canadians challenged the dispossession in court in 1943. Justice Thorson delayed his decision for over three years. Meanwhile, most properties were sold. Thorson dismissed *Nakashima v. Canada* on a technicality.

After the war, Japanese Canadians lobbied for a formal inquiry. Judge Henry Bird led the Royal Commission. He took a narrow view of loss, compensating only one in ten owners.



C  
O  
P  
Y

*has been  
2nd instant  
file. J 24/1/44*

Box 48,  
Slocan City, B. C.

January 18, 1944.

P. H. Russell,  
Vancouver, B. C.

Dear Sir:

Received your letter of the 3rd instant.

I do not wish to appear rude and it is not my intention but I would like to put the facts before you in withholding signatures for this case until the court appeal is settled upon.

Before leaving Vancouver your men had told us that this process was to protect us and in your assurance we had our business put into our local agents whom we trusted as you had promised that if and when they have proved reliable that they will be able to deal directly with us. But now you say according to Ottawa this land has been sold.

You have gone against our wishes, also without even consulting us, as any citizen of Canada would have the privilege of giving assent or refusal, and as long as we are not hindering production I feel before God that we have the right to contest it. After all what are we (Canada) fighting for? Not that same treatment the Nazi's gave the Jews be practised here in our own country! But that Canadian citizens be free to exercise their rights and to contribute to the betterment of this land of our birth.

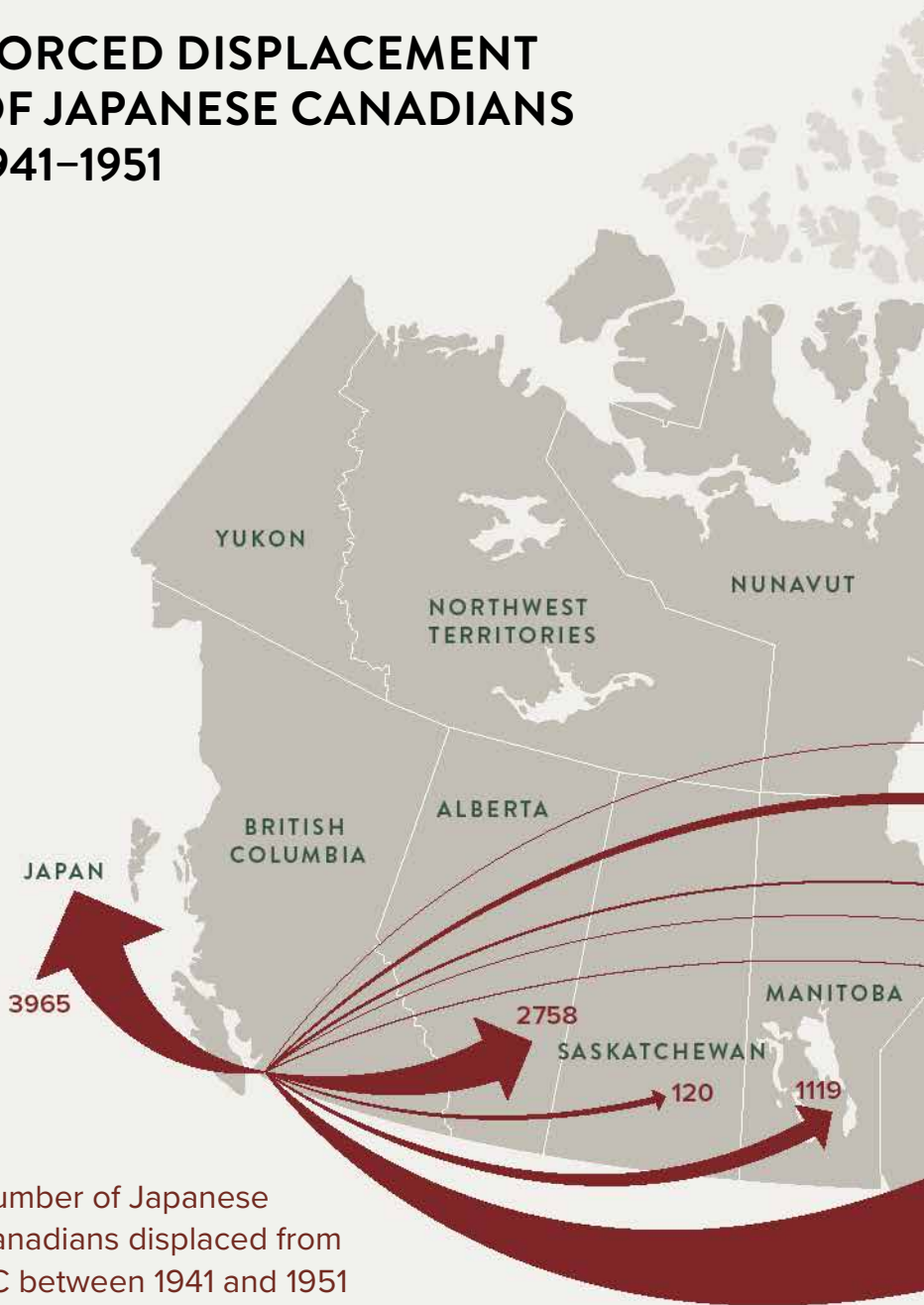
This seems as if we are not cooperating but we must stand for the right. I am sure you will understand when you put yourselves in our position.

