

# Landscapes of Injustice

Research News and Project Updates

Fall Winter 2020

## Message from the Project Director - Jordan Stanger-Ross

*Landscapes of Injustice* is nearing the end of its seventh year with a sense that we've accomplished what we set out to do, and then some. Despite our regrets at not being able to gather the entire project together, we've held a series of important and gratifying launch events: for *Landscapes of Injustice* (our capstone book), the *Broken Promises* exhibition, and teacher resources. We've also looked to the future, beginning discussions of what might come next with institutions and academics in Canada and abroad. The *Executive Committee* has had an opportunity for reflection and we think we've accomplished something special. In a jointly authored op ed., published in the *Vancouver Sun* to mark the opening of *Broken Promises* at the Nikkei National Museum and reprinted below, we try to articulate what that is: "Structures of racism are diverse and enduring," we reflect, "so our renunciation of racism must also be multi-faceted and sustained." *Landscapes of Injustice* has contributed by working together and across difference to grapple with the legacies of a particular history of past racism. This kind of work, we believe, is essential to fostering a culture of social and political accountability today.

The run is not over—our exhibition and programming will still travel across Canada and our digital archives will launch in March—but the end is in sight. From a personal perspective—knowing how hard we worked, how far we've come, and envisioning what we might still do in partnership—it's a pretty remarkable view.



## Opinion: Exhibition exposes multi-generational trauma caused by dispossession of Japanese-Canadians

When 22,000 Japanese-Canadians were uprooted from their homes in coastal B.C. in 1942, officials promised to protect their property. They didn't.

Authors: Jordan Stanger-Ross, Leah Best, Sherri Kajiwarra, Audrey Kobayashi and Nicholas Blomley  
Vancouver Sun Publishing date: Oct 03, 2020

For the past seven years, the Landscapes of Injustice research project has grappled with a disturbing history of racism: the dispossession of Japanese-Canadians in the 1940s. When 22,000 Japanese-Canadians were uprooted from their homes in coastal B.C. in 1942, officials promised to protect their property for the duration of the war. Everything would be returned to its owners, they said, once the internment ended. Instead, officials stood idle as neighbours ransacked and looted. Then, the government decided to sell everything that remained, without the consent of owners. After the war ended, 4,000 Japanese-Canadians were exiled to Japan, with the remainder pressured to disperse across Canada.

This injustice caused multi-generational trauma. Other British Columbian families profited from the acquisition of houses, farms, businesses and family heirlooms that belonged to Japanese-Canadians. The effects of both benefit and loss are still felt today.

Such explicit racism no longer receives public support in Canada. Gone are the days when our elected officials could openly advocate banishing an entire ethnic group on the basis that they are not “an assimilable race,” as Ian Mackenzie, a cabinet minister, claimed of Japanese-Canadians in the 1940s. Nonetheless, racism endures.

How is racial inequality perpetuated even as overtly racist attitudes wane? What does it mean to describe racism as systemic? Part of the answer lies in history.

The dispossession of Japanese-Canadians was part of the unapologetic racism of state policy and private action that endured for much of the country’s past. Canada’s 1867 constitution identified “Indians” as an area of administrative control. Immigration laws banned people deemed “unsuited to the climate.” Public employment was restricted to “white labour.” Covenants prohibited the sale of property to persons of the “Semitic, Negro, or coloured race.” Voting rights were denied to Asian-Canadians, whom our first prime minister deemed “abhorrent to the Aryan race.” Bars and movie theatres cast out black customers with impunity. The country’s last residential school closed in 1996.

Inequalities built in generations of racism do not quickly disappear. We are heirs to landscapes of injustice. What, then, is to be done today?

Structures of racism are diverse and enduring, so our renunciation of racism must also be multi-faceted and sustained. Canadians have pushed explicit racism to the margins of public life. Our governments were right to acknowledge wrongdoing and to offer apologies. We must uphold their commitment not to repeat past wrongs. Our country needed processes of truth and reconciliation. Now it falls upon us to enact the recommendations that they produced. We must confront systemic racism, as well as naked expressions of racial animus. Canadians who found success without facing the obstacle of racism must learn from those whom it disadvantaged. For many, there is listening to be done.

Members of Landscapes of Injustice share a conviction that, as with the history of racism more broadly, the dispossession of Japanese-Canadians requires many responses. In 1988, after years of Japanese-Canadian activism, the federal government acknowledged wrongdoing. Community organizations continue to hold other jurisdictions (especially the City of Vancouver and the Province of British Columbia) to account for their roles. Japanese-Canadian artists of many stripes — among them novelists, filmmakers, sculptors, and muralists — give creative and powerful voice to their history. Activists and scholars are mobilizing the history of the forced uprooting of Japanese-Canadians to combat the ongoing displacement of marginalized Vancouverites.

Landscapes of Injustice has contributed by working in partnership and across difference to grapple with the legacies of the dispossession. Some of us are Japanese-Canadian, many are not. Some lived through the dispossession and vividly remember its pain. Others came to this topic in answer to an advertisement for a summer job. We are scholars who delve into archives and we are grandparents, passing stories on to a new generation. We are an evolving collective of some 70 people, including students, academics, teachers, museum professionals, archivists, librarians, and community leaders. Racism endures in part because of its unresolved legacies, so we commit to unearthing and understanding them.

