Daffodils as property: Settler colonial renewal
and the dispossession of Nikkei farmers in the 1940s

by

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Abstract

This thesis focuses on the forced sales of property, namely daffodils, daffodil bulbs, and bulb farms, owned by Nikkei farmers before 1943 in the small rural community of Bradner in British Columbia’s Fraser Valley. It draws on fields commonly treated as distinct, settler colonial studies and Japanese Canadian (Nikkei) history, by focusing on the workings of property and property dispossession in local perspective. Tracing how the state, specifically the federal Office of the Custodian of Enemy Property and the Veterans’ Land Act Administration, dispossessed four Nikkei families, this thesis analyzes the uneven rationales of settler state policy and practice. Using three property characteristics – definition, value, and boundaries – as they applied to daffodil farms, it examines how the state manipulated the parameters of reasonable governance to reconfigure Nikkei property for white ownership in the 1940s. In doing so, it argues that the dispossession was not an isolated moment of state racism, but a project that renewed a private property regime in settler colonial Bradner (and British Columbia more broadly). This was a regime predicated on the erasure of Indigenous sovereignty and the privileging of whiteness. By highlighting the microhistorical mechanisms of dispossession, this thesis reveals further how ordinary white settlers, predominantly British and Dutch bulb-growers, were entangled in the forced sales and, importantly, how Nikkei people contested the state’s inconsistent logics and practices. Nikkei farmers in the Fraser Valley recognized the contradictions of the dispossession process and testified to the state’s betrayals throughout the decade. At these sites of contestation, the experiences of four relatively unknown Nikkei families mired in state violence suggest that their commitment to the settler colonial property regime was not an inevitability.
Lay Summary

This thesis focuses on the forced sales of property, namely daffodils, daffodil bulbs, and bulb farms, owned by Nikkei farmers before 1943 in the small rural community of Bradner in British Columbia’s Fraser Valley. Using three broad property characteristics – definition, value, and boundaries – it explores how the state pursued a policy of dispossession against Nikkei people during the 1940s by utilizing mechanisms that were often contradictory. In doing so, it demonstrates that the dispossession was not an isolated moment of state racism, but part of a larger project in settler colonial British Columbia aimed at privileging property ownership for white settlers at all costs, erasing Indigenous sovereignty in the process. Centring the experiences of four Nikkei daffodil-farming families in one local context, this thesis reveals further how Nikkei people contested the state’s inconsistencies as they happened.
Preface

This dissertation is original, unpublished, independent work by the author, Nicole Yakashiro. As a research assistant on the Landscapes of Injustice project (2016-2018) and current member of the research collective, this thesis was written with access to the project’s voluminous archive (see www.landscapesofinjustice.com). Preliminary ideas for this thesis came out of a collaboration with Dr. Laura Ishiguro and Will Archibald on an unpublished report for Landscapes of Injustice in 2017, entitled “Settler Colonialism and Japanese Canadian history.” All figures are reproduced with permission.
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To my grandpa, who grew daffodils,

My dad, who picked them,

And my mom, who painted them.
Introduction

In 1951, after a decade of wartime incarceration and exclusion, Haruo Ichikawa settled in Bradner with a dream of “seeing millions of golden daffodils swaying in the breeze in [his] own fields.”¹ He was not the first Nikkei farmer to do so. Ten years earlier, four families – the Imamuras, Yamadas, Yamamotos, and Mikis – had already realized a version of this dream. Since the 1920s and 1930s, these families lived and worked within Bradner’s daffodil farming community.² They purchased property, cleared land, built greenhouses, planted bulbs, and fostered relationships with other bulb-growers. For them, owning fields of golden daffodils on land in which they had invested their time, labour, and finances seemed guaranteed. That is before 1943 when the Canadian government, after uprooting them along with nearly 22,000 other people of Japanese descent from their homes on the coast in the name of national security, began selling their property without their consent.³ By June of that year, all the property

¹ J.H. biography in Bradner Flower Show 1928-1978 pamphlet, Reach Archives, Box: Events, File: Bradner Flower Show, 54.
² The Imamura family purchased property in Bradner as early as 1921. Kazuo Imamura acquired the property from his father (who worked at the Bradner mill) in 1934 to supplement the acreage he had purchased in 1931. He settled on the property with his wife Chie and continued to work alongside his brother, Kogiro. Shintaro Yamada married Kikuye Imamura, sister of Kazuo and Kogiro, and together they settled on land in 1931. The Miki family was in Bradner since 1926; Masao Miki purchased property from his father and uncle in Bradner and bought additional land in the 1930s for him and Tamako, his wife. The Yamamotos, Isamu and Tsunako, settled on a piece of property in 1935. See, Proceedings at Hearing, 10 May 1948, Library and Archives Canada (LAC), RG33-69 (Bird Commission fonds), Volume 6, File 102: Imamura, Kazuo, 6; Kogiro Imamura Interview; Aldergrove, BC transcript, 1995, Nikkei National Museum, Japanese Canadian Archives Oral History collection, NNM 1994-74-149; Proceedings at Hearing, 10 May 1948, LAC, RG33-69, Volume 6, File 99: Yamada, Shintaro (Mrs.), 6; Proceedings at Hearing, 15 April 1948, LAC, RG33-69, Volume 42, File 840: Miki, Masao, 4; Proceedings at Hearing, 17 February 1948, LAC, RG33-69, Volume 9, File 156: Yamamoto, Isamu T., 3.
³ For key histories on the internment era, see Mona Oikawa, Cartographies of Violence: Japanese Canadian Women, Memory, and the Subjects of the Interment (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012); Ken Adachi, The Enemy That Never Was: A History of the Japanese Canadians (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1976); Kristen Emiko McAllister, Terrain of
belonging to Nikkei daffodil farmers in Bradner was sold by the federal Office of the Custodian
of Enemy Property to interested parties. Chattels (personal or moveable property) were disposed
of at auction, individually sold, destroyed, or stolen. Real estate (land) was sold to the Veterans’
Land Act Administration for the settlement of returning white soldiers over the next twenty to
thirty years. Daffodil farming would not be part of the lives of Nikkei settlers again until the
1950s when the government lifted the restrictions that prevented farmers from living in the
Fraser Valley. Nikkei farmers like Ichikawa returned to the area and purchased property to grow
daffodils once more, though not on the same properties the Imamuras, Yamadas, Yamamotos,
and Mikis were forced to leave in the early 1940s.4

Memory: A Japanese Canadian Memorial Project (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010); and Roy
Miki, Redress: Inside the Japanese Canadian Call for Justice (Vancouver: Raincoast Books,
2004). For works on the dispossession in particular, see Ann Gomer Sunahara, The Politics of
Racism: The Uprooting of Japanese Canadians During the Second World War (Toronto: J.
Lorimer, 1981); and Jordan Stanger-Ross and Pamela Sugiman, eds., Witness to Loss: Race,
Culpability, and Memory in the Dispossession of Japanese Canadians (Montreal: McGill-
Queen’s University Press, 2017). Importantly, property and other losses did, of course, occur
before the government codified the forced sales into law. Nikkei fishing vessels were confiscated
in 1941 and, under Orders-in-Council P.C. 288 and 987 in 1942, were sold by the government’s
Fishing Vessel Disposal Committee. Nikkei property-owners, anticipating their removal, often
sold property to the most likely buyer even if the price was far below its value. This pressure,
along with theft, poor management, and the Custodian’s collaboration with the Veterans’ Land
Act in 1942 for the en bloc sale of farms in the Fraser Valley meant that property losses occurred
before 1943.

4 This thesis uses the term “Nikkei” to refer to people of Japanese descent in Canada rather than
“Japanese Canadian.” I do this to acknowledge the complex historical identities of Nikkei in
Canada that can be obscured by being “Japanese Canadian.” Though most people of Japanese
descent were Canadian citizens during the internment era, there were many, including a number
of people discussed in this project, who were not. Their stories are no less significant. I owe
much to the scholars and activists who have fought to be considered “Canadians,” but I view
Nikkei here, as a more historically applicable term and less tied to a particular rendering of
Canadianness predicated on respectability and productivity, i.e. the “model minority”. I also use
the term “settler” to refer to the Nikkei community in the Fraser Valley. In this specific context,
Nikkei people sought and achieved some measure of inclusion within a settler property regime –
interrupted of course, by the dispossession. As property-owners committed to productivity and
who held a vision of settlement that elided Indigenous sovereignty, I have chosen this term
This thesis focuses on the 1940s and the forced sale of property owned by Nikkei daffodil farmers in Bradner, a small rural community in the Fraser Valley. It threads stories of dispossession and possession together to tell a new history of daffodils, property, and settler colonialism in British Columbia. Throughout the dispossession of Nikkei farmlands, which officially began in 1943 and continued over the decade, the settler state used means counter to the narratives of democracy and fairness commonly told about property ownership, rights, and the law in Canada. While the state presented itself as a rational authority operating under the intentionally. It is, of course, an imperfect one. Scholars have debated the applicability of “settler” for non-Indigenous people of colour in settler colonial contexts, many of whom were forcibly brought through slavery or indentured labour. For example, Lorenzo Veracini has argued that “migrants enter someone else’s society, settlers recreate their own.” “Settlers are not Migrants,” in The Settler Colonial Present (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 42. Chickasaw scholar, Jodi Byrd has forwarded the term “arrivant” in lieu of the binary. Jodi Byrd, The Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011). And literary scholar Iyko Day, too, proposes the term “alien” to describe a third positionality. Iyko Day, Alien Capital: Asian Racialization and the Logic of Settler Colonial Capitalism (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016), 19. Certainly, Nikkei people who entered a regime of white possession and who were fleeing poverty in Meiji Japan should not be conflated with white settlers. However, there are other power relations (such as access to property ownership) that complicate the reading of Nikkei people as migrants alone. Drawing on a rich scholarly discourse on settlers of colour, I have opted to use “settler” in this historical context. See Candace Fujikane and Jonathan Y. Okamura, eds., Asian Settler Colonialism: From Local Governance to the Habits of Everyday Life in Hawaii (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2008); Dean Itsuji Saranillio, “Why Asian settler colonialism matters: a thought piece on critiques, debates, and Indigenous difference,” Settler Colonial Studies 3, no. 3-4 (2013): 280-294; and Haunani-Kay Trask, “Settlers of Color and ‘Immigrant’ Hegemony: ‘Locals’ in Hawai’i,” Amerasia Journal 26, no. 2 (2000): 1-24.

Bradner is located in west Abbotsford, on highlands to the west of the Matsqui prairie and south of the Fraser River. It was previously part of Matsqui Municipality before 1995. It borders the cities of Mission, Maple Ridge, and Langley and sits on Matsqui lands in Stó:lô territory which covers much of what settlers call the Fraser Valley. I refer to Bradner as a “region” to imply its historical relationship to the neighbouring community of Mt. Lehman. Before it was named Bradner in 1910 after settler Thomas Bradner (when the BC Electric Railway Company built a railway through the area), it was considered part of Mt. Lehman. See, Reach Archives, Box: Community History, File: Bradner. I refer to the Yamamotos as being part of Bradner’s bulb-growing community, though they technically lived in Mt. Lehman.
exigencies of war, its various offices functioned by way of contradictory policies, conflicts of interest, and inconsistent logics. When it came to managing daffodils, daffodil bulbs, and bulb farms in particular, government bureaucrats, officials, and appraisers struggled to make sense out of the messy workings of dispossession. At the same time their efforts eventually undid Nikkei property rights in Bradner, they secured property for white tenants, bulb-growers, and soldier settlers in the place of Nikkei farmers. In other words, the uneven mechanisms employed by the state in the 1940s were just as much about white settler possession as they were about Nikkei dispossession.6

The dispossession and the wider internment era have largely been viewed in scholarly and public discourse as an isolated, wartime moment of unjust state racism.7 But as a history of white settler possession, it was not an anomaly. Rather, in reading this history of daffodils in Bradner, I suggest that the dispossession process was a laborious process of “renewal” in which the founding logics of Canada’s settler colonial property regime were reinforced.8 This regime, as Brenna Bhandar has recently argued, was and is a racial regime of ownership in which whiteness and thus settlers considered white in changing historical contexts held ultimate

7 See Adachi, The Enemy That Never Was; and Sunahara, The Politics of Racism. A notable example of this view of the internment era as a “dark chapter,” is Lester B. Pearson’s speech at the opening of the Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre in Toronto in 1964, “That action by the Canadian government – though taken under the strains, and fears and pressures of war – was a black mark against Canada’s traditional fairness and devotion to the principles of human rights. We have no reason to be proud of this episode […]”, as cited in Roy Miki, Redress: Inside the Japanese Canadian Call for Justice (Vancouver: Raincoast Books, 2005), 310.
authority over property made out of “empty” or “wasted” Indigenous land. Being racially white was contingent on both descent (European, preferably Anglo in British Columbia) and if one was considered productive, civilized, and capable of improving land. The forced sales of Nikkei-owned property and the state’s justifications for it reflect the renewal of British Columbia’s settler property regime in the context of war.