Hoping things will clear up soon,

Yours sincerely,

"Aya SUZUKI" - #08121

# FORCED DISPLACEMENT OF JAPANESE CANADIANS 1941–1951



Number of Japanese  
Canadians displaced from  
BC between 1941 and 1951

Cartography by Rylee Harlos and the Historical GIS  
Cluster of the Landscapes of Injustice Research Collective

Federal orders uprooted Japanese Canadians from the Pacific coast. After the war's end, officials pressured Japanese Canadians into exile in Japan. Those who refused to go were told to move east of the Rockies.



# LEGACIES *of* DISPOSSESSION

We inherit the landscapes  
of injustice

Rebuilding lasted for decades after the end of internment. Japanese Canadians first had to find a home in still-racist Canada. Loss — of language, education, belonging — endured for generations.

Many others profited from the dispossession. Careers were made and fortunes built from Japanese Canadian losses.

Dispossession is not a chapter that closes, or a period that neatly ends. We walk atop its sediment.



Mark Sakamoto's family rice tin

Courtesy of Jeff Noon





# RECOVERY

## Japanese Canadians worked to rebuild home

Scattered, the seven narrators began again: new jobs, communities, homes, and lives. They strove for security. Many looked toward the future with hope.

Japanese Canadians continued to fight for justice. They achieved Canada's first apology for a historic wrong in 1988. A community, once reeling from loss, now stands resilient.



## KAORU ATAGI

Kaoru returned to Steveston in 1953. He and his brothers bought a modest house by the water and resumed boatbuilding.

Slowly, a Japanese Canadian community re-emerged. Fishing companies, eager for skilled workers, hired Japanese Canadians who returned. In 1972, community organizers opened a martial arts studio and cultural centre.

Still, loss lingered with the Atagis. Years later, Kaoru's wife urged him to forget the past:

“You just have to give up,  
that's all gone.”







# EIKICHI KAGETSU

The Kagetsus moved to Toronto, where many Japanese Canadians were starting again.

Life was precarious. Eikichi's children worked on assembly lines and as cleaners. His wife took in sewing. Eikichi used the little money he had left to open a gift shop and laundromat.

**“Strive high,”**

Eikichi always told his children. School was a priority. In time, they flourished as professionals across North America.





## TEIJI MORISHITA

Teiji refused to move east. His daughters relocated to Toronto. They had once shared their Vancouver home and business with the Ebisuzakis, who stayed in touch from Toronto and then Japan.

Eventually, the Morishitas realized their dream: to reunite the family in Vancouver.

In 1981, Teiji's daughter, Nancy, saw the old store being destroyed to make way for a new building. She found a piece of the tilework that once proudly announced "EBISUZAKI." Friends helped her to reclaim the pieces and place them in her backyard.