Working together, our collective told a story that none of us could have hoped to tell alone. In the process, we came to see one another. The results of this work, we hope, are a resource for a more just Canadian future.



Jordan Stanger-Ross (UVic), Leah Best (Royal B.C. Museum), Nicholas Blomley (SFU), Sherri Kajiwarra (Nikkei National Museum) and Audrey Kobayashi (Queen’s) are the executive of Landscapes of Injustice. The research collective’s book, *Landscapes of Injustice: A New Perspective on the Internment and Dispossession of Japanese Canadians*, was published by McGill-Queen’s Press in 2020.



Photo credit: Kayla Isomura

## Broken Promises exhibition update

Yasmin Amataranga Railton

The *Broken Promises* exhibition is now on display at the Nikkei National Museum & Cultural Centre until April 24th 2021. The NNMCC will be closed from December 20, 2020 - January 4, 2021, so be sure to check the exhibition [website](#) for opening times.

From 2021, the *Broken Promises* exhibition will tour across Canada, including to the Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre (Toronto), Royal British Columbia Museum (Victoria), and the Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21 (Halifax), with further venues in discussion. A 500-square foot modular version of the exhibition is also in development for display at regional museums, cultural centres and universities. If you are interested in booking the *Broken Promises* exhibition, please contact Sherri Kajiwarra at [skajiwarra@nikkeiplace.org](mailto:skajiwarra@nikkeiplace.org).

Since the exhibition opened, the Museum Exhibit Cluster has developed a suite of interpretative and educational resources, including a virtual tour (launching in 2021) and a self-guided tour app (available now for iPhone on the [App store](#) and for Android on the [Google Play store](#)).

The *Broken Promises* self-guided tour app is a free multi-media interactive that allows you to tour the exhibit with Keiko Mary Murakami as your guide. Listen to bonus video clips of Mary speaking about experiences, and explore maps, infographics, and case files featured in the exhibit. This app was developed by Benjamin Wilson for the Nikkei National Museum. With thanks to Yasmin Amaratunga Railton (Curatorial Postdoctoral Fellow, Landscapes of Injustice), Carolyn Nakagawa (Culture, Education, and Programs Coordinator, Nikkei National Museum), Alan Saunderson, (Museum Program Assistant, Nikkei National Museum), Sherri Kajiwarra, (Director| Curator, Nikkei National Museum), and Leah Best (Head of Knowledge, Royal BC Museum).

## Museum exhibit launch and project links

Grounded in research from Landscapes of Injustice – a 7 year multi-disciplinary, multi-institutional, community engaged project, this exhibit explores the dispossession of Japanese Canadians in the 1940s. It illuminates the loss of home and the struggle for justice of one racially marginalized community. The story unfolds by following seven narrators. Learn about life for Japanese Canadians in Canada before war, the administration of their lives during and after war ends, and how legacies of dispossession continue to this day.

7年間にわたる学術研究、および複数の機関とコミュニティが関与した「ランドスケープ・オブ・インジャスティス」。このプロジェクトに基づいた展示は、1940年代の日系カナダ人の財産没収について調べています。また人種差別されたコミュニティが住居を失い、正義を求める葛藤を描きます。物語は7名のナレーターにより展開され、戦前の日系カナダ人の生活、戦時中および戦後のそれらの管理、そして没収の余波が今日までどのように続いているかを探ります。

### Gallery

Nikkei National Museum  
6688 Southoaks Crescent  
Burnaby BC V5E 4M7

### Gallery Admission

\$5 Adult | FREE NNMCC Members and students  
The exhibit is open 10am - 5pm Tuesday - Saturday.  
COVID protocols are in place. The exhibit has a limited capacity of 8 people.

### Recording of opening commemoration: Sept. 26, 2020

Watch recording [here](#)

This program includes the launch of a Landscapes of Injustice book, knowledge mobilization outputs, and exciting information about digital offerings.

Links to some videos used in this opening ceremony

Museum : <https://vimeo.com/461624651/4818be46fd>

Digital Archives: <https://vimeo.com/461601867/a2f9861ee9>

Teacher Resources: <https://vimeo.com/461421534/0387edeb99>

Book: <https://vimeo.com/461600223/387c8f7d93>

### Website

A complementary [narrative website](#) that presents the findings of Landscapes of Injustice in an accessible, compelling narrative format.

### Publication

Purchase your copy of the new publication, *Landscapes of Injustice: A New Perspective on the Internment and Dispossession of Japanese Canadians*, from the [NNMCC online shop](#).

### Broken Promises free e-catalogue

English [ePub](#) | [PDF](#)

### La brochure Promesses Brisées

Français [ePub](#) | [PDF](#)

NOTE: to download ePub files, click on the file. To download PDF files, right click on the link and select "save."



## Breaking the cycle of discrimination one narrative at a time

Laurie Wood, Faculty of Environment

Simon Fraser University

There are many messages telling Canadians that we need to end discrimination. Messages from the Black Lives Matter Movement is a recent example. An earlier example is the 1988 Japanese Canadian Redress Agreement. And while you may not discriminate consciously, you probably do discriminate unconsciously.

If you are wondering what you can personally do to break the cycle, listening to those who have experienced discrimination is an excellent place to start. The Broken Promises travelling exhibit at the [Nikkei National Museum and Cultural Centre](#) in Burnaby has seven narratives you don't want to miss.