In Bradner, constructing and maintaining this regime has included not only the dispossession of Matsqui people, land surveys, and pre-emption in the nineteenth century, but also the persistent material and discursive work of white settlers and daffodil farmers, primarily British and Dutch, to envisage Matsqui lands as permanently and exclusively their own. If, as historian Paige Raibmon articulates, settler colonialism was not just a process of dispossessing Indigenous people and restricting them to reserves, but about “making private property too,” then the mechanisms through which the state and white settlers both reimagined Indigenous land and, in the 1940s, reconfigured Nikkei property into white property merits closer attention. These reconfigurations were not determinative or natural, but highly constructed, contradictory, and contingent on local circumstances.

In the historiography of Indigenous dispossession and settler colonialism in British Columbia, scholars have highlighted how the implementation of the settler property regime was not authoritative or even at times in accordance with colonial law. Using a microhistorical

approach, historians Raibmon and Ruth Sandwell in particular have demonstrated how the process of creating settler property, on levels of both state policy and settler practice, was constituted by on the ground “microtechniques” which were often incoherent and flexibly enforced.11 Ordinary settlers breached laws governing property ownership by encroaching on recognized Indigenous settlements or neglecting to improve their lands. And the state consistently undermined its authority in overlooking these breaches. As Bhandar suggests, settler property regimes “require[d] flexibility in the legal devices and rationales [the state] utilize[d] to maintain state control—and possession—of indigenous lands.”12 Though not in the same way, this flexibility was present too in the dispossession of Nikkei farmers in Bradner.

Though property and property loss have been central in Japanese Canadian history, there is little work that engages with the microhistorical inconsistencies of this regime. Scholars Jordan Stanger-Ross and Eric Adams have recently examined the betrayal of a legal promise to protect Nikkei-owned property during the war, but have not considered this betrayal as part of a genealogy of settler colonial state betrayals and contradictions.13 Overall, the scholarly historiography on Japanese Canadians has included few local histories and even fewer critical

analyses of property as a core tool of settler colonialism and Indigenous dispossession. Instead, Japanese Canadian history has emphasized the incarceration of Nikkei people, the anti-Asian racism of British Columbian society, and the racialization of Nikkei labour, especially in the fishing, logging, and berry industries. The growing scholarship specifically on the dispossession has, on the other hand, focused on the bureaucracy of the state’s administration of racial injustice. This important and thorough work has laid the foundation for a robust historiography on state culpability and Nikkei resilience, but in the process, has treated property


as a natural default in Canada rather than continually constructed for white settlement in local contexts.

The problem with naturalizing property, I argue, is that it normalizes the logics of settler colonialism. For Nikkei people and historians of Nikkei history, property has served as a category for articulating injustice. Activists have calculated property losses and used them as justification for reparations since the 1940s, in the 1980s redress movement, and even in 2019.17 Even before the war, property ownership afforded Nikkei migrants access, albeit precarious, to an exclusionary settler society. For non-Indigenous people of colour on unceded Indigenous land, claims to property and property rights have often been used as tools of resistance and recognition. Yet, these strategies have not only come short in actually accounting for the depth of state violence, they have also often renewed the settler property logics (e.g. ideas of productive land-use) used to not only dispossess Nikkei people in the 1940s, but to erase Indigenous sovereignty and dispossess those racially, economically, and otherwise outside the regime.18

This thesis then, draws on these historical fields – settler colonial history and Japanese Canadian history – and brings them into conversation with one another in Bradner, once the “daffodil capital” of Canada.19 While a small number of scholars have begun to draw connections between settler colonial technologies and Nikkei experiences, I add to this work by

17 See for example Jordan Stanger-Ross, Nicholas Blomley, and the Landscapes of Injustice Research Collective, “‘My land is worth a million dollars’: How Japanese Canadians contested their dispossession in the 1940s,” Law and History Review (2017): 1-41; and Miki, Redress. Nicholas Blomley has highlighted the relationship between property and activism, see Unsettling the City, 103-104. In 2019, contemporary conversations around provincial redress within the Japanese Canadian community have discussed using property losses as leverage for a settlement.
18 For a discussion on the replication of these logics, see Saito, “Race and Decolonization,” 20.
19 For an excellent overview of the relationship between migration history and settler colonial studies, see Laura Madokoro, “Peril and possibility: A contemplation of the current state of migration history and settler colonial studies in Canada,” History Compass 17, no. 1 (2019): n/a.
focusing specifically on the workings of property, in this case daffodils and daffodil farms, in local historical perspective. In tracing how the state, specifically the federal Office of the Custodian of Enemy Property and the Veterans’ Land Act, bolstered by the actions of local white settlers, dispossessed the Imamuras, Yamadas, Yamamotos, and Mikis, this thesis analyzes the uneven rationales of settler state policy and practice. Using three broad property characteristics – definition, value, and boundaries – and the daffodil to ground my analysis, I examine how the state manipulated the parameters of reasonable governance to reconfigure Nikkei property for white ownership. In so doing, I argue that the dispossession was not an isolated moment of state racism, but a process that maintained a private property regime predicated on the privileging of whiteness. In highlighting the microhistorical mechanisms of dispossession in their flaws and contradictions, however, this thesis also reveals how Nikkei people contested the state’s inconsistent logics and practices. The Imamuras, Yamadas, Yamamotos, and Mikis recognized the illogical illegalities of the forced sales process and testified to the state’s lies and betrayals throughout the 1940s. At these sites of contestation, the experiences of four ordinary and

relatively unknown Nikkei families wading through state violence suggest that their belief in and commitment to the settler colonial property regime was not an inevitability. 21


21 I draw here on historian Laura Ishiguro whose work compels historians to take seriously the “settler colonial everyday”. In using both the daffodil and these ordinary families as the centre of my analysis, I aim to engage with the quotidian ways settler colonialism implicates everyday lives in British Columbia. See Laura Ishiguro, Nothing to Write Home about: British Family Correspondence and the Settler Colonial Everyday in British Columbia (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2019).
Before 1942: Making settler property and navigating white possession

When the Imamuras, Yamadas, Yamamotos, and Mikis came to Bradner in the 1920s and 1930s, they entered a landscape shaped by settler colonialism.22 First settled by non-Indigenous people in the 1880s, Bradner became known as a sawmill and lumber town by the early twentieth century. Land surveys by the Royal Engineers in the 1860s and settler land pre-emptions in the 1870s within the Mt. Lehman region, of which Bradner was a part before 1910, allowed settlers to claim plots of land as their property. Given that the only cleared areas were Matsqui trails, settlers radically altered the region by eliminating the thick bush and forest for their homesteads.23 But even as settlers transformed the region into an agricultural hub of the Fraser Valley, it remained unceded Matsqui land.24 Both settlers and the state endeavoured to erase Matsqui sovereignty in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries in order to construct property in its place. In 1868, Chief Commissioner of Land and Water Works Joseph Trutch reduced the main Matsqui reserve to just eighty acres from 9,600, an area which had covered most of the Mt.

22 For more on settler colonialism and its forms, see Tracey Banivanua Mar and Penelope Edmonds, “Introduction: Making Space in Settler Colonies,” in Making Settler Colonial Space: Perspectives on Race, Place and Identity, edited by Tracey Banivanua Mar and Penelope Edmonds (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); and Lorenzo Veracini, Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).
23 See Reach Archives, Box: Community History, File: Bradner; and File: Mt. Lehman. For an overview of the Royal Engineers’ surveys and pre-emption law as technologies of colonialism, see Cole Harris, “How Did Colonialism Dispossess? Comments from an Edge of Empire,” Annals of the Association of American Geographers 94, no. 1 (2004): 165-182.
24 Matsqui people continued to assert sovereignty over their territory into the twentieth century. At the McKenna-McBride Commission in 1915, Chief Charlie cogently stated, “we [Matsqui] are the real owners of the land from time immemorial.” Royal Commission on Indian Affairs for the Province of British Columbia: New Westminster Agency Transcripts, Meeting with the Matsqui Band or Tribe or Indians on Monday, January 11th, 1915. (Victoria, B.C.: The Commission, 1913–16), 142-143. Notably, at the commission, Chief Charlie also highlighted the role of Nikkei, Chinese, and South Asian settlers in limiting Matsqui access to their territory.
Lehman and Bradner region. Though reserve boundaries did not delineate the extent of Matsqui territory, this moment reflected a concerted effort by the state to extinguish Indigenous sovereignty to make room for “productive” white property. The work of the state, in concert with the labour of ordinary settlers who cleared and farmed land, coordinated to reimagine Matsqui lands as exclusively and permanently their own long before Nikkei farmers began growing daffodils in Bradner. This section traces the material and discursive efforts to create, maintain, and naturalize property in Bradner before 1942. Focusing on the role of the daffodil industry, it captures how the renewal of this regime through the dispossession of Nikkei farmers in the 1940s was made thinkable.

In 1914, making and maintaining settler property took on a new form in Bradner. On a trip on the BC Electric Railway from Vancouver that spring, British settler and horticulturalist Fenwick Fatkin became “convinced that Bradner soil was ideal for daffodils and that he was coming up to make this district a second Holland (noted for its bulbs).” In the next thirty years, Fenwick and Charlotte Fatkin cultivated an industry built around daffodils that reinforced material and cultural connections to Europe. They imported daffodil bulbs from horticulturalists in Britain and the Netherlands, such as the R.H. Bath Company in London, that were freighted

\[\text{\footnotesize 25 Keith Thor Carlson, } \textit{The Power of Place, the Problem of Time: Aboriginal Identity and Historical Consciousness in the Cauldron of Colonialism} \text{ (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 188. Matsqui people continually resisted this reduction. Surveyor Edward Mohun wrote to Trutch in 1868 of their “great dissatisfaction” and specific complaints laid by the Chief – that the new reserve area “is nearly all swamp; that it cuts off the burial ground and the potato patches, which are to the west on the higher ground; and he wishes his west boundary about 20 chains lower down the river.” See British Columbia, } \textit{Papers Connected with the Indian Land Question 1850-1875} \text{ (Victoria, BC: Government Printer, 1876), 214. For more on the creation of the reserve system in BC, see Cole Harris, } \textit{Making Native Space: Colonialism, Resistance, and Reserves in British Columbia} \text{ (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2002).} \text{\footnotesize 26 Reminiscences of Charlotte Fatkin, Reach Archives, Box: Community History, File: Bradner.} \]
with a Britishness and Dutchness embraced by many residents. From the perspective of the Fatkins and other settlers in Bradner, bulb-growing was a specialized type of achievement. In 1931, the *Abbotsford, Sumas & Matsqui News* (*ASMN*) speculated that bulb farming might become the “Keystone Industry Of Matsqui’s High Land Areas” and quoted Fatkin who “expressed his strong conviction that the industry could be made the most lucrative in Matsqui municipality, or the Fraser Valley, creating ‘the most valuable lands in the country.’” Newspapers and settlers highlighted the suitability of British Columbia’s soil for daffodils, contending that Canada produced bulbs “bigger and better” than “their native soil” in Holland or England such that in 1929, they were shipped to the “Old Country […] to be planted […] in public parks.” By the 1930s, daffodil farming was considered a productive and prosperous enterprise. White settlers normalized Bradner as property owned and made valuable by British and Dutch men – a place naturally made for bulb-growing and a reflection of European progress in a settler colonial context.


The annual Bradner Flower Show, established in 1928 by Fenwick Fatkin, renewed the story of Bradner as a coherent white settler place. Writing in the _ASMN_ to advertise the second year of the flower show, Fatkin articulated his aspirations:

> If we could visualise our section of this valley as the Dutchman sees part of Holland, the Frenchman part of France, or the Englishman part of England, we would see a country in the flowering season a mass of gold, of silver, of shades of every description, pleasant beyond compare to the eye, prosperous beyond imagination, and altogether lovely.\(^\text{30}\)

Shows were organized frequently around colonial themes that celebrated the industry, province, Canada, and the Queen, erased the presence of Indigenous people, and sidelined the role of non-Indigenous people of colour. In a show in the 1970s for example, organizers made a diorama of an “Indian village – three large decorated teepees, canoes and all people figures in traditional Indian costume” that represented Indigenous people as both stereotypical caricatures and firmly in the past.\(^\text{31}\) The lack of any meaningful representation of Indigenous or non-Indigenous people of colour was common in Bradner throughout the twentieth century and contributed to envisioning this rural community as an exclusively white settler space.\(^\text{32}\) This was the context Nikkei farmers confronted when they settled in Bradner.

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\(^{30}\) Fenwick Fatkin, “Bradner Flower Show,” _ASMN_, 17 April 1929.