Courtesy of Lillian Morishita





# MARY MURAKAMI

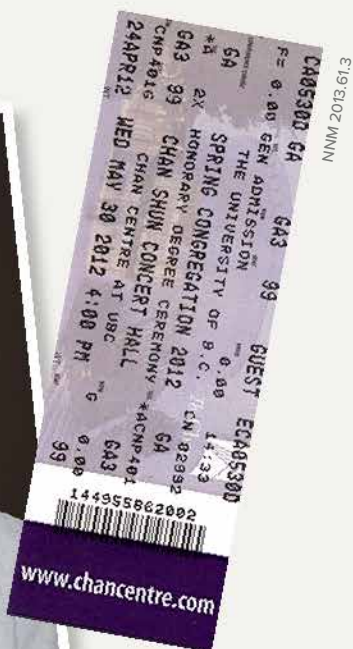
The Murakamis returned to Salt Spring Island in 1954. Mary helped her parents start anew and studied at school.

When she first told her family's story, tears streamed down her cheeks.

Eventually, she became a prominent voice of this history.

Mary stopped a Vancouver building from being named after Howard Green, a champion of the internment. She convinced UBC to grant degrees to Japanese Canadians it had expelled in 1942. She was awarded the Order of British Columbia in 2018.

Courtesy of BC Honours and Awards



Courtesy of Mary and Tosh Kitagawa



# HIROSHI OKUDA

Hiroshi faced racism in Montreal.  
His professional degrees seemed worthless.  
In 1947, angered by continued discrimination,  
he became a founder of the National Japanese  
Canadian Citizens' Association.

Despite his activism, Hiroshi  
seldom spoke about the internment.

His daughter, Sachiko, wanted to learn more.

Exploring her family's history led her  
to community engagement. She joined the  
Redress campaign and led the Ottawa Japanese  
Cultural Centre for many years.





# MASUE TAGASHIRA

The Tagashiras returned to their old Vancouver neighbourhood. Masue's husband wanted their home and business back. She described him as *kuyashii*, or frustrated:

“He was always looking  
for what he had lost.”

In the 1980s, Masue joined the campaign  
for a federal acknowledgement  
of wrongdoing and redress.

**She wanted the injustice settled.**

Masue was 80 on September 22, 1988,  
when Prime Minister Brian Mulroney  
delivered Canada's first federal apology.  
Asked about it, Masue could only smile.





Courtesy of Donald Jinnouchi



Courtesy of Donald Jinnouchi





# TSUMA TONOMURA

Funds were scarce in war-torn Japan, where the Tonomuras started again. They opened a small business. Their daughters worked for the US Army. In high school, Tsuma's youngest son, John, struggled to adjust to life in a foreign country.

In 1954, John sailed to Canada. He worked and saved to support his parents' return. In 1968, they moved back to Vancouver.

“For all the suffering she endured,”

Tsuma's daughter-in-law recalled,  
she never complained.

“She was a pioneer, a grand lady,  
and an inspiration to us all.”



# LEGACIES *of* DISPOSSESSION

Loss is complex. It ripples through families, shaping how they see themselves and their history. In time, new generations face the past. Further Japanese Canadians reflect on these themes.

**LOSS**

**SILENCE**

**FACING THE PAST**

**INHERITANCE**

**RETURNS**

lawn or even  
ing buses used to point  
iden as they drove by  
e, during a survey  
oid Horticultural Society  
that beautify our streets  
granted an Award of  
June 16, 1935.

home and garden be  
past as the garden city  
helped to cheer the sea

Remembrance Day 1935  
to the public and rain  
int Souph's Hospital  
from our garden  
81