*Broken Promises* is part of [Landscapes of Injustice \(LOI\)](#), a research project based at the University of Victoria that is a collaboration between SFU and other university, museum and government partners. It documents the mass displacement and dispossession of 22,000 Japanese Canadians in the 1940s. SFU students and faculty contributed to many facets of the LOI project, including the compelling narratives that make up the Broken Promises exhibit.

Trevor Wideman was a PhD geography student in the Faculty of Environment when he first started working on the LOI project. Cataloging and archiving information from different project clusters informed much of his PhD research and gave him extensive experience in historical methods. But it wasn't until he joined the Broken Promises museum exhibit cluster that the power of the personal stories became evident. Two of the characters documented in his earlier work became part of the exhibit and when Wideman saw their family photographs and read their letters requesting information, assistance and justice, he experienced a different level of understanding.



Trevor Wideman

Photo credit: Matt Williams

When asked what stood out the most for him, Wideman says, “the extent of the dispossession is staggering and shocking.”

While the 1980s redress movement made a strong case to the government by showing monetary loss in concrete ways, Wideman says hearing how dispossession has non-monetary impacts strikes an emotional chord that shocks, infuriates and breaks your heart.



Photo credits: Kayla Isomura

The loss of property and possessions wasn't just about losing real estate, it was about losing family heirlooms and history, treasured books, family connections and financial means.

“The other shocking thing was the banality of the process,” adds Wideman.

There was overt racism and discrimination involved that was easy to identify with individual actions but more subtle and equally unjust discrimination was embedded in the bureaucracy, which ultimately became socially acceptable, and delivered the greatest damage. It became the mechanism to ignore the pleas for help, and absolve responsibility. People were “just doing their jobs”.

The exhibit features compelling virtual and in-person elements. The powerful stories make visible the often-invisible elements of discrimination. Most importantly, they reunite the human element with processes that dehumanized discriminatory practices.

Wideman is now a postdoctoral fellow with the University of Toronto and “hopes that visitors get a sense of the resiliency of the community, and that that resilience continues into the present.”

Let's also hope that by listening to the narratives we learn how to act in ways that break cycles of discrimination.

[Preview Exhibit](#)

# Implicated Subjects in the Landscapes of Injustice

Join preeminent Holocaust scholar Michael Rothberg (UCLA) and Landscapes of Injustice Project Director, Jordan Stanger-Ross (Uvic) with moderator Charlotte Schallié (Uvic) for a conversation about the legacies of historical injustice. Reflecting on the intersections and differences between their respective areas of research, they'll discuss the present imperatives that emerge from histories of harm. Rothberg's recent work has explored the transformative possibilities of recognizing that most of us are implicated, in one way or another, in past wrongs. Stanger-Ross's focus on the dispossession of Japanese Canadians has led him to conclude that we are "heirs to landscapes of injustice." In this session, students and members of the general public are invited to ask where they fit into the

**Wednesday, January 27, 2021 11:00 am – 12:00 pm Pacific**

[Register for webinar](#)

Presented in association with Landscapes of Injustice and the US Holocaust Memorial Museum

## Moderator

**Charlotte Schallié** is a Professor and Chair of Germanic and Slavic Studies at the University of Victoria. Her teaching and research interests include post-1945 diasporic and transcultural writing/filmmaking, memory studies, Jewish identity in contemporary cultural discourse, and teaching and learning about the Holocaust (HTL). Her current research project — "Narrative Art and Visual Storytelling in Holocaust and Human Rights Education," is working on developing a new dialogical-reflective pedagogy in Holocaust and Human Rights education fostering

broad and deep collaborations and intercultural exchange between researchers, visual artists, Holocaust survivors, librarians, students, and community members in Canada, Germany, Israel, the Netherlands, and the UK.



## Speakers

**Michael Rothberg** is the 1939 Society Samuel Goetz Chair in Holocaust Studies and Professor of English and Comparative Literature at the University of California, Los Angeles. His latest book is *The Implicated Subject: Beyond Victims and Perpetrators* (2019), published by Stanford University Press in their "Cultural Memory in the Present" series. Previous books include *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (2009), *Traumatic Realism: The Demands of Holocaust Representation* (6444), and, co-edited with Neil Levi, *The Holocaust: Theoretical Readings* (6447). With Yasemin Yildiz, he is currently completing *Inheritance Trouble: Migrant Archives of Holocaust Remembrance* for Fordham University Press.

"The US Holocaust Memorial Museum's Jack, Joseph, and Morton Mandel Center's mission is to ensure the long-term growth and vitality of Holocaust Studies. To do that, it is essential to provide opportunities for new generations of scholars. The vitality and the integrity of Holocaust Studies require openness, independence, and free inquiry so that new ideas are generated and tested through peer review and public debate. The opinions of scholars expressed before, during the course of, or after their activities with the Mandel Center do not represent and are not endorsed by the Museum or its Mandel Center."

**IMPlicated SUBJECTS IN THE LANDSCAPES OF INJUSTICE**

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 27, 2021  
11am – 12pm Pacific Time

**LIVE STREAMING**

**WITH SPECIAL GUESTS**

**MODERATOR**  
Charlotte Schallié  
University of Victoria

**SPEAKERS**  
Michael Rothberg  
University of California, Los Angeles  
Jordan Stanger-Ross  
University of Victoria



**Jordan Stanger-Ross** is a University of Victoria Provost's Engaged Scholar, Associate Professor of history, and Project Director of Landscapes of Injustice, a SSHRC partnership project (2014-2021) to tell the history of the dispossession of Japanese Canadians. His work on this topic has received honours from the Canadian Historical Association, the Society of Regional and Planning History, and the Canadian Race Relations Foundation. His previous book, *Witness to Loss*, co-edited with Pamela Sugiman, was shortlisted for the Wilson Institute Prize for the best book in Canadian history. His latest book as editor, *Landscapes of Injustice: A New Perspective on the Internment and Dispossession of Japanese Canadians* is part of the Wilson Institute for Canadian History's series, *Rethinking Canada in the World*.



