INTIMATE ARCHIVES:
JAPANESE-CANADIAN FAMILY PHOTOGRAPHY
1939-1949

by

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Abstract

Anthony Cohen, in *The Symbolic Construction of Community*, writes: "the symbolic expression of community and its boundaries increases in importance as the actual geo-social boundaries of the community are undermined, blurred or otherwise weakened."¹ As Japanese-Canadians were uprooted from familiar communities throughout British Columbia and overwhelmed with the loss of those closest to them, photography was employed to recentre themselves within a stable, yet somewhat imaginative, network of relations. Looking became an act of imaginative exchange with the subject – conflating the act of seeing with the act of knowing. Photographs became "the most cherished possession" at a time when all else familiar had been lost. It is my contention that domestic photographs and albums produced at this time worked to construct, preserve and contain the visual and imaginative narrative of cohesive family stability and communal belonging, despite divisive political differences, disparate geographical living situations, and elapsed family traditions. While acknowledging that photographs construct and embody a multiplicity of meanings, I am interested in the ways Japanese-Canadian albums were employed during the internment to foster a sense of place while internees existed in a liminal or transitional, marginal space. These representations attempt (and of course sometimes fail) to authenticate a seemingly cohesive biography.

Declarations of positive experiences abound throughout the seven family albums I address in this project. Yet there is a double nature to these affirmations. Inscribing "happy times" or "joy" alludes to the silent binary of sadness that is effaced from the images. Representations of state surveillance and poor living conditions are virtually never included but did nonetheless exist. It is not my intention, however, to suggest that photographs are entirely deceptive anymore than they are undeniable truths. Rather, I want to argue that the production, organization and narration of photographs enabled internees to resist being subsumed by fears of persecution and obliteration. The intersection of the photographic image with the viewer constructs a narrative of stability, potentially resulting in a positive experience. Inscribing a positive identity onto images of one's body plays a role in the production of contentment: it is an act which simultaneously elides present troubles and safeguards fond memories for the future, it is a conscious and unconscious maneuver constituting one's personal history. Thus the images not only reinforce a positive experience, but also participate in creating one. It is only when anxieties cannot be contained that representation breaks down. "Intimate Archives" seeks to situate domestic photographs of Japanese-Canadians during the 1942-1949 exile as intersecting with historical crisis and subjective narrative, tracing the possibilities of meaning for both the depicted subjects and the possessor of the images.

¹ Anthony Cohen. *The Symbolic Construction of Community*. London: Tavistock Publications, 1985, 50.

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	ii
Table of Contents	iii
List of Figures.....	iv
Terms and Abbreviations.....	viii
Acknowledgments.....	ix
INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER ONE: The Photographic Community.....	13
A Moment of Crisis.....	13
Stabilizing the Portrait.....	20
Drawing the Boundaries.....	26
Photography and the Production of Space.....	32
CHAPTER TWO: Trauma & Family Photography	38
Photographic Mediation: Narratives Through the Album.....	38
Undoing the Album: Counter-narratives	44
The After-life of the Album.....	48
EPILOGUE: Archiving the Intimate: Photography & Commemorations	52
Appendix of Japanese-Canadian Family Photograph Collections	61
Bibliography: Primary Resources.....	64
Secondary Resources.....	65
Newspaper Sources Consulted.....	73
Figures.....	74

List of Figures

1. J.T Izumi, Photographer
Izumi Collection
1946
Courtesy of Basil Izumi
2. J.T. Izumi, Photographer
Izumi Collection
1942-1945
Courtesy of Basil Izumi
3. Shimomura Family
Kunimoto Family Collection
1936
Courtesy of the Kunimoto Family
4. "June 1945. New Denver B.C."
J.T. Izumi, Photographer
Izumi Collection
1945
Courtesy of Basil Izumi
5. "Tashme Home"
Marie Katsuno Collection
2nd album, page 3
c.1945
Courtesy of the Japanese Canadian National Museum
6. Marie Katsuno Collection
2nd album, page 10
c. 1945
Courtesy of the Japanese Canadian National Museum
7. Marie Katsuno Collection
1st album, page 42
c. 1942
Courtesy of the Japanese Canadian National Museum
8. Marie Katsuno Collection
2nd album, page 13
c. 1942
Courtesy of the Japanese Canadian National Museum

9. Marie Katsuno Collection
1st album, page 23
c. 1942
Courtesy of the Japanese Canadian National Museum
10. Mary O'Hara Collection
Album, page 14
c. 1941
Courtesy of Mary O'Hara
11. "Across the Ocean to Japan Aboard the General M.C. Meigs"
Mary O'Hara Collection
Album, page 35
c. 1946
Courtesy of Mary O'Hara
12. "Home"
Marie Katsuno Collection
1st album, page 59
c. 1942
Courtesy of the Japanese Canadian National Museum
13. Mary O'Hara Collection
Album, page 14
c. 1942
Courtesy of Mary O'Hara
14. Mary O'Hara Collection
Album, page 17
c. 1942
Courtesy of Mary O'Hara
15. "Bay Farm, B.C. Canada"
Basil Izumi Collection
J.T. Izumi, photographer
c. 1946
Courtesy of Basil Izumi
16. Basil Izumi Collection
Album, page 1
J.T. Izumi, photographer
c. 1937
Courtesy of Basil Izumi
17. Basil Izumi Collection
Album, page 7

J.T. Izumi, photographer
c. 1937
Courtesy of Basil Izumi

18. "Memories in the Days of L.C."
Mary O'Hara Collection
Album, page 1
c. 1942
Courtesy of Mary O'Hara
19. Mary O'Hara Collection
Album, page 40
c. 1944
Courtesy of Mary O'Hara
20. Mary O'Hara Collection
Album, page 52
c. 1944
Courtesy of Mary O'Hara
21. "My Dearest Dad"
Mary O'Hara Collection
Album, page 7
c. 1942
Courtesy Mary O'Hara
22. Report of the Department of Labour on the Administration of Japanese Affairs in
Canada.
August, 1944.
23. "Owning History, Reshaping Memory: Through the Lens of Japanese Redress"
Japanese Canadian National Museum Exhibition Installation Photograph
1988 Redress Campaign Poster
June 2000
Courtesy of the Japanese Canadian National Museum
24. "Owning History, Reshaping Memory: Through the Lens of Japanese Redress"
Japanese Canadian National Museum Exhibition Installation Photograph
June 2000
Courtesy of the Japanese Canadian National Museum
25. "Owning History, Reshaping Memory: Through the Lens of Japanese Redress"
Japanese Canadian National Museum Exhibition Installation Photograph
June 2000
Courtesy of the Japanese Canadian National Museum

26. "Owning History, Reshaping Memory: Through the Lens of Japanese Redress"
Japanese Canadian National Museum Exhibition Installation Photograph
June 2000
Courtesy of the Japanese Canadian National Museum

Terms and Abbreviations

BCSC- British Columbia Securities Commission. A group composed of national government officials, provincial representatives and police and military representatives formed to oversee the forced removal of those of Japanese descent living in the "protected area" of British Columbia.