\(^{31}\) _ASMN_, 21 April 1971, as quoted in Bradner Flower Show 1928-1978 pamphlet, Reach Archives, Box: Events, File: Bradner Flower Show, 33.

\(^{32}\) This is not to say that Nikkei farmers did not participate in the flower show once they did settle in Bradner. Chieko Imamura, sister of Kazuo Imamura, for example, is listed as a prize winner in 1930 for her “Display of wild flowers.” See “Bradner’s Third Flower Show Reveals Rich Display of Blooms,” _ASMN_, 30 April 1930. Rather, I highlight how the flower show operated to reinforce narratives of settler colonial progress and attached an idea of whiteness – through daffodils – to Bradner as a place. Nikkei people were not the only non-Indigenous people of colour obscured by these narratives – Chinese, South Asian, and Black people also worked and/or lived in Bradner. See for example, Buller Manuel, “Some Impressions,” Reach Archives, Box: Community History, File: Mt. Lehman.
The stories told by and about British and Dutch pioneer bulb-growers supported a regime of ownership in which white possession was natural and overshadowed the complex realities of this rural place. Daffodil farming, for example, disrupted Indigenous ecosystems and was not by
any means an objective improvement to the land. Matsqui people, too, never stopped claiming sovereignty over the lands Bradner’s residents claimed as their property. And yet, these fictions undergirded a racialized property regime in material ways. In the Fraser Valley and British Columbia more broadly, stories about white settlement – as the most productive and legitimate – reinforced boundaries around property ownership such that non-white people like the Imamuras, Yamadas, Yamamotos, and Mikis had precarious and limited access to it.

At the same time Nikkei farmers joined Bradner’s daffodil farming community, politicians and many settlers in British Columbia were advocating for anti-Asian legislation. In particular, they were seeking to “prevent Chinese and Japanese from owning, selling, leasing, or renting land, or, in the alternative, impos[e] conditions upon their rights of ownership.” This proposal, made in the 1927 Report on Oriental Activities within the Province, warned of the “commercial and industrial invasion” of Chinese, South Asian, and Nikkei migrants and the “evils of Oriental penetration” in both urban and rural areas. These narratives were not new. The idea of the “Oriental problem” had roots in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries when the threat of “cheap” Asian labour to white settlers – a threat constructed out of the structural racialization of Asian people – encouraged the state to legally restrict the migration of

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33 Accounts from both white and Nikkei settlers speak to the environmental changes wrought by settlement in the area, namely the loss of salmon (a key Matsqui resource) in the creek through Bradner. See for example, Reminiscences of Charlotte Fatkin, Reach Archives, Box: Community History, File: Bradner; and Kogiro Imamura Interview; Aldergrove, BC transcript, 1995, Nikkei National Museum, Japanese Canadian Archives Oral History collection, NNM 1994-74-149. Scholars have also highlighted the socioecological impact of daffodils specifically on Vancouver Island, which have disrupted Indigenous “flora and food crops like camas,” Michael Simpson and Jen Bagelman, “Decolonizing Urban Political Ecologies: The Production of Nature in Settler Colonial Cities,” Annals of the American Association of Geographers 108, no. 2 (2017): 563.

34 British Columbia Department of Agriculture and Bureau of Provincial Information, Report on Oriental Activities within the Province (Victoria, B.C: printed by Charles F. Banfield, 1927), 3.
Asian people to Canada on the basis of race. In rural areas in particular, the ostensible threat of Asian labour was inextricably tied to the ostensible threat of Asian property ownership.

In the Fraser Valley, efforts to exclude Nikkei farmers to preserve and privilege white settlement were grounded in local concerns as well as those raised at the provincial level. In the 1920s and 1930s, the *Chilliwack Progress* and the *ASMN* warned of Nikkei people overrunning “millions of acres of fertile lands all over the Dominion” and mourned that as a result, “the white child born today has no future in the province.” In addition to these general anxieties about what historian Laura Ishiguro calls white “settler futurity” in British Columbia, restrictions on Nikkei property ownership were specific to regional issues. In an article from 1923, the *Chilliwack Progress* reported that,

> No applications from Orientals will be considered by the government in disposing of the 12,000 acres of reclaimed Sumas lands, says a despatch from Victoria. The anti-Oriental bar virtually ensures that the south side of the Fraser in an important section will be protected from an invasion such as on the north side, in the Maple Ridge section where Japanese fruit growers have settled down to almost alarming extent.

This ban was notable given how the 12,000 acres were made available in the first place. The same year the article was published, the provincial government began draining Sem:ath Lake, a

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37 See Laura Ishiguro, “‘GROWING UP AND GROWN UP . . . IN OUR FUTURE CITY’: Discourse of Childhood and Settler Futurity in Colonial British Columbia,” *BC Studies* no. 190 (2016): 15. Ishiguro emphasizes the crucial role of children within the “collective politics of aspiration” harnessed by settlers to envision and manifest their staying.

38 “Keep Orientals out of Sumas,” *Chilliwack Progress*, 5 April 1923.
site of immense significance to the Sumas First Nation, a Stó:lō people related to the Matsqui. The drainage was intended to turn “wasted” land into property for agricultural development, what historian James Murton has called a “liberal landscape of individual properties, bounded by imaginary lines made real by law and patrolled by individual property owners […] [and] a powerful tool of the colonial state for removing First Nations people from their land.” In the second half of the twentieth century, Dutch bulb-growers settled on these properties, including a number from Bradner who were drawn to “the prairie [because it] is a former lake bed [and] there’s plenty of sandy soil, which daffodils love. […] it’s almost the same conditions as in Holland.” In this sense, banning Nikkei settlers from property in the Sumas area was tied to their wider marginalization in daffodil farming, imagined to be an exclusively white endeavour.

While white settlers and politicians debated strategies to exclude Nikkei people from the settler property regime, Nikkei farmers in Bradner were settling into farm ownership. Though anti-Asian legislation (specifically the Gentlemen’s Agreement of 1908) was crafted to restrict Nikkei migration, it simultaneously permitted Nikkei women into Canada through shashin kekkon (the picture bride system) who began to raise families and settle more permanently. The

increasing intentions to stay, become settlers, and be “married” to land among Nikkei people became entangled with the acquisition of private property. In the rural Fraser Valley, these aspirations surfaced out of both the want to leave the racist conditions of urban industries (and to preserve independence and community in agricultural settings) as well as Meiji-era notions of individual property ownership as highly desirable.\(^{42}\) Frequently limited in finances, Nikkei farmers purchased properties that were difficult to clear, often peripheral to the wants of white settlers, and available via affordable tax sales, in order to realize their aspirations to be productive property-owners.\(^{43}\)

By the 1930s and early 1940s, Nikkei families in Bradner were taking risks and producing more intensive crops on their property, notably, daffodil bulbs. Horticulture marked a novel form of success and productivity. Its financial returns were substantially more significant than other more common crops according to both white and Nikkei bulb-growers.\(^{44}\)

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\(^{42}\) For a detailed geographical study of changing property ideologies of issei (first generation) Japanese migrants during the Meiji era, see Audrey Kobayashi, “Emigration from Kaidema, Japan, 1885-1950: An Analysis of Community and Landscape Change” (PhD diss., UCLA, 1983), especially 130-36. Kobayashi suggests that though the notion of private property (as commodity) occurred in the 1700s with the rise of the market economy, it was only in the Meiji period that the “idea of individual property ownership [over cooperative subsistence land use] as a desirable condition developed.” The issei generation in particular came from agrarian regions in Japan with a relationship to land predicated on productive use, permanent settlement, and the erasure of Indigenous people and sovereignty. Historian Andrea Geiger has recently traced some of the ways Nikkei settlers mobilized colonial discourses – that viewed Indigenous lands as “empty” – to argue for their rightful place as productive settlers and colonists. Geiger, “Reframing Race and Place,” 265.

\(^{43}\) Doré, “Transnational Communities,” 45. The willingness of Nikkei farmers to purchase these lands would backfire in the 1940s when the state suggested that because the properties were purchased at such low prices, they should receive minimal compensation for their property losses. See Ivan T. Barnet, District Superintendent for the Veterans’ Land Act to Gordon Murchison, Director of the Veterans’ Land Act, 3 November 1947, LAC, RG38-E-4, Volume 403, File V-8-10, Part 5: Japanese and their Farm Properties.

\(^{44}\) Fenwick Fatkin continually emphasized the financial returns of the industry. In 1937, he remarked that “[bulb-growing] is interesting, profitable and independent. People will always buy...
Kittera Miki, along with her husband Masao, recalled in an interview from 1991 just how profitable flowers were compared to other crops. Speaking to the sales of carnations, Tamako suggested they would make as much in a week selling flowers as they did in a year selling daikon.\(^{45}\) Kogiro Imamura, the brother of Kazuo Imamura and Kikuye Imamura Yamada, also emphasized that horticultural farming with his brother in Bradner was “a lot better than berries or you know, asparagus and that stuff.”\(^{46}\) In short, bulb-growing was unlike more common forms of labour among Nikkei settlers. Beyond its profitability, it required some wealth to enter the industry; bulbs were expensive and if one forced the bulbs (that is, forced them to grow early) they would need to build a costly greenhouse (both Imamura and Miki did so). Bulb-growing also frequently relied on social connections with other British and Dutch daffodil farmers who, through the Bradner Bulb Growers’ Association, collectively imported and exported bulbs.\(^{47}\) If farming represented meaningful participation in a settler property regime built on the logics of flowers, and what can you grow that will bring such returns from each acre of land?” in “…And There’s Money in Them Thar Matsqui Bush Ranches,” ASMN, 6 October 1937.

\(^{47}\) Haruo Ichikawa contended that in 1951 an acre of bulbs in Bradner would have cost $3,000, compared to an acre of strawberries at $100. It would have likely been more expensive in the pre-war period. J.H. biography in Bradner Flower Show 1928-1978 pamphlet, Reach Archives, Box: Events, File: Bradner Flower Show, 54. It was unique that Nikkei farmers would take this risk as “crops were crucial to their economic survival.” See Doré, “Transnational Communities,” 46. In a more cultural sense, an article on the Vantreight daffodil farm in Saanichton on Vancouver Island suggests that for Chinese Canadian women, picking daffodils was considered a “status symbol.” Though this should not be considered the same perspective as Nikkei people, it does suggest a specific social wealth attached to daffodil farming in British Columbia. Ginnie Beardsley, “Golden Crop for Gamblers … DAFFODILS,” n.d. in Reach Archives, Box: Agriculture, File: Flowers & Bulbs. Furthermore, records of the VLA describe greenhouse work as “intensive” and “highly specialized” throughout the efforts to dispossess Nikkei farmlands, see LAC, RG38-E-4, Volume 403, File V-8-10, Parts 1-6.
improvement and the erasure of Indigenous sovereignty, daffodil farming was a specialized way to participate in that regime.

However, in 1941 the precarity of Nikkei property ownership came into sharp relief. After Japan bombed Pearl Harbor in December, several people supported a permanent ban on Nikkei land possession. In the Fraser Valley, local politicians, namely George Cruickshank, capitalized on anti-Japanese sentiments and the frustrations white farmers had felt for decades about the “invasion” of Nikkei people British Columbia. In 1942, a group called the White Farmers of the District of the Fraser Valley forwarded a petition endorsed by the Matsqui Municipal Council demanding that Nikkei people be prevented from purchasing or renting agricultural land. It gained traction in the province and nation. Citing the cancellation of fishing licenses among Nikkei fishermen with the war, the petition warned,

many Japanese not now farming may turn to fruit and vegetable growing, and egg production, and hop growing, and possibly dairy farming because there are less restrictions to entering agricultural than any other livelihood. And they persist in raising large families. And the Japanese farmers persistently produce more than the market can consume, thus ruining the price to the producers. Therefore we WHITE farmers strenuously object to having our industry over-run by objectionable competitors.

It continued,

The Japanese in our midst apparently, are industrious, peaceful, law-abiding citizens. But they are an enemy race, unassimilable and they maintain a low standard of living. The majority of them are securely established in a small section of the country, thus exposing the white population there to unfair competition and undermining the economic and social structure. Many times in the past our Provincial Government has protested to the Federal Government re the seriousness of the Japanese incursion of this Province, but to no avail.


The petition invoked a racial discourse used throughout the century. It was employed at a moment of acute anti-Japanese racism, but its roots were in a longer history of settler property making that centred white settler possession. Here, the very inalienable property rights said to qualify Canada’s property regime were treated as breachable by petitioners and local politicians, setting the stage for the federal policy of dispossession that followed.