## **Federation of Asian Canadian Lawyers and Landscapes of Injustice present: Landscapes of Injustice: Re Persons of Japanese Race**

When: Monday, February 22, 2021 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM Pacific Time

Location: Zoom

Cost: Free [Register here](#)

On February 20, 1946, the Supreme Court of Canada upheld three Orders in Council authorizing the mass exile of Japanese Canadians in the *Re Persons of the Japanese Race* decision. This year marks the 75th anniversary of that judgment and of the subsequent decision of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council to uphold the SCC decision on appeal. Dr. Jordan Stanger-Ross will cover the historical background and policy origins while Dr. Eric M. Adams will speak about the decision itself. Drs. Adams and Stanger-Ross are currently working together on a book on the Japanese Canadian exile based on the collaborative research from the LOI project.

SCC decision:

*Re Persons of Japanese Race*, [1946] S.C.R. 248

<https://scc-csc.lexum.com/scc-csc/scc-csc/en/item/8297/index.do>

Judicial Committee of the Privy Council decision:

*The Co-operative Committee on Japanese Canadians and another v The Attorney-General of Canada and another*, [1947] A.C. 87

<http://uniset.ca/other/thc/cooperative.html> and

<https://www.casemine.com/judgement/uk/5b4dc2512c94e07cccd23e06>

Speakers:

Eric M. Adams is Vice Dean and Professor of Law at the Faculty of Law. The recipient of several awards for his research and teaching, Eric publishes widely in the fields of constitutional law, legal history, legal education, employment law, and human rights. He provides occasional legal advice on constitutional matters and frequent media commentary on a variety of legal topics.

Jordan Stanger-Ross is a Provost's Engaged Scholar in history at the University of Victoria and Project Director of *Landscapes of Injustice*. He has published widely on the history of Japanese Canadians in the 1940s, including *Landscapes of Injustice: A New Perspective on the Internment and Dispossession of Japanese Canadians*.

Judge Maryka Omatsu will offer introductory remarks for the two speakers.

Maryka Omatsu became the first woman of East Asian descent to be appointed a judge in Canada 27 years ago. In the 1980s, Judge Omatsu acted as a legal counsel for the National Association of Japanese Canadians (NAJC) and was a member of their Strategy and Negotiation Team that won Redress for her community. Today, she is a member of the NAJC's team seeking Redress from the Province of B.C.



The on going series of stories arising from the Landscapes of Injustice claims series has been posted on our Touched by Dispossession section of the website. A past article in this section from 2016 about my family's history in Paldi prompted an email from a reader and sparked the remarkable journey of the repossession of an end table built by my Uncle Bob Toyota before the war. Here is the provenance of this piece of family history.

## The Journey of a Piece of Furniture, a Piece of Family History

Michael Abe

### Prologue

In 1991, my Auntie Katy (Kaoru nee Toyota) and Uncle Kumy (Kumeo) Yoshida came from London Ontario with Kumy's brother Shige (Shigeuki Edward) Yoshida's family for the unveiling of the Lone Scout mural in Chemainus. The mural paid tribute to Shige's history as a scout leader, starting in Chemainus and eventually building the largest Scout troop in the Commonwealth while interned in Tashme just outside Hope BC. Years later I heard a story that while they were there someone came up to them and said that they still have their family's furniture that they took in for safekeeping until they returned after their forced removal. "We've been looking for you for 50 years" she said. When I asked my aunt for more details about what happened she said she couldn't remember and so this family urban legend remained a mystery for another 30 years. Until recently.



My mother, Ruth was the 13th of 14 children to Shoshichi and Kiriye Toyota living in Paldi BC just outside Duncan before WWII. Her uncle and aunt Daigoro and Hanayo and their 10 children lived next door. The houses and furniture were built by some of her brothers, including Mus, George and Bob.



Ruth, front row, second from right.

Paldi, known as Mayo at the time, was a bustling sawmill community, populated with Indo, Japanese and Chinese Canadians. Caucasians were the minority in this unique community of mixed races. (1) My aunt remembers it fondly as a place where there was little racial discrimination despite a very racist BC at the time. Sadly, not much remains of Paldi today and in 2015 my cousin and my family went looking for the exact location of the Toyota houses, eventually discovering not only the location but two plum trees that my grandmother used to make umeboshi, a pickled sour plum for the middle of rice balls. I wrote about that in an article, [Paldi, The Town History Plum Forgot](#), after my mother visited in 2016 and there it has

remained, on the Landscapes of Injustice website in the Touched by Dispossession section.

Fast forwarding to September 2020 imagine my surprise when I received an email from a visitor to the site.