Issei – first generation immigrant from Japan

Internment – refers to the forced removal of those of Japanese descent from British Columbia into camps.

Kika Nisei / Kibei– a second generation immigrant sent back to Japan for their education.

Nikkei - Japanese-Canadian

Nisei – second generation immigrant from Japan

NMEG – Nisei Mass Evacuation Group. An organization formed to fight for their right to remain together as family units throughout the relocation in 1942.

Relocation – refers to the forced removal of those of Japanese descent from British Columbia in 1942.

Redress – refers to the apology and \$20,000 per person reparation payments from the Canadian Government to the Japanese-Canadian people for their forced removal and internment.

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Introduction

In 1942 Japanese-Canadian family photos and images from Japan were confiscated as “evidence” of disloyalty to Canada and orders from the British Columbia Securities Commission¹ forbade anyone of Japanese descent to possess cameras. Media exacerbated discrimination and proliferated the notion of the “yellow peril” in the public imagination through editorials, articles, political cartoons, and photography. From the outset, visual representation became a projected battleground of the War and its contiguous doctrines. Both Japanese-Canadians and their representations were under attack. Despite these circumstances – or perhaps because of them – 1940’s family photography has continued to emerge in historical discourse, private collections, and exhibition spaces.

The Japanese Canadian National Museum in Burnaby, British Columbia is one such arena. In their June 2000 exhibition, “Owning History, Reshaping Memory: Through the Lens of Japanese Redress,” inaugurating their new space inside Nikkei Place,² family photography took on the role of artifact, a guided lesson depicting a darker side of Canadian history. Simultaneously, these representations were framed to captivate and galvanize political action. In the process of collecting, researching and archiving the photographs, the exhibition inspired its donors to revisit their past, to re-tell their stories

¹ An organization formed from members of the provincial government, federal government, military and police to oversee the relocation.

² Nikkei (Japanese-Canadian) Place is located at 6688 Southoaks Crescent, Burnaby, British Columbia.

and thereby shift (again) their relationship to their photograph collections. Photography became the charged terrain between the fluidity of memory and the insistence of history.³

In a 1946 photograph included in the 2000 Japanese Canadian National Museum exhibit, a small child crouches on the deck of the *General Meigs* as it pushes for Japan. The child stares plaintively into the eye of the camera (Figure 1). He is being repatriated to Japan along with his family and the other passengers, although he has never before stepped outside of Canada. Squatting on the deck, the child's serious face contrasts his mother's smile. Strangers stare from the periphery of the snapshot at the photographer. The child, his mother, and the somber expressions of the anonymous crowd have been unknowingly captured and displayed fifty years later. Beneath the well-lit glass casing the images are made to bear upon present politics just as they reference the past. A new burden has been placed upon the snapshot. Institutions seeking to re-write the history books are unearthing the family album for "authentic" illustrations that convey the wrongdoing of the 1940's. Yet family photographs from this era often contain a conflicting array of visual strategies. Few photos capture the difficulties of the times as this photograph from the Izumi family collection.

Basil Izumi, the subject of the above picture and a detainee of the 1942 Japanese-Canadian internment, shared his photograph collection with me during an interview earlier this year, describing intimate pictures of his family and recalling "happier times." By the final leaf of the album, however, his nostalgic mood had transformed, and a

³ This idea is discussed at length in Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Memoire*," *Representations* 26 (Spring 1989): 7-25.

lingering bitterness about the “scabbing wound” of World War II was revealed. As Izumi gazed at the well-thumbed pages, his narrative unfolded: a story at first guardedly and then openly told, a story of longing, loss and survival. His verbal account was mediated by the yellowed snapshots before him. The leather-bound album had shaped the memory of his childhood past - remembrances based largely on the photographs taken in the 1940’s by his father, John Tadao Izumi.

Susan Stewart writes in *On Longing* that the: “souvenir reduces the public, the monumental and the three dimensional into the miniature, that which can be enveloped by the body, into the two dimensional representation, that which can be appropriated within the privatized view of the individual subject.”⁴ Stewart addresses the collision of public histories with private histories, the contest for control over subjectivity and how that contest takes place in and through the personal or personalized object, such as the souvenir and the collection. Working with surviving informants in Vancouver, I have become interested in the cyclical transformation of communal experience into personal photographic narrative, and then from personal photo-narrative into public historical record. How did those most affected by the relocation portray their experience and what apprehensions do these representations betray? How was this traumatic communal experience transformed and understood in the personal photo-narrative?

I use the term “photo-narrative” to describe the metamorphic exchange between the representation and its possessor. In its making, memory, individual experience and the

⁴ Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (London: Duke University Press, 1993), 138.

photographic material intertwine. Expression is fundamentally relational; thus, the partiality of the photographic message depends “upon some external matrix of conditions and presuppositions for its readability.”⁵ Family photography negotiates its multiple modes of meaning-making from a relational position between experience and memory. Griselda Pollock writes: “Representation is to be understood as a social relation enacted and performed via specific appeals to vision, specific managements of imaginary spaces and bodies for a gaze. The efficacy of representations, furthermore, relies on a ceaseless exchange with other representations.”⁶ This notion of representation as a social relation has been crucial to my understanding of memory and family photography.

“Intimate Archives” seeks to explore the construction of meaning in the photograph collections and albums of Japanese-Canadians with a principal focus on representation during the internment of World War II. I have explored the various ways photographs were employed to develop greater stability during a time of transience and powerlessness, centering on an exploration of the visual strategies used to construct configurations of authenticity and identity in photo-narratives. Through a study of these images, I also hope to gain a better understanding of my own family’s history.⁷ Working primarily with the photographic archive at the Japanese Canadian National Museum in Burnaby and with several informants in Vancouver, I am interested in exploring the relationship between the photograph and the individual facing a collective trauma. Chapter one

⁵ Allan Sekula, “Introduction” *Photography Against the Grain: Essays and Photoworks, 1973-1983*, (Halifax: The Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1984), 4.