# LOSS

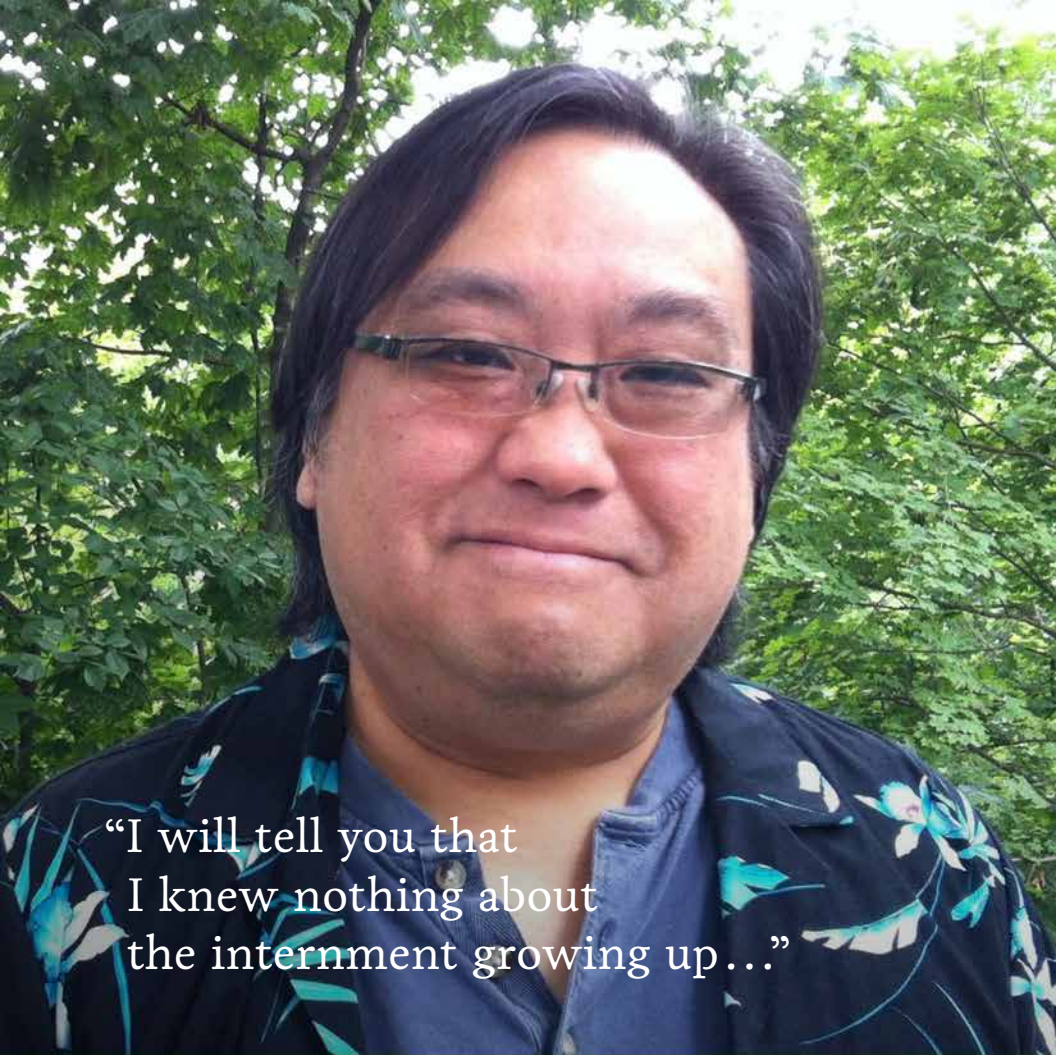
The losses of Japanese Canadians cannot be undone. As they rebuild their lives, the impacts of dispossession linger.

## MIDORI BRUNS

Midori (b. 1927) reflects on the loss of the beautiful home her father had built. For her, the hardest thing was leaving her pets.

“The home, it was a company home to start with and actually the only sentimental value is in my head. What Dad had done to make life so pleasurable with having a summer house and him inviting friends to have beer and whatnot under the tree and that was a pleasant memory, a nice memory and Dad building us a little wee wading pool. We left behind just about everything... We took things like photographs and I brought things that I wrote when I was a kid in the composition and essays and whatnot, those things were the things that meant something... material things... no, because we were only allowed just so much. Clothing would, being a family of six, would weigh a lot. But the saddest thing was leaving the cat, our cat, Pet. He was a white Persian with two different coloured eyes. And when we left she was sitting on the fence post. Oh yeah, that was the hardest thing. And I just prayed that neighbours would feed the cat, you know? Yeah, that’s the one thing I regret. Yeah that’s the saddest thing, leaving pets and living things behind.”





“I will tell you that  
I knew nothing about  
the internment growing up...”

## SILENCES

Many parents hoped their children would look forward, rather than dwell on the past. But silence leaves a gap that younger generations often wish to fill.

## TERRY WATADA

Terry (b. 1951) knew nothing of his family's experiences growing up. He describes when he first learned about the internment at university. He says, "It blew my mind."