She writes:

*Hello, my name is Judy Koga-Ross. Thank you for sharing your lovely story. I lived and grew up in Paldi and married into the Ross family from Duncan. Mary and Perry Ross held onto some dresser drawers for a Toyota family during the internment. They had promised the family it would be here upon their return but the Toyota family never came back to the Cowichan Valley to their knowledge. We have a corner table which Mike Ross, my husband, inherited when he left for university. The other piece of furniture may have been sold along with the house when Mary and Perry died. If you would like the end table, it is yours.*

*Respectfully Yours,*

*Judy Koga-Ross*

Excited and in shock I wrote back and several emails were exchanged. I also found out more about Perry and Mary Ross in the book Paldi Remembered, written by Joan Mayo, long-time resident of Paldi.

In an interview with Perry Ross and his wife Mary Joan relates Perry saying, "It all happened so fast we didn't really catch on to what was happening till suddenly they were all gone." 2

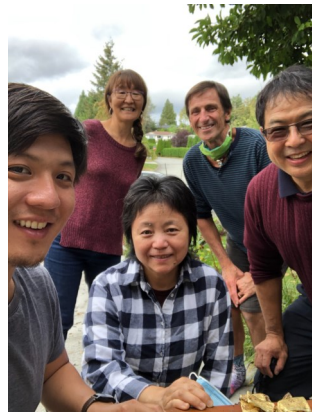
Said his wife Mary, "I remember all those people coming from Duncan offering to buy their furniture, cars and other belongings real cheap. It was criminal. They took their hard-earned belongings for next to nothing. We bought a chesterfield from the Toyotas but we paid them a fair price. It was real sad to see them go like that. 3

Joan added that later the Ross family moved into one of the two large two-storey houses the Toyota brothers had built for themselves. The other one was lost in a fire. 4

The connection continued to grow and so did my anticipation of meeting Judy and Mike and as luck would have it my wife and I and eldest son were on our way to the mainland later that week so we started out a day earlier and fit in a trip to Mission BC.

We spent a wonderful afternoon sharing stories and history with Judy and Mike, who were the most gracious hosts and after some emotional goodbyes we took possession of a small but treasured piece of family history that survived the forced uprooting and dispersal of a family half a country away, almost 80 years before. We were assured by Mike and Judy that it had served them well and was well loved. The sturdy end table built by my Uncle Bob Toyota had weathered much use, and it was accompanied by index cards that said, "Welcome Home!" and "I have lived with Perry and Mary Ross since 1941 ish! I was a bedroom end table all my time away. "

Mission accomplished.



Mike Ross and Judy Koga-Ross L-R Kento Abe, Judy, Izumi Abe, Mike R, Mike Abe

### Epilogue

Talking to my 95 year old Auntie Katy she said that it was likely Uncle Bob who made the end table as he made most of the furniture and also helped build the two Toyota houses. Bob passed away in 2018 at the age of 96.

I then emailed Rodney and Marsha, Bob's children. Rodney said that working with his dad on many hotel furniture projects, that night table reminded him of many projects they did -and he used that style in a few hotels. He also remembers his dad telling him stories about how he'd stay up late at night making handmade furniture in their shed for the community. He'd use scrap material from the mill where he worked full time since he was 13 years old. This experience led to a lifetime career in woodworking.

I pulled the case file for Uncle Bob and there is a line that says under personal property, 1 box of carpenter's tools, 1 bicycle in their house at Paldi, BC, being looked after by P. Ross who is living in house.

Auntie Katy also related the story of Shige being whisked off to Victoria during his internment in Tashme to be congratulated in person by Lord Baden-Powell at a Jamboree being held there. Helen Lansdowne, Associate Director at CAPI upon hearing this story, noted the contradiction of the entire situation. The largest scout troop with its inherent colonial ideals, honoured while being incarcerated by their own country of birth.

And talking to Joan Mayo, she recalls the Ross' and said that she has home movies of young Judy overtaking her son in a sack race at a picnic in the early 60's.

I have a feeling that this story might continue.

[Listen to this story on CBC Radio's North By Northwest with Sheryl MacKay that aired Dec. 12, 2020](#)

1. Joan Mayo, *Paldi Remembered, 50 years in the life of a Vancouver Island logging town*, (Duncan: Cowichan Valley Museum & Archives 2016), 9
2. Ibid., 91
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.



# Learning History Through History-An Interview with Greg Miyanaga

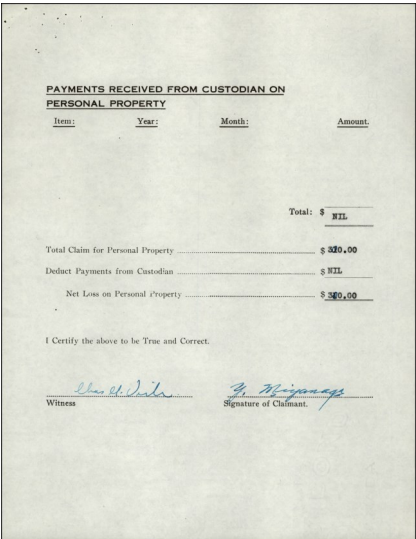
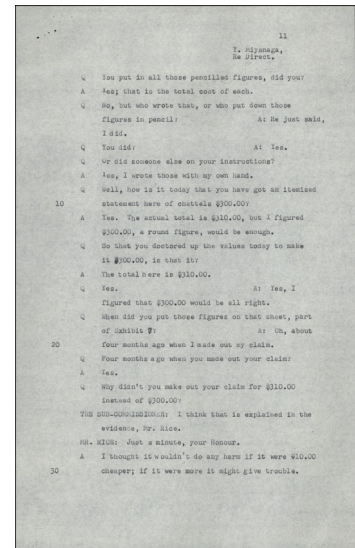
By Matt Billson