⁶ Griselda Pollock, “Feminism/Foucault – Surveillance / Sexuality” in eds. N. Bryson, M.A. Holly and K. Moxey, *Visual Culture: Images and Interpretations* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1994), 14.

examines the strategies used to represent subjectivity within the family as cohesive and composed, considering fissures in the internal visual narrative. Chapter two addresses the relationship between photograph collections and their possessors, including the elisions, affirmations and fragmentation in photo-narratives of trauma and recovery. Through the epilogue, I raise questions about the re-surfacing of 1940's Japanese-Canadian family photography in contemporary museums, exhibitions and literature, as the distinctions between public historical artifact and private memoir collide and collapse.

Admittedly, the process of photographically reformulating identities is not a phenomenon isolated to the Japanese-Canadian experience. Richard Chalfen, Jo Spence and Pierre Bourdieu have documented middle class families in the United States and France respectively, and have concluded that domestic photography commonly emphasizes the immutability of the patriarchal family, leisure time, and celebratory moments in life. However, I am interested in understanding uses of domestic photography in situations of extreme crisis, rather than the everyday. Chalfen's *Snapshot Versions of Life*⁸ is a statistical account of American family photography practices in the 1970's and 1980's. His later publication, *Turning Leaves: The Photograph Collections of Two Japanese American Families*⁹ moved beyond statistics for a detailed look at two family collections, but his research did not consider representation and narrativity - two issues that I have been concerned with throughout this work. Further, Chalfen did not address issues of

⁷ As part of this project I examined albums from my family's collection and interviewed my great-uncle, Roy Kunimoto.

⁸ Richard Chalfen, *Snapshot Versions of Life* (Bowling Green: Bowling Green State University Press, 1987).

⁹ Richard Chalfen, *Turning Leaves: The Photograph Collections of Two Japanese American Families*, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1991).

race, consequently overlooking the possibilities (and impossibilities) of meaning making in minority family photography.

Bourdieu's text, *Photography: A Middle-brow Art*, is a seminal work which delineates the class driven motivations and conventions surrounding French middle class family photography. He analyses the sociology of photographic practice and discusses it as an "index and an instrument of integration."¹⁰ Although his concepts of integration and class conventions have been a necessary foundation for my own work, I take issue with his tendency to discuss the middle class as if it is only they who are "anxious" about their class status; moreover, he discusses class as though its divisions were inherently stable and fixed. Bourdieu problematically avoids the issue of cross-cultural integration, a question that has emerged repeatedly in my examination of Japanese-Canadian communities. Bourdieu's distinctions leave little room for the fluidity of cultural identity, wherein contradictory modes of integration, or simultaneous integration into two or more groups, is negotiated within a single album. For example, Japanese-Canadian portraits that affirm familial economic status or material gain conform to Bourdieu's description of middle class photography, yet, the conventions of these images must be reconciled with photographs of Japanese-Canadians performing imposed manual labour or service work that might be considered demeaning or inappropriate in an album that Bourdieu would address. While portraits included in the same album attempt to secure middle or upper class status, photos of labour expose a working class background that contravenes the preoccupation with leisure time that much middle class photography

¹⁰ Pierre Bourdieu, *Photography: A Middle-brow Art* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990), 19.

emphasizes. Applying Bourdieu's findings against a highly circumscribed set of albums underscores the conventional aspects of Japanese-Canadian family photography, but also reveals how any set of conventions is subject to constant flux and dispute.

Jo Spence deconstructs and exposes the power of family photography on identity and psychology. Although otherwise valuable, her texts *Cultural Sniping*¹¹ and *Family Snaps*¹² (co-written with Patricia Holland) are over-zealous in their denunciation of studio photography, assuming all studio portraiture has a negative impact on identity. The problems inherent in this assumption were exposed in my project as the boundary between professional and amateur photography became blurred, or when interviewees expressed a wide-range of reactions to portraits of themselves. Spence's work with photo-therapy explores ways of recovering from individual trauma through the material manipulation of photographs and media imagery. In contrast, my project has examined photographic practices as they relate to collective trauma, investigating the ways that the possessor of an album negotiates meaning through the images, and how those meanings shift.

I have turned to some sources dealing with representations of the Holocaust to gain a better understanding of collective trauma. Of these, most useful has been *Acts of Memory: Cultural Recall in the Present* edited by Mieke Bal, Jonathan Crewe and Leo

¹¹ Jo Spence, *Cultural Sniping: The Art of Transgression* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

¹² Jo Spence and Patricia Holland, eds. *Family Snaps: The Meanings of Domestic Photography* (London: Virago Press, 1991).

Spitzer.¹³ Throughout the volume of essays, the notion of memory as fluid and occurring in the present is asserted. Bal's definitions of trauma mapped against the discourse of cultural memory have illuminated the psychological implications of statements made by interviewees for this project. The conception of memory as a cultural phenomenon – as opposed to being solely an individual phenomenon – has been crucial to my understanding of Japanese-Canadian family photography.

Both *Acts of Memory* and *On Longing* discuss narrativity, the former text dealing primarily with narratives of traumatic experience, the latter with nostalgia mediated through an object. Despite their lack of emphasis on photography, I have drawn on these texts extensively because of their attention to memory, nostalgia and trauma – central concerns in my project. Yet the aims of my research necessitated departures from these sources. To my mind, there is a lack of historicity in both the aforementioned texts. Elucidating the historical-political moment evidences what is at stake in representation. I appreciated *On Longing's* insistence upon the physicality of objects and its relation to meaning - an element slightly overlooked in *Acts of Memory*. Following Stewart, I have attempted to emphasize the materiality of my topic; that is, the ways photography (film and light) produce visual and mental effects.

I have limited my period of study to one decade from 1939 – 1949, which covers the turbulent years leading up to the war, the period of the war itself, and several years following. 1949 marks when the final restrictions on Japanese-Canadians were lifted and

¹³ Mieke Bal, Jonathan Crewe, and Leo Spitzer, eds. *Acts of Memory: Cultural Recall in the Present* (London: University Press of New England, 1999).

returning to the "restricted-area" was finally legal. This period is useful for understanding how meaning is negotiated in and through family photography during times of extreme tension, because the images made in the late 1930's and early 1940's offer a means of comparison with photos produced during exile.