In 1943, under Order-in-Council P.C. 469, the Custodian of Enemy Property (hereafter Custodian), previously responsible for the “protection” of all “enemy” property, sold Nikkei farmlands – including the properties of the four Nikkei daffodil farming families in Bradner – to the Veterans’ Land Act Administration (hereafter VLA) for future white soldier settlement.\(^50\) Though the state argued the sale was to the benefit of Nikkei property-owners, whose property was deteriorating in economic value, records that trace the dispossession on the ground reveal that uneven and flexible mechanisms ensured that the dispossession would facilitate – and renew – white settler possession in Bradner’s daffodil industry. Through property’s definitions, values, and boundaries, I highlight the myriad betrayals and contradictions employed by the state administration as well as ordinary white settlers within the effort to dispossess Nikkei farmers of their daffodil farms in a place imagined to be white property. At the same time, I argue that in the 1940s the Imamuras, Yamadas, Yamamotos, and Mikis were not simply witnesses to these inconsistent strategies, but actively challenged the regime they were mired within.

\(^{50}\) The Custodian took different measures to dispossess farmlands than it did urban properties. Where urban real estate was sold on the market, agricultural property was preserved for conveyance to the Veterans’ Land Act. For a study of urban sales, see Jordan Stanger-Ross, “Suspect Properties.”
Definition: The difficulty of daffodils

Shintaro and Kikuye Imamura Yamada owned one of 769 agricultural properties and four bulb farms sold to VLA in 1943. They had settled on about forty-five acres in Bradner in 1931 and over the next decade, had cleared “about 20 acres […] mostly by hard labour” and raised a family.51 By 1942, when the federal government seized the property, the farm contained about two acres of daffodil bulbs. Fenwick Fatkin – tasked with supplying the state with information on bulb properties – called their farm “one of the show places around Bradner.”52 The Yamada farm was perfectly legible as a productive property before 1942. But in the bureaucracy of dispossession, daffodil farms were much more difficult to define. This section traces the contours of these difficulties. Examining the inconsistencies in state definitions of daffodils and bulbs throughout the 1940s in Bradner, it analyzes how state definitions of bulbs – as either immovable or moveable property – revealed state contradictions and the local contingencies of property logics. Rather than a stable legal category, government offices and officials unevenly constructed, manipulated, and employed private property definitions to serve its interests.

Though formalized in 1943, the dispossession of Nikkei bulb farms had begun as soon as the state required farmers to register and abandon their property in 1942. Under the pressures of the impending incarceration, many Nikkei property-owners arranged hasty sales and leases with neighbours. Kikuye Imamura Yamada, for example, signed a lease with fellow bulb-grower John Dospital on 15 April 1942, just two weeks before her forced uprooting; her husband, Shintaro had already been separated from the family and shipped to a work camp under the government’s

51 Proceedings at Hearing, 10 May 1948, LAC, RG33-69, Volume 6, File 99: Yamada, Shintaro (Mrs.), 7.
52 Fenwick Fatkin testimony, 1 February 1949, LAC, RG33-69, Volume 77, File: General Evidence, February 1 to February 4, 1949, 1552.
orders. The Custodian took over Nikkei farms within these contrived conditions, yet acted as an expert authority, collecting information about real estate and chattel property in terms they defined. Officials instructed Nikkei property-owners to fill out forms which recorded possessions left with the Custodian to protect the state from future legal challenges. In short, the state systematically dispossessed Nikkei property by first defining it.

But on the ground, officials defined property in less than authoritative terms. When Kikuye Imamura Yamada registered with an official in April of 1942, not only was “[she] was not given any opportunity to read the JP form before being asked to sign it,” but “at the time she signed the [Japanese Property] form she told the person taking it she wanted to give a detailed inventory of all items, but they said not to bother as it was too much trouble to type.” That the Yamadas’ property was noted by the state as both accurately defined and “too much trouble to type” exemplifies the types of contradictions laden within the state’s mismanagement of Nikkei property.

Inconsistencies were revealing when it came to defining daffodils as either real estate or chattel property. In general, the Custodian arranged for the sale of real estate to the VLA separate from chattels sold through public auction. This binary distinction aimed to simplify what was a convoluted process. Yet, this approach did not account for the ways daffodil bulbs

54 Proceedings at Hearing, 10 May 1948, LAC, RG33-69, Volume 6, File 99: Yamada, Shintaro (Mrs.), 17.
55 Nicholas Blomley and Kaitlin Findlay have recently explored the state technologies of dispossession as they related to chattels. Nicholas Blomley and Kaitlin Findlay, “(De)valuation: The state management of Japanese Canadian personal property in the 1940s” (forthcoming chapter).
transgressed these categories. Unlike less moveable items like strawberry plants and buildings, which both the VLA and the Custodian agreed would be sold as part of the land, the state did not recognize or prepare for the fact that daffodil bulbs were simultaneously landed and moveable. As crops, bulbs only remained in the ground for a period, after which they were uprooted and dried, sometimes sold or exported, treated, and then replanted (see Figure 3). When examined more closely, bulbs could be considered both real estate and chattel property, or something different altogether.

Figure 3: Bulb-growers digging daffodil bulbs for cleaning, sorting, and shipment, ca. 1950. © The Reach. Reproduced with the permission of The Reach (2019). Source: The Reach P4706.
Government representatives were indecisive and ignorant when it came to defining daffodils. They lacked agricultural knowledge specific to bulb handling, a lack that Nikkei farmers noticed. It was first brought to the Custodian’s attention when Isamu and Tsunako Yamamoto wrote the Custodian from Oyama, BC in 1943 requesting that more of their money be disbursed to them. Beginning in February and continuing over the year, the Yamamotos expressed their “desperate” and “dire need” of funds. Unaware that their bulbs had already been sold to the VLA in June 1943, Isamu Yamamoto requested that the Custodian send the daffodil bulbs he left on their property to his family in Oyama. After asking for their monthly disbursement of $100 which was late to arrive in September 1943, he wrote: “I would like to obtain permission to draw the daffodils here [Oyama], from my farm at Mt. Lehman [next to Bradner], for we must have it to keep the family going.” He penned another letter two weeks later in early October refusing the sale of his property and again asking for his bulbs:

In reply to your letter about selling my land. I am a member of the association formed by evacuated Japanese Property Owners who formed a compound body through which to protect against land ask. I […] would like you to discuss such matters with Messrs. Norris and MacLennan who are the lawyers for the association. Twice I sent a letter to you asking who was to pay the taxes for this year and if you could get my daffodils and tulips from Mt. Lehman here, Oyama. May I request once more to have you send last month's (Sept) cheque ($100) and this month's cheque (Oct $100).

56 Isamu Yamamoto to R.D. Richardson (Farm Department, Custodian), 22 February 1943; T. Yamamoto to Custodian, 21 April 1943; Isamu Yamamoto to Custodian, 17 May 1943, LAC, RG117, File 13385: Yamamoto, Isamu T., Microfilm reel C-9422.
57 Isamu Yamamoto to Custodian, 21 September 1943, LAC, RG117, File 13385, C-9422.
58 Isamu Yamamoto to Custodian, 5 October 1943, LAC, RG117, File 13385, C-9422. Also see, Adams and Stanger-Ross, “Promises of Law,” for more on the legal efforts of the Amalgamated Property Owners’ Association, represented by lawyers Norris and MacLennan in 1943 and 1944. They brought their case – that the dispossession was unconstitutional – to the Exchequer Court in *Nakashima v Canada*. Despite state promises to “protect” Nikkei-owned property, the Court ultimately dismissed their case.
The Custodian briefly considered the request. The office inquired with the VLA as to whether or not the bulbs could be collected from the property in the VLA’s possession, noting “if they are not dug this fall, [they] will spoil” (a concern raised only after Yamamoto’s requests). In the end, they denied permission to remove the bulbs, taking

the position that he [the Director of the VLA] cannot accede to the bulbs being removed or being treated as chattels and therefore removeable. […] Under the circumstances it would appear to me [the VLA’s legal advisor] that you [the Custodian] will have to refuse the request of Mr. Yamamoto as to accede to his request would open the door to a great number of applications which, in my opinion, would not be warranted from a legal aspect.

Their decision came out of concerns from earlier in 1943 about chattel property. Under local pressures to manage vacant farms in the absence of Nikkei farmers and white soldier settlers (for whom the lands were pre-emptively purchased), both the VLA and Custodian identified a need that chattels could fill. As properties deteriorated, the VLA was anxious to secure tenancies to increase productivity on the farms. A key strategy for establishing white tenants on the properties until soldier settlers returned was creating favourable conditions for them. Chattels would be key in doing so. The VLA suggested that by guaranteeing tenants the benefits of Nikkei chattels left on the properties, they could incentivize renters to care for the properties and thus, solve the issue of poorly managed estates. Only months before

59 R.D. Richardson to A.G. Duncan Crux (legal advisor for Custodian), 15 October 1943, LAC, RG117, File 13385, C-9422.
60 A.G. Duncan Crux to F.G. Shears (Custodian), October 20, 1943, LAC, RG117, File 13385, C-9422.
61 In 1942, the VLA had been hesitant about including chattels in the leases. It is likely they shifted their position due to local dissent about property conditions and the dissatisfaction among tenants who had taken over Nikkei farms. By 1943, chattels seemed the best option for appeasing tenants. It is notable that the 1942 discussions about leases occurred nearly a year before the policy of dispossession was official. See LAC, RG38-E-4 (Veterans’ Land Act fonds), Volume 403, File V-8-10, Part 2: Japanese and their Farm Properties.
Yamamoto’s request, daffodil bulbs were considered part of this group of moveable chattels and not part of the land as the VLA’s legal advisor later implied. The Custodian ensured that, given their legal responsibility to Nikkei property owners, they would “have the right to enter on the land [in the possession of the VLA] to dispose of the chattels in such a way as may be determined upon.”

Daffodil bulbs were relegated for tenants’ use to the detriment of Nikkei daffodil farmers who never consented to their sale in the first place. In the case of H.J. Konrad, who leased the Imamura property in Bradner, the state’s incentive worked; Konrad leased the property and sold Imamura’s bulbs as chattel property. He provided only 25% of his proceeds to the government for disbursement to the Imamuras and established himself as a bulb-grower in Bradner in the process.

The state’s inconsistent treatment of bulbs as moveable or immovable property reflected the lengths the state would go to protect themselves and white settler concerns above those of Nikkei settlers. In Yamamoto’s case, the state’s position suggested it was easier to move 22,000 Nikkei people into sites throughout Canada and Japan than it was to move daffodil bulbs. They argued it would set a dangerous precedent; if they defined the bulbs as chattels when requested by Nikkei farmers (though they had not long before), they might be expected to release other

63 A. Berner, Chief Inspector for the VLA, Memorandum re: Japanese Lands – Bulb Farms, LAC, RG38-E-4, Volume 403, File V-8-10, Part 4: Japanese and their Farm Properties; see also Harvey and Marjorie Konrad biography in Bradner Flower Show 1928-1978 pamphlet, Reach Archives, Box: Events, File: Bradner Flower Show, 55.
64 Barnet made this explicit comparison in 1942 when describing the labour involved in dispossession in the Fraser Valley: “City people little realise that the handling of farm lands goes on indefinitely, whereas there is finality to the moving of 25,000 people or the sale of a thousand fishing boats.” Barnet to Murchison, 8 July 1942, LAC, RG38-E-4, Volume 403, File V-8-10, Part 1: Japanese and their Farm Properties.
crops on properties reserved for white settlers. In short, chattel property policy was contingent on changing local circumstances and state objectives of securing white settlement. That people like the Yamamotos were forced to be financially reliant on the state who withheld their moveable property was just one consequence of those objectives.

Five years later, the problem of classifying daffodils surfaced once again, but this time in legal proceedings. From 1947 to 1951, under pressure from the public and the Nikkei community, the Royal Commission on Japanese Claims (also known as the Bird Commission) offered an avenue for Nikkei property-owners who were financially able (only about 1500 of 22,000) to present claims for monetary losses incurred due to the forced sales of their property. In the end, the commission served only as a political manoeuvre and instrument of state betrayal. Its limited terms of reference and negligible reparations allowed the state to both gesture at compensation while evading full responsibility for Nikkei property losses. Despite, or perhaps because of its flaws, it was also a telling site of contestation among Nikkei claimants, lawyers, and state representatives that exposed crucial inconsistencies within state definitions of property.