My name is Matt Billson, a first-year student intending to study both History and English at the University of Victoria. As a part of my HUMA 295 course, a first-year seminar course that looks at research in the Faculty of Humanities and explores what it really means to be human, I had the opportunity to virtually volunteer on the *Landscapes of Injustice* project for three weeks. Under the guidance of project manager Michael Abe, I had the wonderful opportunity of interviewing Greg Miyanaga, who is the co-chair of the Teacher Resources for this project. Greg teaches at Smiling Creek Elementary in Coquitlam, and he has been developing lesson plans on Japanese Canadian internment and dispossession for the elementary school curriculum (grades 4-6) since 2000. After my insightful interview with Greg, I was able to critically reflect on how important it is to teach about Japanese Canadian dispossession in school, which is a part of Canadian history that is often skipped over.



Greg Miyanaga-Teacher and Teacher Resources Co-chair

My interview with Greg, which was conducted over Zoom, began by discussing his family's history. Before Greg began to write lessons on Japanese Canadian internment, he knew very little about his family's history or Japanese Canadians in World War II. His grandparents were very vague when discussing the past, and the history of Japanese Canadian internment was not a part of the education curriculum at the elementary and high school level. Upon obtaining his family's case file which contained all of the information in regards to his grandparent's dispossession, Greg was surprised and upset to learn about his family history. Greg's grandfather worked for a logging company and also maintained a farm, which were both taken away from him in the 1940s. The case file also provided him with a transcript of a court case (Bird Commission) that involved his grandfather submitting a claim that disputed the amount he received from the sale of his property. In the case of his chattels, he rounded down from three hundred and ten dollars to three hundred dollars to make it more convenient for the Commission. However, he was accused of doctoring the numbers, which made the Commission deem him untrustworthy. While the findings Greg made while looking at his family's case file shocked him, he also found it interesting and insightful to view his family's past.



Greg shared the case file with his family which sparked conversation from both sides of his family. His mother's side of the family, who were located in Alberta at the time, found these discoveries fascinating, which resulted in a flurry of emails and Whatsapp messages revolving around the case file and the *Landscapes of Injustice* project as a whole. On his father's side of the family, the knowledge they obtained from the files provided a clear image of what occurred during these dreadful times, which was primarily unknown as Greg's grandfather was hesitant to speak about his past.

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A story that Greg told me which fascinated me involved a bus trip that he took in 2019 as part of the *Landscapes of Injustice* Canada's Internment Era Field School which visited the sites of camps that Japanese Canadians were held at. Part of the tour involved visiting Christina Lake; as a kid, Greg visited Christina Lake most summers, and he stayed in cabins on the waterfront. Unbeknownst to him, these cabins were also home to interned Japanese Canadians. While he was younger, his parents and grandparents frequently visited there as well, so learning about the history of these cabins was an ironic twist.



Current cottage, former internment site  
Landscapes of Injustice Field School Christina Lake BC

During the second portion of the interview, I discussed Greg's role as an educator and how his personal experiences reflect on how he teaches Japanese Canadian internment to elementary school kids. While the issue of Japanese Canadian internment is deeply personal to Greg, he uses it as a platform to discuss race and multiculturalism in the classroom. He encourages his students to explore their own identity and family history, which helps engage and teach students about the past. Greg's students are always curious about his family's story and how he feels about their experiences, which he always shares to help his students discuss and learn about Japanese Canadian internment. His students are normally shocked and in disbelief when they learn about what occurred since it goes against their idea that Canada is a safe and welcoming home for everybody. Despite his family's hardships, Greg does not find it difficult to teach about Japanese Canadian internment to his students, since he feels that educating them provides a narrative that helps his students explore both the history of Japanese Canadian internment, but also their perspectives and knowledge of their families' history. The lesson plans he has created for *Landscapes of Injustice* have also been attributed to this notion since they explore the idea of what is fair and what it means to belong to a place.

While Greg feels the concepts of fairness and belongingness fit into the elementary school curriculum, he also feels that more serious implications of Japanese Canadian dispossession should be covered in high schools, like the violation of human rights and the racism that occurred during these times. From my personal experience in high school, we talked very little about what happened to Japanese Canadians during World War II, and while it was acknowledged, it acted more as a footnote than a focal point in the curriculum. As someone who intends to teach Social Studies in the future, having this experience and being able to discuss the topic of Japanese Canadian internment has deeply resonated with me, and having the knowledge that Greg has shared with me will result in me being more informed in my future profession.

After having the opportunity to volunteer on the *Landscapes of Injustice* project and to interview Greg Miyanaga, my knowledge and understanding of Japanese Canadian internment has really struck a chord with me. The significance of this project and the educational portion to it demonstrates to me that this is a part of Canadian history that needs to be discussed and taught from elementary school to post-secondary. Overall, working on this project and interviewing Greg has helped prepare me for my future, and I am grateful to have had the opportunity to do so.



"Matt Billson is a first-year undergraduate student at the University of Victoria studying History and English. He is particularly interested in Canadian history during the 20th century, especially Canada's foreign affairs and policies surrounding both World Wars. As a part of HUMA 295, Matt had the opportunity to volunteer on the *Landscapes of Injustice* project, which involved him interviewing Greg Miyanaga about his family's experience with dispossession, along with teaching it in the classroom."