The scope of the project has been limited for a number of reasons. To survey all the photographs of Japanese-Canadians from 1939-1949 is beyond this project due to constraints of time, funding, and length. I have conceived of this study as qualitative rather than quantitative, exploring relational questions rather than statistical answers. After examining numerous archived photos, I have concentrated my attention on seven albums and loose photographs belonging to four Japanese-Canadians. By working largely with intact albums rather than archived individual photos, the original visual context is preserved. Albums allow interviewees to communicate a photo-history that they had personally arranged and edited. This highly circumscribed grouping, while lacking in breadth, has allowed the issues existing between the possessor and the albums to surface. I chose to work with these particular albums (two belonging to Marie Katsuno, one to Basil Izumi, one to Mary O'Hara, and two to Shirley Omatsu) because they were accessible, intact, and, their original owners were willing and able to discuss them.

However, even accessing this small number of albums has proven a challenge. Many photograph collections have disappeared - confiscated, burned or lost during the relocation. In January of 1942 Japanese nationals and Japanese-Canadians were banned from owning cameras and short-wave radios. Japanese-Canadian homes were searched

without need of warrant by the authority of the War Measures Act,¹⁴ and cameras and any other “suspicious” items were removed. Fear bred from these searches led many to burn photographs of Japanese family members. Consequently gathering source material was a primary aspect of the project.¹⁵ My study has been based largely on photograph collections donated to a larger institution, such as the Japanese Canadian National Museum and a small number of museums and archives in British Columbia and Alberta. Examining private collections outside of institutions has been conducted solely from fortuitous contacts made through the above-mentioned organizations or through my own community connections. As a result, availability and access have necessarily biased my selections.

My approach has involved looking at the content of photograph collections inclusively, rather than exclusively. I have taken into account the controversial and changing conception of what constitutes a family. In the introduction of *Family Photographs: Content, Meaning and Effect*, Julia Hirsch states that a family photograph “contains at least two related people...physical features are an essential clue to kinship.”¹⁶ Her description leaves little room for diversity in the genre. Similarly, Jo Spence and Richard Chalfen have limited their discussion of family photography to portraits of related persons, although Spence has at least interrogated the issue of familial exclusion. I maintain that the definition of family is inherently unstable: who shall be included or

¹⁴ The War Measures Act granted the government leverage including “The security, defense, peace, order, and welfare of Canada...[including] Censorship and the control and suppression of publications, appropriation, control, forfeiture and disposition of property and arrest, detention, exclusion and deportation.” Ken Adachi, *The Enemy that Never Was* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1991), 222.

¹⁵ Please see the attached appendix for a listing of Japanese-Canadian photographs that I have documented at several museums and archives.

overlooked is subject to debate, and the notion that a family can be defined based solely on bloodlines seems unquestionably outdated. To seek out a certain type of family photograph overlooks important transitions in the family unit that are made visible (to greater and lesser extents) in the family album itself. I am interested in how political and personal change results in a re-negotiation of the conception of family and its representation. The 1942 internment, for example, forced changes within family that emerge within the private album. Broadening the definition of family photography opens up the debate surrounding familial groupings and allows an individual's conception of the family to be revealed through the body of their photograph collection. For the purposes of this project, "family photography" shall refer to the larger domestic photograph genre of those related by friendship, peer networks, community relations as well as by kinship ties. In other words, I shall consider any photo, amateur snapshot or professional portrait, which appears in private albums, as situated in the genre of family photography.

For many years discussion of the Japanese-Canadian internment was evaded by government sources, omitted from Canadian history textbooks and literature, and generally overlooked by the media. This silence is now breaking, although not without resistance.¹⁷ While it is necessary to acknowledge our nation's historic indiscretions, it is not my aim to re-construct the past. Nor does this project approach family photographs as authentic documents that reveal the "truth" of wartime experiences. Indeed, this tactic

¹⁶ Julia Hirsch, *Family Photographs: Content, Meaning and Effect* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 3.

¹⁷ For example, in a recent controversy, the Pacific National Exhibit in Vancouver, British Columbia has refused to put up a commemorative sign on its grounds that would recognize that the area was once a mass holding cell for internees.

has been used in several books and exhibits,¹⁸ and despite their provocative political agenda, these writings problematically rely on emotionally-loaded images that run the risk of constructing (and exploiting) an anonymous and homogeneous representation of the Japanese in Canada. Rather, I have viewed the images in relation to their changing contexts, considering each photo-narrative as one thread of a larger reconstruction of the past. This is not to downplay the historical importance of the collections. On the contrary, if I am to allow the material to take shape, each element must play a part. Thus we might view these histories as a photographic weaving: narrative and light, interlaced, its details becoming obscured or defined in relation to its surroundings, a myriad of patterns and textures rather than a linear exposé.

¹⁸ For example, see Barry Broadfoot, *Years of Sorrow, Years of Shame: The Story of the Japanese-Canadians in World War II* (Toronto: Doubleday Canada, 1977).

CHAPTER ONE:

The Photographic Community

A Moment of Crisis

The outset of World War II was a time of extreme uncertainty for Japanese-Canadians. By the end of 1942, over 22,000 women, men and children had been forcibly removed, or in the words of our government, “detained at the pleasure of the Minister of Justice”¹⁹ by the authority of the War Measures Act. The long-standing rhetoric of veiled racism, narrowly defined nationalism, miscegenation fears, and economic opportunism of the 1920’s and 1930’s led to a climatic crisis in December of 1941. With the tremors of Pearl Harbor vivid in public memory, the Canadian government set into motion plans to relocate and intern those of Japanese origins, regardless of their citizenship. Before the uprooting, over 95 percent of Japanese in Canada lived in British Columbia, more than 75 percent of whom were Canadian citizens.²⁰ While class affiliations and chance resulted in distinct experiences for different individuals and families, dispossession was ubiquitous. Many were given no more than twenty-four hours notice to relinquish their human rights, their livelihood, their homes, their personal possessions, and contact with friends and family.²¹

¹⁹ Roy Miki and Cassandra Kobayashi, *Justice in Our Time: The Japanese Canadian Redress Settlement* (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1991), 24.