65 Bulbs presented such distinct issues that the Bird Commission dealt with daffodil and bulb farms as a special category. See, Henry Irvine Bird, Memorandum of Sales of Farm Properties Developed for Bulb Production, 29 December 1949, LAC, RG117, Volume 2818, File 55908, Part 7: Japanese Property Claims Commission.
66 For more on the Bird Commission’s limitations, see Miki, Redress, especially chapter 5; Kaitlin Findlay, “The Bird Commission, Japanese Canadians, and the Challenge of Reparations in the Wake of State Violence” (MA thesis, University of Victoria, 2017). Thanks also to Will Archibald for highlighting how Glenn McPherson, the bureaucrat who penned the dispossession policy for the Custodian, informed the proceedings of the Bird Commission. This conflict of interest had a hand in ensuring that the labour of the state’s defense would be minimized throughout the commission by dividing claims into categories (e.g. bulb farms). See Glenn McPherson, “Report re Japanese Property Claims Commission,” UBC Rare Books and Special Collections, Glenn McPherson fonds, Box 2, File 2-7: Correspondence.
At the commission, the state’s counsel argued that bulbs owned by Nikkei farmers in Bradner were chattels, not real property – a complete reversal from what the VLA told Yamamoto in 1943. Within the parameters of the commission, if the state defined the bulbs as chattels rather than real estate they could escape culpability for the bulbs’ deterioration after the sale of farmlands in 1943. However, in his hearing on 10 May 1948, Kazuo Imamura challenged this position. He laid out the conflicting definitions the Custodian applied to bulbs and referenced the office’s slippery logics:

As far as I am aware the land was sold to the VLA with all my plants in the ground, including my bulbs. Subsequently, nearly two years after the sale, the Custodian received an adjustment on the bulbs which was credited to me. It appears that the Custodian would now like to treat the bulbs as chattels, the bulbs having deteriorated after the sale of my land, however, he sold them as part of the land and I claim they added to the value of the land at the date of sale. My estimate of the value includes the bulbs as adding to the value of the land.67

In other words, because the bulbs were treated as part of the land when it passed hands to the VLA and were ignored by appraisers as adding value to the real estate, Nikkei claimants had a case to make for their losses. Kikuye Imamura Yamada furthered her brother’s argument in her own family’s testimony on the same day in Kamloops, BC. She stressed that, “the Custodian sold the land with the bulbs in the ground and treated them in the same category as strawberries and other fruit plants. The fact that he subsequently dug up the bulbs and sold them and credited the sale price of $225.00 to our account does not make the bulbs chattels.”68

Not the land itself, but rooted in the earth, daffodil bulbs were a paradox that led to glaring policy contradictions. But these contradictions were not inevitable; rather, they were

results of decisions and manipulations, large and small, that were made according to what was most strategic for the Custodian and the VLA. They emerged out of conflicting logics of federal offices: the VLA, who argued that “the bulbs were included in the sale [and of benefit for VLA tenants and future soldier settlers],” and the Custodian who contradictorily refused to send Yamamoto his daffodils and claimed “the bulbs were of the nature of chattels for commercial stock and not included in the sale.” They too were influenced by locals who saw Nikkei-owned bulbs as personal opportunity.

Fluctuating between categories of real estate or chattel, the state defined and redefined bulbs according to what served its priorities in the context of dispossession. At the same time that the state grounded its authority in the narrative that property was “common sense” in a settler colonial context, it constantly undermined its own logics. In doing so, administrators regularly reconfigured property’s parameters to evade responsibility for the harms endured by Nikkei families like the Yamamotos and to bolster the presence of white farmers in the Fraser Valley. The ability of the state and white settlers to enact and capitalize on such unstable definitions tells us less about private property as a dubious category (which it was) and more about how and for whom it actually worked. In local perspective, property categories were not definitive. They were manipulated by the settler state to support its interests and secure property for white settlers as they replaced the Imamuras, Yamadas, Yamamotos, and Mikis in Bradner.

69 Ian Macpherson, Real Property Summary for Masao Miki – History of Administration, 7 May 1946, LAC, RG117, File 4524: Miki, Masao Miki, C-9345, 2.
70 For more on “settler common sense,” see Mark Rifkin, Settler Common Sense: Queerness and Everyday Colonialism in the American Renaissance (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014).
Value: Racializing bulb farms and making white settlement

Like definition, establishing value was both a contested process and key among the state’s tasks within the dispossession. An authoritative determination of value, according to the Custodian and the VLA, ensured that Nikkei-owned agricultural property was accounted for on terms they could claim were reasonable and fair. Establishing value also laid the foundation for the sale of farmlands in 1943 for soldier settlement. The value of these properties, of course, was more than financial. Significant work about and by the Nikkei community has highlighted how economic valuations of property could not, by any means, account for losses of community, culture, and belonging in the 1940s. While influenced by this scholarship, this section takes another approach and examines how the state constructed the property values of daffodils and bulb farms as rational in the first place. More specifically, I interrogate how state calculations of value emerged out of ideas of expertise specific to a racialized settler property regime.

Government officials and appraisers utilized colonial technologies such as map-making to determine what they deemed a comprehensive picture of a property’s worth, and they mobilized long-standing discourses that devalued Nikkei-owned daffodil farms in Bradner on the basis of racial and cultural difference. These approaches were constructed as rational in the Fraser Valley in the 1940s, but they were replete with contradictions and conflicts of interest obscured by the state’s claims to objectivity and accuracy. In Bradner, these contradictions coincided with the direct relationship between the devaluation of Nikkei property and increased valuation, both materially and discursively, of white settler property.

Before the federal government formalized the forced sales in 1943, the state had passed another Order-in-Council in 1942 that set the dispossession of rural lands in motion. Order-in-Council P.C. 5523 authorized the VLA (also the Soldier Settlement Board) to oversee the management of Nikkei farms and as part of that process, to conduct a thorough appraisal of the properties. Officially, the VLA was not in the market to purchase the farms in 1942, but unofficially, government bureaucrats and politicians pushed for the office to gain the properties for veterans even before the state concretized the dispossession in law. According to Director of the VLA, Gordon Murchison, P.C. 5523 was arranged “because the Official Custodian had no authority to deal with such matters as leases or sales until the Japanese people concerned had been actually evacuated.” In other words, on paper it was not a law to secure the sale of these lands to the VLA, but to aid the state in managing Nikkei properties. Regardless of their official stance, the VLA had a vested interest in obtaining rural properties suitable for soldier settlement.

In spring and summer of 1942, VLA appraisers visited the farmlands with the intent to record holdings, draw maps, and determine, in their view, fair property values. Ivan T. Barnet, the District Superintendent of the Soldier Settlement Board and appraisal supervisor, described their work as an “accurate record, as far as possible.” Despite these claims, the legitimacy of the VLA’s appraisals is questionable. Government records bare explicit racist motivations among administrators. Throughout 1942 and 1943, Barnet in particular expressed his desire to “maintain

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73 Gordon Murchison, Director of Soldier Settlement to Arthur MacNamara, Deputy Minister of Labour, 3 December 1943, LAC, RG38-E-4, Volume 403, File V-8-10, Part 2: Japanese and their Farm Properties.
[the] Pacific Coast [as] a white man’s country,” a long-held settler colonial myth predicated on securing white possession and the erasure of Indigenous people.75 He insisted that given the state’s investments in incarcerating Nikkei people, “it [was] essential to see the thing [the dispossession] through and these people [Nikkei] be cleared entirely off this Coast regardless of where they were born.” In the same letter, he alluded to unsubstantiated rumours that Nikkei farmers had a “national [Japanese] motive in the selection of their holdings […] Some people think these poultry houses were built to house troops if the Japanese were ever successful in landing them.”76 These were the narratives expressed by the VLA when tasked to fairly evaluate Nikkei properties in the early 1940s.

As a whole, the appraisal process was undermined by these types of biases as well as less overt gaps in knowledge. On one hand, the appraisers hired by the VLA were experienced in the type of work expected of them. B.C. Wormworth, for example, who surveyed three of the four Nikkei daffodil farms, also surveyed lands on the Saddle Lake and Frog Lake Indian Reserves in Alberta for non-Indigenous settlement only two decades earlier.77 On the other hand, this was an expertise forged out of a genealogy of knowledge production that sought empirical legibility of landscapes to make settler colonialism possible. In using technologies like mapmaking to understand the value of rural properties, the VLA employed what geographer Cole Harris has called a “detached vertical perspective,” obscuring more complex realities of place in the

process. With generalized experience in appraisal work but almost no familiarity with the Matsqui region, appraisers knew little of what made properties valuable in local contexts such as Bradner’s bulb-growing community.

It was summer in 1942 by the time appraisers visited daffodil farms. When they arrived, flowers no longer bloomed and a number of bulbs remained in the ground; farmers had either left them to naturalize (a process whereby daffodil bulbs increase in size and durability overtime) or had not yet uprooted them to be treated against infestation. On the properties formerly occupied by the Imamuras, Yamadas, Yamamotos, and Mikis, appraisers B.C. Wormworth and G.T. McKay did not inspect the crops, greenhouses, or land conditions with any specialized local knowledge. While both mentioned the presence of some bulbs on the Bradner properties in their reports, they ignored tens of thousands in the ground. McKay’s sketch of Miki’s property was absent of bulbs, almost 300,000, altogether (see Figure 4).

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78 Harris, “How Did Colonialism Dispossess?”, 175.
79 Barnet wrote a number of times about the appraisers’ lack of familiarity with the Matsqui area and the Fraser Valley more broadly. He suggested that this unfamiliarity shaped conservative values placed on the Nikkei properties. Barnet to Murchison, 2 June 1942; Barnet to Murchison, 10 June 1942, LAC, RG38-E-4, Volume 403, File V-8-10, Part 1.
About a year later, the federal government revoked P.C. 5523, which paved the way for the VLA to legally purchase Nikkei farmlands from the Custodian, even if the VLA appraisals – the same ones that overlooked so many valuable daffodil bulbs – formed the basis of the sale price. The sale was finalized in June of 1943, but even before its completion Gordon Murchison, as Director of the VLA, acknowledged his own conflict of interest as both “judge and jury” in the events leading up to the purchase: “my official position changed from that of being a sort of watchdog on the interests of the Japanese, as provided in P.C. 5523, to that of an interest in buying at the best possible price all the lands that might be suitable under the VLA.”

In short, a sale that the state argued was fair throughout the 1940s was negotiated using prices calculated by the same people that purchased them.

The flaws of the VLA’s valuations benefitted the state and negatively impacted Nikkei families. The Imamuras, Yamadas, Yamamotos, and Mikis received minimal to no compensation for their bulbs, some of their most financially lucrative and expensive crops. Murchison admitted to these problems in a letter to District Superintendent Barnet,

> I understand there are four properties on which certain bulb crops were in the ground at the time our appraisement was made and our offer submitted to the Custodian. [...] Having some idea of the appraisal problems involved I would be surprised to learn that any value was placed on these bulbs and simply for the reasons that they could not be seen or counted or the appraiser could have little idea of their variety, type or value. [...] He continued, suggesting solutions to address their shortcomings which included backtracking and treating the bulbs as chattels (which would make their mistake the Custodian’s problem) or concealing the VLA’s missteps,

> I might point out further that the time may not be very far distant where an inquiry may be made as to the value at which these various properties were taken over, and it is

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therefore essential that our records be in clean cut shape. This adds weight to my suggestion that you should either declare, now, that the appraiser did take the value of these bulbs into account, or, in the alternative, the Custodian should be immediately notified that he can remove them and realize whatever they may be worth for the credit of the Japanese concerned.\(^{81}\)

Murchison was right to brace for criticism. Only a few months later, Fenwick Fatkin drafted a report to the Custodian on the poor condition of the bulb farms in Bradner. Critiquing the “inexperience on the part of practically all connected with the disposition of these properties,” Fatkin took issue with the fact that no “grade [of bulb] such as ten centimetres or up [in the ground]” was accounted for by those who handled the properties.\(^{82}\) Nikkei farmers were not silent on the matter either. At the Bird Commission (the inquiry Murchison anticipated), they pointed out flaws in the appraisal process and questioned the grounds for the valuations. Masao Miki contended that “[t]he appraiser ignore[d] the large number of fruit trees and flowering plants and bulbs 317,250, although this was referred to in my J.P. form.”\(^{83}\) Kikuye Imamura Yamada argued that “[t]he appraiser barely mention[ed] that we had some bulbs planted on the premises. These were, in fact, a very valuable addition to the premises. We estimate that we had from 200,000 to 250,000 bulbs planted when we left.”\(^{84}\)

The state’s conflict of interest and inexperience with daffodil farming shaped the valuation – and devaluation – of Nikkei properties. But the appraisers who valued the daffodil farms were influenced too by more insidious intentions to replace Nikkei settlers with white

\(^{81}\) Murchison to Barnet, 18 July 1944, LAC, RG38-E-4, Volume 403, File V-8-10, Part 4: Japanese and their Farm Properties.

\(^{82}\) Report on the Bulb Situation on the I.T. Yamamoto, Miki, Yamada, and Imamura Farms situated in Bradner & Rand, B.C., 14 September 1944 (original), LAC, RG33-69, Volume 6, File 102: Imamura, Kazuo. Bulbs suffered deterioration because appraisers overlooked these bulbs.