This article in our series on the four claims highlights Claim #2: Dispossession is hard work. It comes from Isabelle D. Tupas, an undergrad at KPU and practicum student volunteering at the Nikkei National Museum & Cultural Centre.

# The Case of Akira Namba

By Isabelle D. Tupas

Claim #2 states that the dispossession required years of administrative work and the complicity of thousands of people. Hundreds of government officials laboured in the dispossession. Thousands of civilians stole and bought the belongings of their former neighbours. Japanese Canadians felt the burden of daily administration for an entire decade.

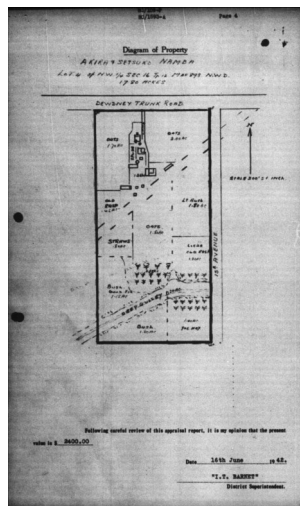
The Office of the Custodian was responsible for documenting the identities, properties, and belongings of Japanese Canadians, but its structure became unorganized as time went on. It was not uncommon for workers to become inattentive in their tasks, their errors ultimately affecting the protection of Japanese Canadian property.

Although a federal commission was put in place to investigate and compensate Japanese Canadian material losses under the Bird Commission, it did little to aid the financial casualties caused by unmotivated agents and dispossession as a whole. The case of Akira Namba is an example of Japanese Canadians adhering to Canadian rules and systems despite the government's administrative negligence in protecting Japanese Canadian possessions.

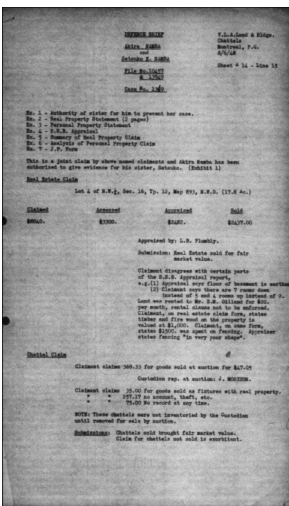
During the early years of dispossession, Japanese Canadian adults were ordered to register their possessions with the Office of the Custodian. In 1942, businesses, land properties, farms, boats, food, crops, and other personal belongings were some of the things Japanese Canadians needed to register prior to being interned or forcibly moved.

Akira Namba and his sister Setsuko registered their 17-acre farm to the Office of the Custodian in Haney, British Columbia. Their father, having legal authorization to act on Akira's behalf in regards to the property, made the decision to lease the farm to their neighbour. In 1942, an agent from the Office of the Custodian was sent to the farm to file an appraisal report listing what was left, and before notifying the Namba family, sold everything on the property.

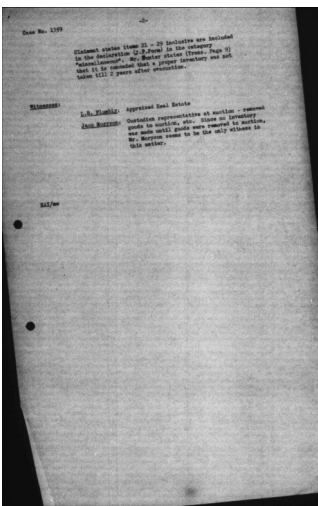
The report, which was filed months after the Namba family had been forcibly uprooted, had listed inaccuracies about the house and chattels (personal items) that lowered their value. When proceeds from the auction were sent to the Namba family, the money was a fraction of the items' true market value.



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In 1947, four years after World War II, the Royal Commission on Japanese Claims or The Bird Commission, provided government investigations and compensations for material losses during Japanese Canadian dispossession. The following year in 1948, Akira Namba represented his family to the Commissioner to investigate and reclaim the money that was supposed to be made from his family belongings.



Though the Commissioner agreed that the agent of the Custodian calculated the Namba's property values incorrectly, the Namba family received limited compensation. One of the errors the Namba family was compensated for was their 120 fruit-bearing orchards (valued at \$180) being listed with no attached value.

On June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1950, although the Namba family claimed \$8000 for the wrongful sale of their family possessions, they received a cheque from the Bird Commissioner for a total of \$2934.79.

The Royal Commission on Japanese Claims (The Bird Commission) (1947-1951) was not enough to fix the insurmountable damage caused by the dispossession policies of the 1940s. As Kaitlin Findlay, Research Coordinator of *Landscapes of Injustice* states from her Masters' thesis concerning the ineffectiveness of the Bird Commission, she notes that "Community histories bitterly describe the Commission as destined to failure, with narrow terms of reference that only addressed a fraction of what was taken."

The case of Akira Namba is not an isolated incident. Thousands of appraisal reports with errors in inventory and prices were filed by the Office of the Custodian, costing Japanese Canadians thousands of dollars in property casualties and unpaid remittances. Although the Bird Commission offered investigations and compensation towards Japanese Canadians, it was not enough to undo the damage caused by negligent agents and other government workers unwilling to correct them.