²⁰ Eight thousand people were sent through Hastings Park and then to internment camps, 3,600 went to Alberta and Manitoba for sugar beet work, 3,500 were sent directly to internment camps, 3,000 were classified as self-supporting and moved east, 2,150 men were sent to road camps, and 800 went to prisoner of war camps. Humphrey Mitchell, MP, Minister of Labour and Arthur J. Macnamara, Deputy Minister of Labour and Director of National Selective Service. *Report of the Department of Labour on the Administration of Japanese Affairs in Canada, 1942-44* (August, 1944), 5.

²¹ On March 27, 1942 Order in Council P.C. 2483 stated: “The Custodian may notwithstanding anything contained in this regulation, order that all or any property whatsoever, situated in any protected area of British Columbia, belonging to any person of the Japanese race shall, for the purpose of protecting the interests of the owner or any other person, be vested in the Custodian, and the Custodian shall have full

Responses to government injunctions were as diverse as those relocated. Some *Issei*, or first generation immigrants, maintained their cultural belief in conformity and authority, and obeyed orders despite their misgivings. A small number of Japanese nationals and Japanese-Canadians were reputed to have been hoping Japan would win the war, but many other *Issei* were highly distinguished World War One Veterans and hundreds of *Nisei* (second generation immigrating from Japan) had volunteered to join the Canadian army.²² In both cases, finger-printed identification cards replaced those of citizenship and the Japanese-Canadians faced alienation and hostility from their country, fracturing of their communities, and doubts about the survival of their families. These apprehensions were exacerbated by the decision to send all able-bodied men to work camps, thereby separating family units and rupturing communal ties. Furthermore, unlike the United States, where a mass evacuation policy was in place, the British Columbia Securities Commission caused further family segregation by their disorganization and often arbitrary assignment to internment and road work camps. On March 25th of 1942 the first men received orders to depart for work camps. Approximately 100 men refused, and were immediately sent to prisoner of war camps in Ontario, not to see their families again for many years.²³

power to administer such property for the benefit of all such interested persons, and shall release such property upon being satisfied that the interests of aforesaid will not be prejudiced thereby." Adachi, *The Enemy that Never Was*, 437.

²² Roy Ito, *We Went To War: The Story of the Japanese-Canadians Who Served During the First and Second Wars* (Stittsville: Canada's Wing Inc., 1984), 292. Ito's book includes photographs of retired officers in full regalia being arrested by the police during the relocation. Thirty-five *Nisei* who had enlisted before Pearl Harbor were permitted to remain in the army throughout World War II.

²³ Miki and Kobayashi, *Justice in Our Time*, 37.

The desire to keep their families united provoked in the evacuees a polemical shift in behaviour. Japanese-Canadians had until that point followed government orders for relocation without conspicuous objection. Rejecting the conception of inevitability embodied in the popular Japanese phrase *shikataganai*, meaning, “it can’t be helped,” the NMEG, or Nisei Mass Evacuation Group, was formed to fight for their right to remain as a family unit throughout the relocation. The NMEG, a group of second generation Japanese-Canadians, produced pamphlets, wrote letters and hid from the authorities, refusing to comply with evacuation orders. For example, in an open letter to the Chairmen of the British Columbia Securities Commission dated April 15th, 1942, the representatives of the NMEG wrote:

As you clearly understand and as it is fully mentioned in our review, we have said “YES” to all your previous orders however unreasonable they might have seemed. But we are firm in saying “NO” to your last order which calls for the break-up of our families. When we say “NO” at this point, we request you to remember that we are British subjects by birth, that we are no less loyal to Canada than any other Canadian, that we have done nothing to deserve the break-up of our families, that we are law abiding Canadian citizens, and that we are willing to accept suspension of our civil rights – rights to retain our homes and businesses, boats, cars, radios and cameras.²⁴

Their defiance was important in inciting discussion and inquiry within the BCSC about the injustice of family separation, but also provoked censure from some Japanese-Canadians. For example, *The New Canadian*, a Vancouver publication, was the only Japanese-Canadian newspaper that had not been shut down. Its editors repeatedly urged readers to acquiesce with government restrictions. One edition warned that “careless talk, careless actions, careless tempers – these are individual sins that will invite

suspicion and arouse feelings against our whole community, no matter how loyal we may be.”²⁵

Despite threats of retaliation, Japanese-Canadians’ apprehensions about isolation as well as the effects of the internment on the family were consistently expressed in letters and other written accounts of the time. Margaret Minato reveals the predominating anxieties:

We put name-tags on all the children, in case we got separated, on cloth we wrote it down, and we put a little sum of money on the bigger ones, and the baby I knew I could carry wherever I went. And we all had name-tags, in case we got separated, you know, died, or something, well then, they’d know who we were.²⁶

From 1942 to 1949 the pain of exile and the severing of familial and communal ties was unavoidable: Japanese-Canadians were shipped from their homes to the barnyard of the Pacific National Exhibit in Vancouver, then from Vancouver to internment camps in the interior of British Columbia, and from there to either sugar beet farms, Eastern urban areas or repatriated to Japan. Within a period of a few months the everyday life of the family had been dramatically altered. No longer did the household rely on the male head for income; dining together was replaced by eating in mess halls or shared kitchens, and even basic communication was infringed upon as internees were discouraged from speaking Japanese at home. The dissolution of the family unit was continued even after families had been evacuated from the Hastings Park centre. Families of less than five

²⁴ Muriel Kitagawa, *This is My Own: Letters to Wes and Other Writings on Japanese-Canadians* (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1985), 39.

²⁵ *The New Canadian* (12 December 1941): 4.

²⁶ From the transcribed interviews in Daphne Marlatt and Carole Itter, “Opening Doors: Vancouver’s East End” Derek Reimer, ed. *Sound Heritage* 8 (1979): 89.

were forced to share their living quarters with others and family units over five were split between more than one residence.

Furthering the sense of isolation was the loss of community ties. Interviewees Shirley Omatsu, Marie Katsuno and Mary O'Hara all expressed sadness at the loss of their high school friends – a social network central to most teenage lives. Their youthful bonds had already sustained losses in the years leading up to the war as racism created a tense atmosphere that dictated and distanced social relations. (Some of these younger Japanese-Canadians expressed finding solace from racism in the camps, despite the difficulty of leaving home. Young men especially were relieved to be free of the constant threat of violence that surrounded them at schools.)²⁷ Separated from their families and elder siblings, younger *Nisei* sought out new connections in the relocation centers. The restrictions of the censors, geographical limitations and the chaotic confusion of uprooting hundreds of people all impeded maintaining contact with friends and family.