\(^{84}\) Proceedings at Hearing, 10 May 1948, LAC, RG33-69, Volume 6, File 99: Yamada, Shintaro (Mrs.), 8.
soldier settlers. At its core, the VLA administration operated for the benefit of veterans’ settlement. It specifically sought out the types of properties that would enable soldiers to be successful and “productive” settlers.\textsuperscript{85} This meant ensuring that the properties were “suitable” for soldier settlement and excluding the ones that were, according to Murchison, either “a very low grade type [or] so highly improved that they are clearly beyond any reasonable possibility of being used for VLA purposes, and the greenhouse propositions which certainly we would not able to use and which are a constant liability.”\textsuperscript{86} In short, the suitability or unsuitability of each property for white soldier settlers determined the scope of VLA valuations.

VLA appraisals were embedded in fictions of racial difference and constituted by the racialization of agricultural labour and property in the Fraser Valley. In his remarks on the Mikis’ daffodil farm in Bradner, McKay noted that the home could “hardly be classed as fit for white habitation.”\textsuperscript{87} These types of descriptions were used to justify reductions in Nikkei property values. In cases specific to daffodil farms, the VLA considered the value of Nikkei-owned and -built greenhouses used for bulb-growing in these terms. In September of 1942, a few months after appraisers visited Bradner, Barnet expressed concern about acquiring greenhouses like those of Kazuo Imamura and Masao Miki (see Figures 5 and 6). He described them as a liability for white settlement,

The Japanese greenhouses are all of one design with a side wall of about 5½ feet to the eave. The tie beams cross the houses at this level, and the result is that the average white

\textsuperscript{85} The Veterans’ Land Act of 1942 was in many ways a response to the Soldier Settlement Act of 1919 deemed a “spectacular failure” for its lack of proper housing and support for veterans. The VLA had specific criteria (financial and otherwise) to ensure its success in 1942. See Richard Harris and Tricia Shulist, “Canada’s reluctant housing program: The Veterans’ Land Act, 1942-75,” \textit{The Canadian Historical Review} 82, no. 2 (2001): 253-282.
\textsuperscript{86} Murchison to Barnet, 24 March 1943, LAC, RG38-E-4, Volume 403, File V-8-10, Part 3.
\textsuperscript{87} G.T. McKay, Farm Appraisal Report for Masao Miki, 14 June 1942, LAC, RG33-69, Volume 42, File 840: Miki, Masao, 3.
man could not work in them standing up straight. The pipes for the heating systems all lie on the ground with the result that the soil must all be dug by hand, and everything done in the most laborious way. In other words, the cheapest thing with the Japanese apparently was labor. They would rather save the last dollar in construction, than put up a plant in such a way that it could be worked with the minimum labor after construction.  

Barnet viewed the greenhouses and the labour needed to maintain them too “Japanese” to be suitable for returning white soldiers.89 These logics were applied to agricultural farms more generally in the valley; because Nikkei farms were built by and for the labour of often large families, Nikkei-owned properties were described as incompatible with the needs of returning veterans and their families (usually young couples) and thus, less valuable.90 In short, the VLA devalued intensive bulb and greenhouse farms because they were a risk and “hazardous in the hands of anyone not an expert in specialized operations.”91 Nikkei expertise and labour then laid the groundwork for the severity of their property losses, contradictory to the narratives of land improvement and productivity that characterized property-ownership in settler colonial British Columbia.

89 The racialization of Nikkei properties as “slum” properties occurred in urban contexts as well, whereby the “greater good” (over individual rights) was cited as justification for the dispossession. See Jordan Stanger-Ross, “Suspect Properties.”  
90 See Barnet to Murchison, 27 August 1942; and Barnet to Murchison, 2 June 1942, LAC, RG38-E-4, Volume 403, File V-8-10, Part 1.  
91 Murchison to T.A. Crerar, Minister of Mines and Resources, Memorandum on Japanese Lands, 16 September 1942, LAC, RG38-E-4, Volume 403, File V-8-10, Part 2; H. Allam, District Superintendent of Soldier Settlement and VLA to T.J. Rutherford, Director of Soldier Settlement and VLA, 20 July 1949, LAC, RG38-E-4, Volume 403, File V-8-10, Part 5.
In the end, the VLA purchased Miki and Imamura’s greenhouse properties as part of the package deal for Nikkei farmlands in the Fraser Valley at a price about 2% less the appraisal value the VLA established one year prior. Though the properties may have lacked “suitability” for soldier settlers, appraisals were so low as a result that the VLA cited the same reasons they had used to not buy the farms as they did for buying them. Poorly valued properties created opportunity for profit. Barnet, who had doubted the value of Nikkei greenhouse farms in 1942, suggested in 1943 that the state “could sell them without a great deal of trouble on the open
market.” Later in the 1940s, even though the VLA had profited off of their low appraisals of greenhouses, the Bird Commission determined their valuations to be fair. While head commissioner Bird recognized that greenhouses were in “tremendous demand” throughout 1942 and 1943, he contended that the shortage of specialized labour available to operate them decreased their value for the market. The Commission did not take into consideration how this shortage of labour was created in the first place: the forced removal of Nikkei families.

At the same time state officials devalued Nikkei bulb farms on the premise that future settlers would struggle to make these properties productive, Bradner’s bulb-growing community was telling a much different, more optimistic story about its future. The war marked a time of disjuncture for Bradner’s Nikkei families, but it marked a period of massive growth in bulb-growing for other farmers in the community. Because imported bulbs were barred from Europe during the war, Bradner became a central, if not the central, daffodil bulb supplier in Canada. An article from April 1942 in the ASMN remarked on the sudden developments in the daffodil industry:

On land wrested from the giant stumps left by a former industry there has been developed by a hardy group of pioneers a promising new industry that is rapidly gaining national prominence after nearly twenty years of fierce struggle against primeval conditions, unfavorable economic factors and adverse legislation. Strangely enough the international upheaval cause by world-wide war is giving the industry its first ‘break.’

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92 Barnet to Murchison, 8 April 1943, LAC, RG38-E-4, Volume 403, File V-8-10, Part 3.
94 “Matsqui Farm Industry Gains Stature,” ASMN, 1 April 1942, 1. Farmlands were increasing in value more generally in the Fraser Valley at this time, see “Farmlands Value Increase in BC,” ASMN, 11 March 1942.
The community told an affective narrative of settler progress and commended the “pioneers” of the bulb-growing community even as its Nikkei members were being removed from it. On the same page was a report from a Board of Trade meeting that “Urg[ed] All Jap Farms Be Taken Over By Custodian And Action To Save Crops.”95 The newspaper did not mention that among the farmers who “fierce[ly] struggle[d]” to establish the bulb industry were Nikkei owners of a number of “Jap [sic] farms” that locals, including Fenwick Fatkin, encouraged the Custodian to take over.

News stories about Bradner in the 1940s emphasized the wealth of the industry catalyzed by conditions of war and the arrival of Dutch settlers. In the spring of 1943, as the sales agreement for Nikkei daffodil farms between the Custodian and VLA neared completion, William Vander Zalm Sr., a horticulturalist from Holland, brought approximately 1.5 million new bulbs to Bradner for planting and resale.96 In addition to his family, several Dutch daffodil bulb-growers followed Vander Zalm to Bradner over the course of the decade, among them Bill Smorenburg, Ted Van Haaster, John Warmerdam Sr., and Cornelius Van Paridon (see Figures 7 and 8). Dutch newcomers were welcomed with enthusiasm into the settler community. In 1946, the Bradner Bulb Growers’ Association even wrote to the Department of Immigration to

95 “Urge All Jap Farms Be Taken Over By Custodian And Action To Save Crops,” ASMN, 1 April 1942, 1.
96 “1,500,000 more bulbs for Bradner District planting this year,” ASMN, 31 March 1943, cited in Bradner Flower Show 1928-1978 pamphlet, Reach Archives, Box: Events, File: Bradner Flower Show, 13. Unable to return to Holland due to war, Vander Zalm settled in Bradner and his family later joined him. His son, Bill Vander Zalm Jr., continued the family business in horticulture and became the leader of the conservative Social Credit Party in BC and the province’s premier.
advocate for an extension on Van Paridon’s visa given his “invaluable” expertise in bulb exporting.\footnote{Jay W. Scofield, Secretary of Bradner Bulb Growers’ Association, to Department of Immigration, 9 July 1946, reproduced in Bradner Flower Show 1928-1978 pamphlet, Reach Archives, Box: Events, File: Bradner Flower Show, 60. See also biographies of Dutch bulb-growers in Bradner Flower Show 1928-1978 pamphlet, 51-63.}
In this context, the state’s suggestion that Nikkei bulb farms were not valuable because there were no specialized farmers to take them over was unfounded. Nikkei dispossession created opportunity for other bulb-growers and greenhouse operators in Bradner, an opportunity of which many white, particularly Dutch, settlers took full advantage (see Figure 9). Fenwick Fatkin attested to the “Dutch men” who were “anxious to get [bulbs] to Eastern market” and insisted that “[t]here was to such an extent [demand for bulb farms in Bradner] that bulldozers and every possible machine they could get was brought in to get land cleared and have bulbs planted.” At the time that Nikkei farms were forcibly sold by the state, Fatkin suggested that the daffodil farms were so lucrative that “nobody [in Bradner] wanted to sell [their properties].”

While the public celebrated the nascent possibilities of daffodil farming in the 1940s, the VLA

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98 Fenwick Fatkin testimony, LAC, RG33-69, Volume 77, File General Evidence, February 1 to February 4, 1949, 1520, 1536.
elided the value of Nikkei daffodil farms in this period of growth. The Bird Commission too, left this value out of its purview in calculating just compensation for the Imamuras, Yamadas, Yamamotos, and Mikis.

Figure 9: Legion members gather with thousands of daffodil blooms on the farm of Bradner farmer, Mike Roche (far right) and his son, Dick (fourth from the left). Dick was a lessee of the Imamura properties in 1946 and 1947 under the VLA. By 1961, he was listed as owner of 28.8 acres once owned by the Imamuras. © The Reach. Reproduced with the permission of The Reach (2019). Source: The Reach P3596.

Devaluing Nikkei properties did important work for the settler state. Practically, it allowed the VLA to purchase hundreds of farms for minimal costs and to carry out a postwar soldier settlement scheme that prioritized white veterans. More broadly, it renewed the idea of

99 Importantly, soldier settlement did not include Nikkei veterans. The only Nikkei veteran permitted to return to his property was Zennosuke Inouye in Surrey after a series of complicated manoeuvres and protests. After 1949, the state discussed allowing other Nikkei veterans to return to their properties if the lands were available and if the veterans purchased them back from the VLA. Mona Oikawa describes these restrictions as “racial limits to the rewards for participating in nationalism and proving one’s loyalty to Canada through military service.” Oikawa,
white property as more valuable than non-white property and by extension, Indigenous land in settler colonial British Columbia. In this context, appraisers and state officials constructed processes of devaluation as sensible and fair. They operated in accordance with the law and hired experts to draft property appraisals. And yet, while the state positioned themselves and their valuations as rational and definitive, a close reading of their actions in local perspective renders a much more complicated history. The state struggled to value, let alone identify, thousands of bulbs. They argued daffodil farms owned by Nikkei families were of less value because their properties were too improved and too productive, contradictory to logics of improvement that have legitimized settler property rights in Canada. They claimed bulb properties held little value for returning veterans, despite the industry’s promise for white settlers. In 1940s Bradner, valuing daffodils was, in fact, far from sensible or fair. It was subject to state manipulation and the prioritization of white settlement even as contradictions riddled the work of dispossession.

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Boundaries: Dispossession in a bulb-growing community

The dispossession was an arduous process. In addition to defining and valuing things like daffodils and bulbs, the state also required information on property boundaries. Whether physical lines on appraisal maps or tacit agreements between neighbours, boundaries demarcated insider from outsider and delineated private property from public space. The state relied on clear boundaries to render individual properties legible for disposal. The problem, of course, was that in practice, property boundaries were not clear at all. As geographer Nicholas Blomley suggests, boundaries are not static in local contexts, but rather complex “sites of interaction” where multiple actors come to attach multiple, often conflicting meanings. In Bradner’s bulb-growing community and in the messy workings of dispossession – where local white settlers, Nikkei farmers, and the state held divergent and overlapping interests in bulb farms – boundaries were especially subject to contestation.

This final section engages with the contested boundaries of farms once owned by the Imamuras, Yamadas, Yamamotos, and Mikis. Rather than any determinative marker of ownership, I argue that the boundaries that bordered their bulb farms in Bradner, like property more broadly, were fictions constantly negotiated by the state, ordinary people, and even non-human actors such as daffodils. While much of the scholarship on the internment era centres the uneven relationship between the government and the Nikkei community, I suggest that white neighbours, tenants, and bulb-growers were also active participants in shaping the work of dispossession. They transgressed, defined, and took issue with Nikkei property boundaries and through these actions, enacted forms of tacit ownership and authority over Nikkei properties

throughout the 1940s. In this sense, it was more than state appraisers and bureaucrats who had a hand in Nikkei losses. Local white settlers both problematized and influenced the boundaries of possession and dispossession.