Isabelle D. Tupas is a student at Kwantlen Polytechnic University in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada majoring in Asian Studies and has just completed a practicum processing case files created from the dispossession and forced displacement of Japanese Canadians in the 1940s. Through her time with the *Landscapes of Injustice* she has aided in supervision of volunteers and has learned about the work of digital humanities. As a second-generation Filipino Canadian, Isabelle is inspired to see the work of immigrants being honored and remembered through *Landscapes of Injustice*.

## Far from Home

By Jenny Manzer, BA '97

Students at a new field school learn by visiting the sites where Japanese Canadians were held in internment camps during the Second World War.

One July evening in 1942, as a war raged around the world, a little Canadian boy went for a swim in Slocan Lake with some friends. The nine-year-old had only recently arrived from Vancouver and was new to the Slocan Valley. Tragically, the boy drowned. His name was Takeo Kinoshita. He was one of the 22,000 Japanese Canadians forcibly uprooted from the coast, most ending up in internment camps from 1942 to 1946. Unable to return to the coast until 1949, they had their homes and possessions sold against their will in the name of national security.

Young Takeo's story is just one that students might discover at "Canada's Internment Era: A Field School," a new opportunity that combines hands-on-learning at the former sites of internment camps with on-campus work and collaboration. The school starts with a week of bus travel, including stops at Hastings Park (once a detainment and processing centre for Japanese Canadians) and former internment and self-supporting sites such as Tashme, Greenwood, Lemon Creek, New Denver, Kaslo and East Lillooet.

The group of adult learners is met at each location by experts in the area, often Japanese Canadians with personal knowledge of internment. After the tour, the field school continues on the UVic campus with group work on creative projects, such as developing a "choose your own adventure" game for elementary students to teach them about the era. The field school is a collaboration between the National Nikkei Museum in Burnaby and University of Victoria's

[Landscapes of Injustice](#), an ambitious seven-year multi-partner research project that seeks to develop education materials; both narrative and digital-archive websites; oral narratives and a touring museum exhibit.

Mike Abe, Project Manager for Landscapes of Injustice, attended the field school with his daughter, Natsuki, a UVic History student, and his great aunt, Kimiko Yamada. His family had been interned at Lemon Creek in the Slocan Valley, and during the tour he saw, for the first time, where the ashes of his great grandfather, Takejiro Toyota, were buried.

When viewing the livestock pens at Hastings Park (home to the Pacific National Exhibition in Vancouver), his great aunt suddenly remembered being there, at age three, when it was used as a processing centre. She'd thought her family was going to the zoo, but then realized it was where they would sleep. Abe says *Landscapes of Injustice* has been able to connect participants who had experienced internment with their own digital records, since thousands of them have been collected and archived as part of their work.

Kaitlin Findlay (MA '18), research coordinator for Landscapes of Injustice, says during the field school she was struck by how isolated the camps were, surrounded by mountains and wilderness: "People lived in shacks in a field for *years*." She'd seen many photographs of the camps, but being there was different.

The new field school, started in 2019, built on an existing tour offered by the National Nikkei Museum, adding the week-long campus component led by UVic's Jordan Stanger-Ross, an associate professor of history. It will be offered again in 2021 and 2022 with 50 spaces for teachers from across Canada, community members and UVic students. The upcoming final years of Landscapes of Injustice project will see their narrative and digital archive websites launched. The museum tour started in August at the Nikkei National Museum and will end at Victoria's Royal BC Museum in early 2022.

Takeo Kinoshita is buried in a cemetery in the Slocan Valley. Findlay says the Nikkei National Museum staff brought a new marker along with them, a memorial for those who died at an internment camp, including Takeo.



Photo credit: Margaret Yahiro

This article originally appeared in the *UVic TORCH Alumni Magazine* Autumn 2020 edition.

## Recordings from recent events

### NAJC Chat Landscapes of Injustice Book Launch

Landscapes of Injustice: A New Perspective on the Internment and Dispossession of Japanese Canadians including chapters by 11 authors was launched this summer. This book reinterprets the uprooting of Japanese Canadians by focusing on the deliberate and permanent destruction of home through the act of dispossession. Editor Jordan Stanger-Ross was joined by guests, Audrey Kobayashi, Kaitlin Findlay and Nicholas Blomley as they chatted about their involvement in the project and how and what they came to contribute to this volume.

<http://najc.ca/landscapes-of-injustice-book-launch/>

<https://youtu.be/CFHteS3UcY>

### Midge Ayukawa Commemorative Lecture

Masumi Izumi, provided a short synopsis of her new book, *The Rise and Fall of America's Concentration Camp Law: Civil Liberties Debates from the Internment to McCarthyism and the Radical 1960s* and Jordan introduced the book, *Landscapes of Injustice: A New Perspective on the Internment and Dispossession of Japanese Canadians* which he was editor. They then commented on each other's work and discussed how some of the material in the other's book might contribute to their own research and fielded questions from the audience.

<https://youtu.be/Ilgsi4RaY3A>

### Wilson Institute Book Lecture series

Jordan Stanger-Ross and a panel of distinguished readers discussed his latest book, *Landscapes of Injustice*, which is the most recent installment in the Wilson Institute's Rethinking Canada in the World book series (McGill-Queens Press). A short book summary was followed by critical commentaries from Constance Backhouse, Maryka Omatsu and Nicholas Mulder. General discussion and questions from the audience were moderated by session chair and series co-editor, Sean Mills.

<https://youtu.be/tUOMlws5FfE>