Writing to relatives and friends offered only a limited means of sustaining social ties. Internees were expected to write in English, as Japanese characters hindered the censors. If written in Japanese, letters were to be confined to essential news and information, and “inconsequential gossip” was to be avoided.²⁸ Spouses of Japanese nationals were

²⁷ Roy Miki and Yosh Tanaka, Taped interview with Ian Belcher, Japanese Canadian National Museum (3 November 1995).

²⁸ Adachi, *The Enemy that Never Was*, 267.

discouraged from writing to their husbands at all.²⁹ As a result, re-affirming ties through symbolic exchanges or contact was severely encumbered. Creative practices of concentrically framing one's community (and the family within it) were necessary.

Anthony Cohen, in *The Symbolic Construction of Community*, writes: "the symbolic expression of community and its boundaries increases in importance as the actual geo-social boundaries of the community are undermined, blurred or otherwise weakened."³⁰ As Japanese-Canadians were uprooted from familiar communities throughout British Columbia and overwhelmed with the loss of loved-ones, photography was employed as a means of re-centering themselves within a stable, yet somewhat imaginative, network of relations. Looking became an act of imaginative exchange with the subject – conflating the act of seeing with the act of knowing. Photographs became "the most cherished possession" at a time when all else familiar had been lost. It is my contention that domestic photographs and albums produced at this time worked to construct, preserve and contain the visual and imaginative narrative of cohesive family stability and communal belonging, despite divisive political differences, disparate geographical living situations, and elapsed family traditions. While acknowledging that photographs construct and embody a multiplicity of meanings, I am interested in the ways Japanese-Canadian albums were employed during the internment to foster a sense of place while internees existed in a liminal or transitional, marginal space. These representations attempt (and of course sometimes fail) to authenticate a seemingly cohesive biography.

²⁹ Eileen Sato, "The Internment of Japanese During the Second World War: Family Interrupted,"

Throughout the upheaval of the war period, photography played a role in mediating relationships within interned Japanese-Canadian families.³¹ Isolated men working in road camps maintained contact with immediate relations through correspondence and by enclosing photographs. Many individuals were physically isolated from their families for years because they were visiting or were sent to Japan for their education, to be raised by relatives. In her narrated biography *Mothertalk*, Mary Kiyoshi Kiyooka reveals how photography was used to bridge the vast geographical and emotional distance:

Looking through the album I'm reminded of Mariko's absence and of all the pain her prolonged absence caused. Down through the years Papa and I sent her family news as well as photos of her brothers and sisters. She in turn sent us an occasional note with a photo of herself. As she grew up her photos reflected an unspoken sadness.³²

Similarly, Takeo Nakano's memoir relates his desire to see his family while confined in a Prisoner-of-War-Camp: "On that first night I had not a moment's sleep. I took out a photograph of my wife and our child. In the dim light I could barely make out the two faces that were so much a part of my existence. Tears welled up. Still, warmed by my heartening recollection, I fought to reclaim courage."³³ Photography functions in the autobiography in multiple ways, by structuring memories and also by assisting in their expression. The tattered album increases in value when it represents what is no longer

Unpublished Essay (April 2001): 7.

³⁰ Anthony Cohen, *The Symbolic Construction of Community* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1985), 50.

³¹ Photography also played a major role in the formation of Japanese-Canadian families before the war, as many marriages were arranged between men in Canada and women in Japan. For more information on this see Tomoko Makabe, *Picture Brides: Japanese Women in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995).

³² Roy Kiyooka, *Mothertalk: Life Stories of Mary Kiyoshi Kiyooka* (Edmonton: NeWest Press, 1997), 84.

³³ Takeo Nakano, *Within the Barbed Wire Fence* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), 12.

accessible, idealizing what is out of reach. Family photography at times operates through the discourse of nostalgia, heightening desire for the past and thereby elevating its own status. Stewart writes: “the realization of re-union imagined by the nostalgic is a narrative utopia that works only by virtue of its partiality, its lack of fixity and closure. Nostalgia is the desire for desire.”³⁴ Stewart later states that the partiality of the souvenir (or photograph) is fundamental to its operation, requiring that the object be supplemented by a narrative discourse, which “articulates the play of desire.”³⁵

Photo-narratives compensate for the inadequacies of the photograph, providing visibility beyond the frame, adding a dimension of depth to the flat artifact. The photo entices us but ultimately denies us contact with its content - reunion is offered but never actualized. The mimetic form, miniature and thin, prevents us from reliving the authentic experience. Even the scent of the photograph accentuates its artificiality – the distinct odour of chemical developers; or perhaps giving off no smell at all, lacking the traces of everyday life. Similarly, the picture is obstinately silent. Unlike the fluidity of our memories, the photograph is still, implying a false sense of temporal control. To perform in the social realm, and transcend its material stasis, family photographs demand a narrative - that of its possessor, rather than of the object itself.

Stabilizing the Portrait

John Tadao Izumi, formerly a professional photographer employed at Campbell studios on Powell Street, produced numerous family photos at different relocation sites in the

³⁴ Stewart, *On Longing*, 23.

British Columbia interior, such as Slocan, New Denver, and Bay Farm. Izumi's photographs have reappeared in several different collections based in Vancouver, ranging from highly formalized portraits, to snapshots, to a deeply personal photo-journal on the birth of his son, including images of the hospital room, as well as the nurses and the doctor that were involved. In 1942, Izumi was left without a means of employment when the police confiscated his camera equipment. His belongings were returned only after he was relocated, when Mr. Campbell, the owner of the Vancouver studio, intervened on his behalf.

While the official regulations of the British Columbia Securities Commission forbade anyone of Japanese descent from owning a camera, the existence of photographs from this period substantiates that these rules were enforced inconsistently. Prisoner of War camps³⁶ were under strict control and amateur photographs from these camps are very rare. Yet at other internment camps photography became quite commonplace. Individuals found ways to work around the laws, by mail-ordering cameras or discreetly smuggling their cameras into the camps and having Church ministers (who had greater travel privileges) develop their film in the cities. The upheaval of thousands of Japanese-Canadians in such a short period made it difficult for the BCSC to closely monitor all individual belongings. Some camps were under limited surveillance and those in authority frequently overlooked minor transgressions.³⁷ Many RCMP or other officials

³⁵ Ibid., 136.