"I will tell you that I knew nothing about the internment growing up in the 1950s in the East End of Toronto here. But then I went to university. I think it was 1970. A group formed in Toronto, a Japanese Canadian and then an Asian Canadian group to discuss themes of identity, racism, all kinds of topics. Then I think the leader of the group, Allan Hotta, decided to hold a conference in Toronto. During that conference they actually set up a photo exhibit which was put together by the Vancouver people, of the internment. And it was quite something, it just—yeah, surprised me. I could use the term "blew my mind." So then I had to ask my parents, right? Did this really happen? And of course my mother just said I was an idiot. 'Why do you want to know that stuff for?' And she just clammed right up."

Terry Watada



“What if you had said,  
‘I’m not going to do this.’”

## FACING THE PAST

If your family had looted, purchased, or assisted in the dispossession of Japanese Canadians’ possessions, how would you feel? Many descendants struggle to make sense of their ancestors’ actions.

## LESLIE BARNWELL

Leslie's (b. 1949) grandfather, Frank Shears, oversaw the dispossession of Japanese Canadians. She reflects on his motivations and the difficulty of living with his decisions.

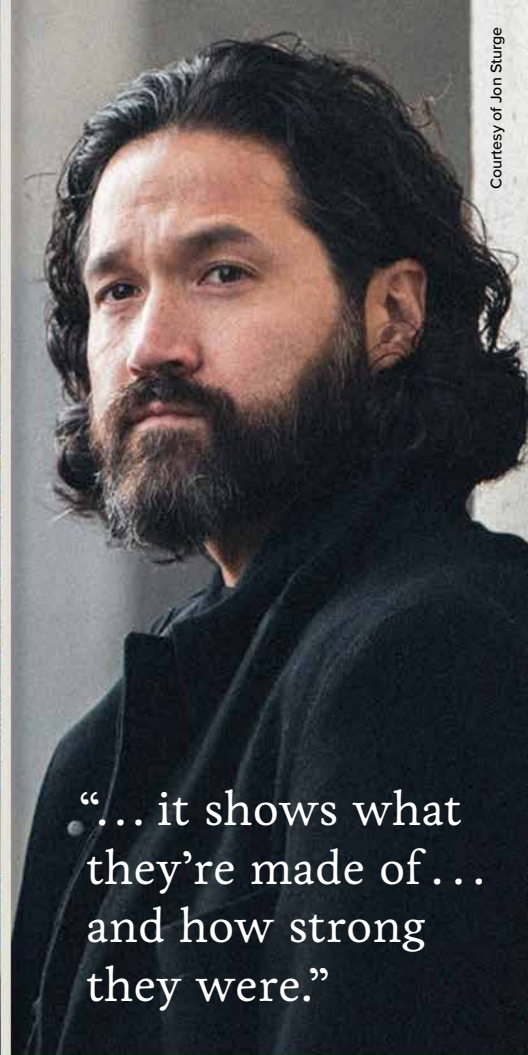
“I don’t think, as I say, that I’ll ever come to a full resolution because I won’t be able to talk to Granddad. So, I think that he originally, as I say, began with that intention that he would be able to work on behalf of the Japanese people and preserve their lands and their goods for them. But it didn’t take very long for the directives to come down to alter that position. I don’t know whether or not if somebody else had been doing the job it would have been worse. You know, is it true what my mum said, “If a bad job had to be done, better that a good man do it”? I don’t know. But I think, “Granddad, what if you had said, ‘No’? What if you had said, ‘I’m not going to do this. Instead, I’m going to stand outside and I’m going to speak up.’” Then I wouldn’t have conflicted feelings.”

Leslie Barnwell





Courtesy of Jeff Neen



Courtesy of Jon Sturge

“... it shows what they’re made of ... and how strong they were.”

# INHERITANCE


Decades later, ordinary belongings link a family to its history. Each object that families managed to save speaks of both injustice and resilience.

## MARK SAKAMOTO

Mark (b. 1977) describes the personal significance of the rice tin his family brought with them to internment.

“... my grandfather, Hideo Sakamoto, was a total pack-rat. He just kept everything. And so after he died ... and we cleaned out the garage. And at the very back of the garage—because it was one of the first things that was put in the garage in 1952 when he moved into the house—was a tea box. A big tea box about 2 feet by 3 feet. This tea box was tinned and it was tinned because of the small amount of weight that they could bring, they brought a tinned box of rice. It was literally about a quarter of the weight that they could carry. And it was just food, the basic staple of their life. And thank goodness that they did because for the first winter they did not have a lot of food. And for me it’s such a wonderful and terrible reminder of the sacrifices that they made during that period. The sacrifices that they were forced into, the dilemmas that they were forced into. I kept it because it ... it shows what they’re made of and how they could survive and how strong they were. They were forced to choose between the sentimentality of their life or their life.”