From 1914, when Fenwick Fatkin first planted bulbs in Bradner, daffodil farming was a collective and community-driven industry that complicated private proprietorship. By the time the state uprooted Nikkei bulb-growers in the 1940s, it was clear that bulb farms could not be dispossessed in isolation from the communities of which it was a part. Though property was characterized as individual and bound in maps and the law, on the ground it was a matter of the public’s social and economic interest. Three of the four Nikkei families were members of the Bradner Bulb Growers’ Co-operative Association – an organization established in the 1920s of both white and non-white bulb-growers that supported new bulb farmers and distributed imported and exported bulbs.101 The association was a site of Nikkei and white settler collaboration within a political environment of Asian exclusion in British Columbia. Though it was led by white farmers, the collective work of daffodil-farming influenced the scope of Nikkei and non-Nikkei relations.102 In 1942, Kazuo Imamura granted Fenwick Fatkin the power of attorney over his property at the time of his forced uprooting. Others like Kikuye Imamura

101 Fenwick Fatkin testimony, LAC, RG33-69, Volume 77, File General Evidence, February 1 to February 4, 1949, especially 1519. Fatkin describes the purpose of the association: “To grow and market co-operatively daffodils and other bulbs, build greenhouses and market the flowers, the product of such bulbs.” Yamamoto was the only of the four bulb-growers Fatkin confirmed did not belong to the association.

102 Collectives like the Bradner Bulb Growers’ Association were in keeping with a wider agricultural cooperative movement in Canada in which farmers, both white and non-white, “developed a complicated web of interdependency within and between neighbouring communities.” See Doré, “Transnational Communities,” 58. For a discussion of Nikkei cooperatives in the fishing industry, see Jo-Anne Lee, Brian Smallshaw and Ana Maria Peredo, “Rethinking co-operatives: Japanese-Canadian fishing co-operatives,” *Community Development Journal* 52, no. 4 (2017): 540-557.
Yamada and Masao Miki arranged leases with their neighbours, John Dospital and Beryl Underhill. These agreements were made in exceptional circumstances of war and displacement, but they still reflect a degree of trust in relationships between farmers and neighbours.

Relationships among members of associations posed a series of problems as the state attempted to implement the dispossession policy in the Fraser Valley. Dealing with larger collectives like the Pacific Cooperative Union and the Maple Ridge Cooperative Exchange in particular (berry cooperatives with a majority of Nikkei farmers), the Custodian struggled to dispose of Nikkei property in the form of shares or other investments in organizations. In this context, boundaries between Nikkei property and white property were blurred. The forced sales would harm not only Nikkei families, but would have a direct impact on white farmers worried about industry losses that could occur because of the state’s mismanagement of Nikkei farmlands and crops. 103

Agricultural collectives of only Nikkei farmers also caused extra labour for the officials. The Yamato Nokai in the Bradner and Mt. Lehman area, for example, was owned by twenty different farmers including the Imamura, Yamamoto, Yamada, and Mikis. As a Japanese agrarian practice, establishing a nokai that supported the needs of farmers and families was common in Nikkei communities. 104 By the time the Custodian moved to compensate the nokai’s

103 See for example, Memorandum re Japanese Lands, Murchison to Crerar, 27 November 1942, LAC, RG38-E-4, Volume 403, File V-8-10, Part 2. Murchison reflects on the “future embarrassment and probably considerable expense to the Dominion Government as a result of the evacuation of the Japanese and the inevitable deterioration of their properties.” See also Fatkin’s report, Report on the Bulb Situation, 14 September 1944 (original), LAC, RG33-69, Volume 6, File 102: Imamura, Kazuo.

owners in 1946, they were living in “four different localities of British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario and Manitoba,” had passed away, or had been exiled to Japan. The blurred boundaries of ownership within the nokai presented specific obstacles for the Custodian. Yet, the problems posed by cooperatives like the Bradner Bulb Growers’ Association were uniquely concerning. For associations of both white and Nikkei settlers, the state had to not only dispossess Nikkei farmers, but had to answer to white farmers who performed a sense of ownership over local industries, communities, and spaces. Throughout the 1940s, white settlers in Bradner transcended and controlled both physical and discursive boundaries that would normally protect Nikkei property from encroachment.

When the state incarcerated the Imamuras, Yamadas, Yamamotos, and Mikis in 1942, their properties became increasingly susceptible to the desires of white bulb-growers and settlers. Eager buyers, like bulb-growers H.G. Lamming in Cloverdale and Langley Greenhouse Limited, encroached upon Nikkei bulb farms by visiting the properties or writing to the government about purchasing bulbs. Even the Experimental Station farm in Saanichton on Vancouver Island, an original site of mass daffodil production in British Columbia, showed an interest in the bulbs on Nikkei properties in Bradner. Boundaries were also subject to more explicit transgression in the numerous incidents of theft reported to the Custodian. Government records note a series of

“missing” chattels on both the Imamura and Yamada properties, among them were new and unused bulb-drying boxes necessary for daffodil farming.\textsuperscript{107} Though these are certainly different cases of boundary-crossing, each demonstrates the vulnerabilities of Nikkei properties to outsiders in the context of dispossession.

The state recognized local non-Nikkei settlers as having authority over Nikkei property and its boundaries such that ordinary farmers had the ability to buttress or undermine the protests of Nikkei farmers. For example, the tenant who took over the Yamamotos’ property, Mennonite settler John Retzlaff, argued that Tsunako Yamamoto misrepresented the acreage of berries he took over and in 1942, made a statutory declaration attesting to his claims. It is notable that Retzlaff himself belonged to a migrant community that was considered “alien” in the Fraser Valley and labelled a threat by the VLA who sought the settlement of Anglo-Canadian men over all “foreign elements.”\textsuperscript{108} Even so, Retzlaff’s word held weight over the Yamamotos’. According to Retzlaff, he was paying for property not present on the land. Though bulbs were not among the crops that Retzlaff took specific issue with, his claims demonstrate how tenants could influence Nikkei lives by measuring or contesting boundaries, even those around specific crops.\textsuperscript{109} In a response to hearing of Retzlaff’s declaration, the Yamamotos wrote to the Custodian:

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\textsuperscript{107} Inventory of Chattels, LAC, RG117, File 14041: Yamada, Shintaro, C-9426.
\textsuperscript{108} The VLA, particularly Barnet, spoke ill of the “heavy infiltration of ‘foreign’ element’ into the Fraser Valley” which included Mennonite settlers. Barnet suggested that the public more broadly raised “[t]he question of prohibiting Mennonites, conscientious objectors, etc., from purchasing land.” See Barnet to Murchison 26 June 1943, 28 March 1943, LAC, RG38-E-4, Volume 403, File V-8-10, Part 3.
\textsuperscript{109} When it came to the daffodil bulbs, Retzlaff claimed he sent two bags to Yamamoto even though the state had insisted they could not treat the bulbs as moveable property in 1943. Regardless, the majority of bulbs were left in the ground to deteriorate on Yamamoto’s property.
We hoped it would be good news, but was worse than bad news, for it was more shocking than anything else. When we leased the farm, we gave what we knew was the minimum acreage. Therefore we do not believe that there was a difference of 1.63 acres. We would like to know when and who measured our farm. We would like to have him send us the number of acres he measured of strawberries, raspberries, and logan berries.110

In another letter a week or so later, the Yamamotos took further contention with this claim, stating that prior to this conflict, Retzlaff had “no complaints” and agreed that “there was at least 6.5 acres in strawberries, raspberries, and logan berries.” Questioning the timing, Isamu wrote, “I would like to know why you are informing us now, after two crops are finished […] This we can not understand.”111 Regardless of the Yamamotos’ rebuttal of Retzlaff’s accusations, the Custodian granted Retzlaff a refund for the alleged discrepancy in acreage using funds from the Yamamotos’ shallow account.

Boundaries – both those drawn to demarcate acreages and those around a plot of land itself – were sites of conflicting knowledges. In the case of the Yamada property, the boundary between neighbours and what that boundary came to signify reflected the authority white settlers possessed over Nikkei properties even as Nikkei farmers contested it. In April 1942, John Dospital, a bulb-grower and neighbour of the Yamadas, signed an agreement with Kikuye Imamura Yamada to lease the Yamada property for the “duration of the War or until further notice.” The document stipulated that he would protect “the Owners interest [and property] with and could not be salvaged. Report on the Bulb Situation, 14 September 1944 (original), LAC, RG33-69, Volume 6, File 102: Imamura, Kazuo.
110 Mr. and Mrs. Isamu Yamamoto to Custodian, 16 July 1943, LAC, RG117, File 13385: Yamamoto, Isamu T., C-9422.
all care” as well as “attend to all the business pertaining to the berries and bulbs on the farm.”

But in the years following, these promises proved fragile. A VLA appraiser noted in June of 1942 that Dospital had expressed a personal interest in acquiring the property he was meant to preserve for the Yamadas’ return. Furthermore, by October 1944, the Yamadas’ bulbs had deteriorated to such an extent that the bulbs’ value was almost negligible. The bulbs were sold for $225.00 to H.G. Lamming when, according to Kikuye and Fatkin’s valuation of $15.00 per thousand bulbs, they had been “worth at least $3000.00” just two and a half years earlier.

When questioned on the damage to the bulbs, Dospital claimed that the deterioration was caused by Shintaro Yamada’s lack of care from years prior, rather than any mishandling on his part. He remarked that “[t]he bulbs have been three years in the ground. Should have been attended to two years ago, but Mr. Yamada did not want to spend any money on the place and it was left to nature to take its course.” In short, Dospital drew on his proximity to and ostensible knowledge of the Yamada property to support his position – that the damage was ultimately Shintaro Yamada’s fault.

In this sense, the boundary that divided the Yamada and Dospital properties signified familiarity with the Yamada property and the family’s farming practices, rather than privacy. At the Bird Commission, the state’s counsel mobilized Dospital’s argument to challenge the Yamadas’ claim. They drew on logics of land improvement and Yamada’s alleged years of

112 Indenture between Kikuye Yamada (Mrs. Shintaro) and John Dospital, 15 April 1942, LAC, RG117, File 14041: Yamada, Shintaro, C-9426.
neglect in attempt to undercut Kikuye Imamura Yamada’s testimony. The Yamadas were tested on the quality of their bulb treatment throughout the commission, but they remained steadfast that they “tended [to the bulbs] right to the very last day [Kikuye] was on the premises.”\textsuperscript{116} In the end, their persistence paid off. They received compensation for their bulbs at the commission’s end.\textsuperscript{117} But even so, Dospital’s role as a local authority is revealing. At the same time the state used Dospital’s familiarity with the Yamada’s farming practices (he was a neighbour for years before the dispossession), the Yamadas cited the boundary between neighbours as a barrier to his knowledge. Though Dospital had been leasing their farm since 1942, Kikuye Imamura Yamada was resolute that he would not have known how they had treated the bulbs in the years leading up to their incarceration.\textsuperscript{118} That the state saw this neighbour as a credible informant at all suggests that ordinary white settlers, unlike their Nikkei counterparts, held a privileged position within the dispossession process that could alter how property boundaries were conceived and utilized by the state.

Conflict, as much as collaboration among bulb-growers, signalled the interconnectedness of Bradner’s community. The relationships among neighbours and daffodil farmers, such as those between Dospital and Yamada (though tenuous), were built on shared experiences of farming grounded in economic and material connections. When the dispossession interrupted the lives of Nikkei daffodil farmers in Bradner, it not only disrupted social networks, it altered a

\textsuperscript{116} Proceedings at Hearing, 10 May 1948, LAC, RG33-69, Volume 6, File 99: Yamada, Shintaro (Mrs.), 26.
\textsuperscript{117} With the support of Fatkin’s testimony, Commissioner Bird recommended a payment of $2500.00 for the approximately 200,000 bulbs not accounted for by the VLA appraisal. They had claimed $3000.00. Commissioner H.I. Bird, Claim No. 99 – Mrs. Shintaro Yamada Summary, 20 December 1949, LAC, RG117, File 14041: Yamada, Shintaro, C-9426.
\textsuperscript{118} Proceedings at Hearing, 10 May 1948, LAC, RG33-69, Volume 6, File 99: Yamada, Shintaro (Mrs.), 27.
shared physical landscape. Properties and bulbs deteriorated and Nikkei families, like the Yamadas, suffered deeper economic losses as a result. But the material changes wrought by dispossession were also communal problems. In Bradner, these changes crossed boundaries. As Blomley reminds us, “[t]he things of property are […] not simply condensation sites of human agency and meaning. They have some form of agency in their own right. Weeds grow, branches cross borders, and fences rot and sag.”119 This was true, too, of daffodils, like the ones once grown by the Mikis.