³⁶ Prisoner of War camps held Japanese and German nationals, as well as Japanese-Canadians who were perceived to be agitators.

³⁷ When I asked interviewees like Marie Katsuno (Tashme camp internee), Mary O'Hara (Lemon Creek internee) and Shirley Omatsu (New Denver sanitarium patient) about their access to photographic

felt uncomfortable enforcing rules against a community that they found highly civilized and obedient. For example, Jack Duggan, a RCMP who worked in the Lemon Creek and Slocan internment camps in 1943 – 1945, said in an interview:

Since this was my first experience dealing with people of Japanese ancestry, I wasn't quite sure what to expect at first. When I was first assigned to my duties, I was ordered not to fraternize with the people in the camps, but as it turned out, that particular order was very difficult, if not impossible, to carry out.³⁸

In the same article Duggan admits that he has long treasured a handmade photo album given to him by a group of Japanese-Canadian friends.

Despite these lapses from official BCSC rules, the majority of internees did not have access to photographic equipment. Hundreds of cameras had already been confiscated during the 1942 home searches, and Japanese families who feared having any potential “evidence” held against them had destroyed many others. The loss of jobs, property and future employment opportunities left Japanese-Canadians in a difficult economic position, and as a result many who owned cameras sold them. A single photographer at an internment site has often produced all of the works that have emerged from that location.

Izumi, once reunited with his equipment, was in high demand. His prolific body of work from this period features families from numerous areas in British Columbia, and those he

equipment within their respective camps, they all replied that restrictions loosened once they had been relocated from the coast, and that authorities often chose to disregard certain rules.

³⁸ Mas Yamamoto, “1943: Recollections of Lemon Creek: A chat with Jack Duggan, retired RCMP staff sergeant,” *The Bulletin* (December 1990): 18.

photographed in the 1940s still speak fondly of him. The Izumi collection is of special interest for the ways it intersects the public and private realms, the way it blurs amateur and professional photography and the way it clearly depicts the transformation before and after the relocation. Comparing amateur and studio photography in this context reveals profound differences yet striking similarities. Professional photographers working in internment camps had to operate in highly unusual circumstances and understandably could not achieve the same quality of images produced previously. Studio portraits and amateur photography coexist in the same albums, often with little differentiation, as amateur photographers attempted to replicate the postures and lighting of the studio portrait. Jo Spence has usefully mapped out important differences between the amateur and studio photo, such as class issues and controlling the means of production over one's own image.³⁹ However, amateur and professional photography have too long been held in binary opposition, the assumption being that professional photography reinforces the power structure, while amateur photography offers greater opportunities for resistance and freedom.⁴⁰ I would argue, rather, that these photographic genres do not fit neatly into a hierarchy of power.

Portraits from J.T. Izumi's in-home studio before the war are characterized by a playful formality, the careful composition of well-dressed subjects in various furnished rooms marked his attention to detail, and the lighting and finish made each photo a showcase for his skill as a photographer.⁴¹ Materialistic displays of expensive clothing and furniture

³⁹ Spence, *Cultural Sniping*, 41.

⁴⁰ For more on photography as a tool for resistance see bell hooks, "In Our Glory" in *Art on My Mind: Visual Politics* (New York: The New Press, 1995) or Spence, *Cultural Sniping*.

⁴¹ The owner of this collection requested that I refrain from reproducing these images.

reinforce the economic status of the subjects. Like other portraits, these images most often portray groups attempting to legitimize class status. During the internment period, however, a greater urgency existed, as subjects were propelled to maintain class status, resisting relegation to the lowest societal ranks as “enemies of the state.” As some families categorized as “self-supporting” (upper class) were sent to town sites instead of camps (under minimal supervision), the status of the family was imperative.⁴² Of the family portraits created in the 1930’s, none have the solemn overtones of Izumi’s later works.

In Izumi’s photographs from the 1940’s, his style and content undergo a radical transformation. His was an enterprising hobby that at times stylistically recalled portraiture despite being far removed from any studio. In a 1943 photograph by Izumi, an anonymous “family” of five poses at a relocation site in British Columbia (Figure 2).⁴³ The relation between the subjects is unclear, for the small girl, dressed in brown wool jacket and pants, is perhaps too young to be the daughter of the older man and woman at her sides. Likely the photograph captures a contrived family grouping, established following the separation of the mother and father from the children and grandparents. Two youthful girls stand behind the threesome, their thin bodies separated from one another, leaving a gap that contrasts the compression of the three figures seated on a wooden bench. The surety of gaze typical of most portraits is undermined as the elder man is caught in a sidelong glance. Posed in a position mimicking the older woman

⁴² Families who felt they could afford to pay for their relocation applied to the government to be categorized as “self-supporting” based on income, which offered greater flexibility in locations.

⁴³ This photograph, originally black and white, appears colored due to the aging and subsequent yellowing of the film.

beside her, the small girl is focused attentively on the camera. The hastily constructed tar and paper walls behind them become symbolic within the image, a lasting reminder of the poor living conditions in the camps, standing in sharp juxtaposition to the orientalist setting commonly employed on former Powell Street Studios (See Figure 3). The composure of the sitters, as customary as studio portraits elsewhere, is ruptured by the backdrop of the shack. Moreover, the lack of control over exterior lighting prevented a smooth, formal finish (interior shots were out of the question, due to a severe lack of space and light). Interiority and its associated psychological and physical comforts is jarringly denied by the blatant exteriority of the photograph. Posed on frozen ground outside a makeshift home, the awkwardness of the de-centered picture reveals the gap between the stable, contained family unit and the attempt to represent it.

Other portraits that I have encountered in my research avoid reference to the relocation almost entirely. In a June 1945 J.T. Izumi photograph of a couple in New Denver, British Columbia, the arrangement is reminiscent of a vacation snapshot (Figure 4). A couple poses comfortably on a bridge overlooking a wooded road, with a mountainous skyline beyond. They are centred, smiling wide and meeting the camera's lens. Significantly, conditions in New Denver were an improvement over other internment centers: homes were often made of brick, and many were properly insulated, unlike those at Tashme or Lemon Creek. In this image, tolerable conditions permit the construction of the idealized portrait, eliding the lack of freedom and overwhelmingly uncertainty of the future.