“So what it means  
to me now is it’s  
unfinished business.

## RETURNS

Some Japanese Canadians refuse to revisit  
the places their families once called home.  
Others find comfort in return.

## LESLIE UYEDA

Leslie (b. 1960) recalls her “rage” at seeing her former home in Vancouver and her conflicted feelings about approaching the current owners.

“When I came out here I determined quite early on to go and see if the house was still there. So I would drive up there and just look at it and see my family—imagine my family—there on those steps. It has a very particular front, this house, it’s on a corner overlooking a park. It’s probably worth gazillions now. Part of why that house means something to me is that my rage is involved in that house . . . because it’s still there and I think . . . I wonder how the present owners got it and the previous owners, how did they get it? And did the first owners, after my parents had had to leave—my family had had to leave—did they know how they came to acquire that house? That part of me thinks that, “Okay, I do want to know what happened to that house and I do want to see if those people there know how they got that house and—it belonged to my family, not you.” That’s what I feel like going up and saying. So what it means to me now is it’s unfinished business.”

Leslie Uyeda

# *The* STORY CONTINUES

The dispossession is an era  
with enduring legacies,  
not a closed chapter of history.

Today, Japanese Canadian storytellers and  
their allies are working to understand it anew.



“If we could, as Japanese Canadians, take pride in our accomplishments and pride in who we are and who we were and who we’re going to become, and if we could pass that on to the next generations, that’s the important part.”

Vivian Wakabayashi Rygnestad

Vivian’s father Tadao Wakabayashi challenged the dispossession in court.





Leslie's grandfather, Frank Shears,  
ran the Vancouver office of  
the Custodian of Enemy Property.

“Canada did do things that brought us  
into disrespect. And so I would say to  
future Canadians, we must never do  
that again . . . And I encourage all of us  
to work towards that end.”

Leslie Barnwell



“I grew up listening to the stories of my grandparents, of their struggles throughout the war and after. I witnessed them trying to move forward but always held back by their history. Working in combination with my grandmother’s sewing patterns and my etchings, I explore my family’s stories, the experiences of other Japanese Canadians, and the ideas of assimilation and cultural integration, to find a sense of belonging.”

Emma Nishimura





# *Can* CANADA OFFER *a JUST HOME for ALL?*

What would this look like?

*Right to Remain* March,  
Downtown Eastside SRO Convention,  
Vancouver, 2014

## TELL US YOUR THOUGHTS

VISIT:

<https://loi.uvic.ca/feedback>



Your anonymous feedback will help us evaluate our exhibition.  
It could also be used by University of Victoria's Landscapes of Injustice  
project to analyze responses to this presentation of history.  
University of Victoria research ethics clearance has been granted.

**BROKEN PROMISES** is part of Landscapes of Injustice, a 7-year community-engaged research project. This exhibition is the result of extensive research and consultation with the Japanese Canadian community, scholars, and museum professionals.

Thank you to everyone who contributed to the telling of this history. A special thank you to all of the individuals and families in the exhibition and their descendants for keeping these important stories alive.

This project has been made possible in part by the Government of Canada.

## **A SPECIAL THANKS TO THE FAMILIES OF THE EXHIBITION NARRATORS:**

Mary and Tosh Kitagawa

Sus and Barbara Tabata

Susanne Tabata

Nolan Kagetsu

Kanaye Kay Kagetsu

Takako Huang

Mikiko Huang

Sachiko Okuda

Lillian and Nancy Morishita

Donald Jinnouchi and family

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Mark Sakamoto

Betty Toyota and Joy Trapnell

Leslie Uyeda

Terry Watada

Jean Anne Wightman

## **WITH THANKS TO:**

Maleea Acker, Editing

Ophélie Alvaro, Translation

Great Northern Way Scene Shop, Fabrication

Ria Kawaguchi, Kiko Communication Design,  
Graphic Design

Jean-Pierre Lussier, Translation

Nicholas Massé, Translation

Multigraphics Ltd., Print Graphics

Doug Munday, Exhibition Design

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