On 13 April 1942, a week before his incarceration, Masao Miki arranged a lease agreement with Beryl Underhill to take care of his family’s property, prevent trespassers, and, critically, to ensure “that no Bulbs must be dug and sold, but that the Bulbs must be left in the ground.”120 It was not unusual for bulbs to remain in the ground for one to three years as Miki requested, but it was common for bulb growers to lift the bulbs to treat them every year to prevent narcissi fly infestations and disease. For many Nikkei property-owners, arrangements like the one between Miki and Underhill predated the government’s public decision to dispossess and were written with the expectation that Nikkei families like the Mikis would soon return home to tend to their property. Masao Miki’s insistence that the bulbs remain in the ground, rather than lifted and sold, suggests that he anticipated a future on his farm. In a 1944 letter to the Custodian from a sugar beet farm in Manitoba, Miki was outlined these intentions:

We depend upon the BC Security Commission and the Custodian, and we handed in all of our properties which you said will surely kept until the end of the war. We left BC unwillingly, now I heard all of our moveable properties sold at the auction sale; the things that we listed […] You are now trying to sell my land. I wish to keep it in your hand till the peace comes. Please do not sell.

120 Indenture between Masao Miki and Beryl Underhill of Bradner, 13 April 1942, LAC, RG33-69, Volume 42, File 840: Miki, Masao.
He continued, calling upon Canadian narratives of fairness and citing the labour he had invested into his property,

I do not know neither you the time of armistice day be come but I advise you that you do not such violation for the racial prejudice, and hope not repented of your action taking now. Canada is the democratic country and also Christendom. It is evidently contrariety what you are doing now to the Canada's principle. Please mind of our properties which we toilled for many years day by day, also our present poor situation compare to those other enemy aliens.\(^{121}\)

Regardless of Miki’s protests and his appeals to the logics of improvement embedded in Canada’s settler property regime, his agreement with Underhill gave both the state and local bulb-growers leverage against him. As a result of Underhill’s obligation to leave the bulbs in the ground during her tenancy (she abided), by September of 1944 the bulbs were so “very badly diseased” that they had started to cross property boundaries.\(^{122}\) The diseased bulbs presented a new series of problems when they began infesting neighbouring farms.

The nearly 300,000 diseased and “dangerous” bulbs on Miki’s farm defied property boundaries as “pests [began to spread] to surrounding bulb farms.”\(^{123}\) Fatkin, emphasizing his expertise as a “life time bulb grower” and President of the Bradner Bulb Growers’ Association, expressed frustration towards Miki and his farm in correspondence with the Custodian. He stated that “the conditions regarding the bulbs on this farm are entirely the fault of the owner, Masao Miki, who resolutely refused to allow Miss Underhill to handle the bulbs, with the consequences

\(^{121}\) Masao Miki to R.D. Richardson (Custodian), 23 March 1944, LAC, RG117, File 4524: Miki, Masao, C-9345.

\(^{122}\) Report on the Bulb Situation, 14 September 1944 (original), LAC, RG33-69, Volume 6, File 102: Imamura, Kazuo.

\(^{123}\) Fatkin to Custodian, 10 July 1945, LAC, RG33-69, Volume 42, File 840: Miki, Masao; W.E. Anderson (Farm Department, Custodian) to Scofield, 6 June 1945, LAC, RG33-69, Volume 42, File 840: Miki, Masao.
as above.”\textsuperscript{124} In 1945, Secretary of the Bradner Bulb Growers’ Association, Jay Scofield
described the bulbs as “a menace” to the industry and their poor condition as “simply scandalous
especially for [association] members living adjacent to this farm.”\textsuperscript{125} When confronted with this
issue, the Custodian named the agreement between Underhill and Miki as the reason that they
did nothing to salvage the bulbs, even though the state had nulled almost every other lease
arrangement of this nature.\textsuperscript{126} This laid the blame for the damage caused by the diseased bulbs
solely in the hands of Masao Miki.

Locals and officials described the infestation of Bradner bulb farms as not only a failure
of appropriate land-use but a moral failing of Masao Miki. The bulbs, and by extension Miki,
were resented by neighbours and were used by the state to justify Miki’s losses. But Miki
recognized the state’s contradictions. In another letter addressed to the Custodian in 1947, Miki
contested the “unreasonable price” at which his property (including bulbs) was sold without his
consent. He reminded the state “[he] wish[ed] to keep [the property] until we are returned.” As
he had in 1944, he again referred to the Canadian property regime and what he thought were its
guarantees:

\begin{quote}
I am a Canadian. I got the naturalization paper in 1923 at Bradner, BC. I think it is
unlawful that the Custodian or the government would act such compulsory sale on the
Canadians’ property without understanding, and even though the forcing act had been
proceeded in the war time, it should be returned to the owner or compensate fully for the
total loss upon one's property at the later date. […] My old neighbours informed me a few
weeks ago that those over 300,000 bulbs [which he did not want dug and sold] had
almost been dug out and took away from this property. The wartime emergency powers
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{124} Fatkin to Custodian, 10 July 1945, LAC, RG33-69, Volume 42, File 840: Miki, Masao;
Report on the Bulb Situation, 14 September 1944 (original), LAC, RG33-69, Volume 6, File
102: Imamura, Kazuo.
\textsuperscript{125} Jay Scofield, Bradner Bulb Growers’ Association to the Custodian, 18 June 1945, LAC,
RG33-69, Volume 42, File 840: Miki, Masao.
\textsuperscript{126} Commissioner H.I. Bird, Claim No. 840 – Masao Miki Summary, 29 December 1949, LAC,
RG117, File 4524: Miki, Masao, C-9345.
of the federal government are due to expire on or before Mar. 31st in this year, and if we would be allowed to be returned in BC Coast, my intention is to pay the sum what I got from you back and go to the old home and continue the old business. Therefore, I beg to you that let no one have this property.\textsuperscript{127}

Even as Miki outlined the state’s blatant betrayals, at the end of 1949, the Bird Commission maintained that “the bulbs had depreciated to the point of being valueless, a condition created by the claimant’s failure to permit the bulbs to be properly cared for.” As a result, the commission “rejected the claim for bulbs” for $6325.00 (almost $100,000 dollars in 2019).\textsuperscript{128} In this decision, the state maintained it had been Miki’s responsibility, even in Manitoba, to care for his bulbs in Bradner by preparing a lease that could foresee his permanent removal. He received no compensation for his bulbs.

Whether they were crossed or not, the boundaries that lined Nikkei properties were subject to state control, manipulation, and (mis)recognition. Physically, a number of properties purchased by the VLA were subdivided to accommodate smaller lots desired for soldier settlement. In Bradner, the state remapped boundaries of daffodil farms owned by Shintaro Yamada and Kazuo Imamura in 1947 to create more suitably-sized lots for white settlers over the next twenty years.\textsuperscript{129} In less literal terms, the state determined where and when a boundary was significant; boundaries were important if they were transgressed by diseased bulbs but less so when crossed by people stealing Nikkei property. They mattered when they upheld the claims of local white bulb-growers, but less so when they were meant to protect Nikkei farmers. In short,

\textsuperscript{127} Miki to Custodian, 23 January 1947, LAC, RG117, File 4524: Miki, Masao, C-9345.
\textsuperscript{129} Assessment and Collector’s Rolls, 1943-1971, Reach Archives. Notably, most of the lots owned by Imamura, Yamada, Yamamoto, and Miki were not officially settled by white settlers or soldier settlers (without VLA title) until the 1950s and 1960s.
boundaries were more about the uneven relationships that constituted British Columbia’s property regime than they were about determinative borders that demarcated plots of private land.

Autonomy over property and property boundaries was more secure for white settlers than their Nikkei neighbours, regardless of the extent to which the Imamuras, Mikis, Yamadas, or Yamamotos invested in the settler property regime. Though relationships between Nikkei and white settlers in Bradner’s bulb-growing community were complex and often collaborative, the burden of responsibility was faced by Nikkei farmers alone. That Fatkin planted a “real good stock of bulbs” on Imamura’s property anticipating his return and that Beryl Underhill ultimately stood by the terms of her agreement with Miki does not change the imbalance of these relations. Underhill was quick to be exonerated by the state for any responsibility in the deterioration of Miki’s bulbs; Dospital bore no accountability for the claims he made against Yamada though they were disproved; and Fatkin, as the key source on bulb farms and greenhouses for the state, had his hands in every case of property loss among Nikkei bulb-growers in Bradner. In other words, the state’s authority was far from authoritative; it was contingent on local perspectives and actions of white settlers. Neighbours, tenants, and bulb-growers in Bradner were not architects of the dispossession policy, but their absence from historical and contemporary conversations about the dispossession reveals much about who the regime of settler property works for on the ground. Though not in the same ways, ordinary white settlers were just as entangled in the property losses of Nikkei settlers as the state.

130 Fenwick Fatkin testimony, LAC, RG33-69, Volume 77, File General Evidence, February 1 to February 4, 1949, 1543.
Conclusions: Resisting renewal and recommitment

The 1940s marked a time of great change for daffodil farmers in Bradner. British and Dutch settlers capitalized on the conditions of war, diversifying the industry they had helped to create and fortifying it for years to come. The decade emboldened an already prominent narrative in Bradner about the community as a prosperous home for both the daffodil and white settlers. Concurrently, Nikkei farmers faced the acute blow of state violence. The Imamuras, Yamadas, Yamamotos, and Mikis lost their homes, belongings, daffodil bulbs, and collectively, nearly 200 acres of property. The federal government, in concert with local administrators and politicians, implemented a policy of dispossession in 1943 which removed Nikkei settlers from a regime of property ownership they had worked diligently to enter throughout the early twentieth century. This was a betrayal of property rights, as articulated by Masao Miki, contrary to “Canada’s principle,” or rather, the narrative told of its principles.

The dispossession was not only a process of taking property from Nikkei farmers. It was also a process of securing that same property for white settlers and their futures. In Bradner, the state employed strategies contingent on the complexities of the daffodil farming industry to ensure Nikkei bulb farms would become the inheritance of white tenants, bulb-growers, and soldier settlers. Over the decade, bureaucrats and administrators compensated for their lack of local expertise by treating property definitions flexibly. Daffodil bulbs were subject to constant redefinition as the state navigated the incongruities of its policies on the ground. Appraisers, too, managed their unfamiliarity with the Bradner region by acting with the conviction that their

131 Assessment and Collector’s Rolls, 1943-1971, Reach Archives.
132 Masao Miki to R.D. Richardson (Custodian), 23 March 1944, LAC, RG117, File 4524: Miki, Masao, C-9345.
valuations were fair. They calculated values of greenhouses and bulb farms based on their “suitability” for white settlement, a quality constructed out of racist logics. These were logics akin to those that devalued Nikkei farmlands at precisely the same time the daffodil industry flourished for British and Dutch settlers. The state treated white settlers as local experts whose perspectives and desires influenced the boundaries of possession and dispossession. When property boundaries were contested, the authority of whiteness won. In 1940s Bradner, the contest was fixed.

Yet, even in these impossible circumstances, the Imamuras, Yamadas, Yamamotos, and Mikis challenged the state’s logics and actions. Kazuo Imamura, along with the Yamamotos, questioned the contradictions in how bulbs were defined by officials. Kikuye Imamura Yamada called out the VLA for their massive oversight of daffodil bulbs in the thousands. And Masao Miki testified to the state’s illegalities. When read in the wide view, these were not small interventions. Not long after Nikkei people were permitted to return to British Columbia’s coast, many recommitted themselves to the property regime from which they had been expelled if such a recommitment was financially feasible. Farmers including Haruo Ichikawa as well as the Imamuras and the Yamamotos came (back) to Bradner and tried their hand (once more) at daffodil farming. For the Imamuras and Yamamotos in particular, who in the 1950s lived on land not far from their former properties that had been taken over by white settlers, this recommitment would have likely been loaded with unease. In the post-war period, property ownership took on new meanings; paradoxically, it represented both security and insecurity for Nikkei settlers.

The dispossession functioned to renew a regime made by and for white settlers. But this renewal also operated by cornering Nikkei people into a position of post-war precarity where property ownership – including a recommitment to its colonial logics – was tied to possible
redress. However, if ongoing community efforts to contend with the aftermath of dispossession tell us anything, it is that this recommitment has not given us redress to the incalculable depths required. The interruptions and interventions made by the Imamura, Yamada, Yamamoto, and Mikis that peppered the state’s work of dispossession, instead, demonstrate that recommitment to a regime based on the erasure of Indigenous sovereignty was not an inevitability. As it happened, Nikkei farmers identified and resisted the uneven microtechniques that made and remade white property. While the dispossession of Nikkei settlers and Indigenous people must not be conflated, they are connected. The system that has ensured white inheritance in settler colonial British Columbia has taken numerous, unruly forms that each deserve continued, microhistorical, and ruthless critique.
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