Drawing the Boundaries

Marie Katsuno was interned at Tashme southeast of Hope, British Columbia. At the time she was an eighteen year-old high school graduate who was recruited to teach at the provisional high school. From 1942-1949 she maintained detailed photo albums of her experiences. Her amateur collection, shot and arranged during her spare time at Tashme, depicts youthful friendships, community connections and emotional contentment. Warm, smiling faces and landscapes abound, their organization and layout constructing a photo-narrative of social permanence, despite the extreme pressures of the internment. In an image entitled "Tashme Home," Katsuno and a friend are poised in pumps amidst the snow (Figure 5). Standing formally, the shot is taken in front of the mountains and trees, out of view of the camp. None of the buildings or shacks are shown, and the inscription of "Tashme Home" seems ironic in the absence of the porch and house so common in earlier domestic snapshots. Qualifying the title of home suggests that this is not a timeless place; other homes have and will exist. The name of her "hometown" resonates with the imposing conditions of the internment. Tashme is a name coined from the first two letters of the surnames of the three commissioners of the British Columbia Security Commission: Taylor, Shirras and Mead. Tashme was open country, nonexistent before the relocation. Consequently, those arriving had to make a home for themselves, creating a physical and social living space from a cultural and architectural void.

Echoed on the opposite page of this album, a second photograph of the girls is framed within a striking sketch (Figure 6). Using white pencil upon the black pages of the album, Katsuno has linked the images, creating a house-like drawing that demarcates the photos within its interior, declaring the territory of the "imagined community." The thin drawing

and the veneer of the surface call up the collapsibility of the imagined home. Within the space of the album, home can be folded up and tucked away. In Benedict Anderson's book, *Imagined Communities*, he describes community as: "*imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion."⁴⁴ Japanese-Canadians, on the other hand, knew at least some of their fellow-members, but the restrictions of the internment often prevented contact between friends for up to seven years. With social interactions geographically impossible, the notion of a community was maintained through more imaginative forms such as memory, oratory and photography. At a time when the frameworks of the community (including proximity to neighbors, freedom of visitation, internal community economic exchange and production, censor-free letter writing and freedom of the press) were dismantled, symbolically reinforcing the boundaries of the community was essential. Family photography, I argue, is one such symbolic form that works to reaffirm the community structure. Creating the family photograph album allows one to develop a sense of belonging despite unsettling circumstances.

Tashme internees were most often relocated more than once and few individuals stayed at Tashme for the full extent of the internment. This inconstancy combined with looming decisions around repatriation as well as the uncertainty about the duration of the war made the peripheries of community membership a realm of constant flux. In Katsuno's album, we see the boundaries visibly redefined. Many photos of men sent to road camps

⁴⁴ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983), 6.

are included in her album, some of whom would likely have had connections with the Nisei Mass Evacuation Group. Isolated in the backwoods of B.C, these young men had been removed twofold: uprooted from their Vancouver home, and then separated from their families and larger communities at other internment camps. Over a dozen photographs of men at road camps have been carefully arranged within the album. Inclusion within the album heightens the value of the photograph's content. The exiled subjects are thus shown to be valued within a continuum of relations existing inside and outside the album.

Depictions of labour appear frequently in the albums I have observed. For example, in an image inscribed "Tosh Watt – Solsqua B.C., 1942," a young man stands before a large metal basin, large piles of fresh cut wood a testament to his long hours of work (Figure 7). In the far corner, another man works as 'Tosh' poses for the camera. It is a representation of isolated labour, but the photograph is a means to offset isolation by confirming social ties with those left behind. Editorials in the *New Canadian* suggested accepting the terms of the internment and responding with hard work would demonstrate one's commitment to Canada. Internees representing themselves as laborers may then have been demonstrating their continued allegiance to their nation. On the same page, another photograph of the young man with other workers is positioned just below a small snapshot of Katsuno and a teacher (See Figure 7). Katsuno and friend appear well dressed in business attire, posing cozily in an interior setting. In contrast, the men are unsheltered. Physicality is foregrounded by their position amidst the chopped wood, their athletic stance and the display of their flexed forearms. Shot outside the warehouse-like building in the background, the rugged atmosphere of the picture underscores the

differences in lifestyle between the exiled laborers and Tashme internees like Katsuno. Still, within the album these distinctions are minimized. Keeping the image close to the snapshot of the girls suggests that contact with the domestic world remains a possibility.

Declarations like “joyful,” “happy times” and “everyone happy” are repeated in the captions handwritten below many photos in the Katsuno collection (Figure 8). Yet there is a double nature to these affirmations. Inscribing happiness alludes to the silent binary of sadness that is effaced from the images. Representations of state surveillance and poor living conditions are virtually never included but did nonetheless exist. It is not my intention however, to suggest that photographs are entirely deceptive anymore than they are undeniable truths. Rather, I want to argue that the production, organization and narration of photographs enabled internees to resist being subsumed by fears of persecution and obliteration. The intersection of the photographic image with the viewer constructs a narrative of stability, potentially resulting in a positive experience. Inscribing a positive identity onto images of one’s body plays a role in the production of contentment: it is an act which simultaneously elides present troubles and safeguards fond memories for the future, it is a conscious and unconscious maneuver constituting one’s personal history. Thus the images not only reinforce a positive experience, but also participate in creating one. Though at times, the images cannot help but reveal the underlying anxieties of this larger context.

Periods of transition and instability in Katsuno’s life are omitted from the photo-chronology. The duration of relocation intervenes mid-point in one of the albums yet neither Katsuno’s departure for Tashme nor difficult farewells to her friends in

Vancouver are represented. In fact, Katsuno excludes self-representation completely at this point. Departing drastically from the collection of family and peer photographs dominating the album previously, postcards of famous American musicians are inserted (Figure 9). Choosing these images had significance; as emblems of mainstream, occidental America, they were symbolic of the cultural separation occurring in her life. Katsuno stated: "I would be a collector of Glen Miller records, and I had to give him up - his records, when we left."⁴⁵ The slick smiling image of Glen Miller silently bookmarks exile both from Vancouver and its cultural context. Mary O'Hara's album makes a similar departure into popular culture, as the postcards of famous actors such as John Payne appear in a moment of transition between her Vancouver and Lemon Creek home (Figure 10).

Album chronologies often reinforce closure around the epoch that its internal photo-narratives address. Katsuno's album finishes with the end of the internment and her family's repatriation back to Japan. Similarly, the album belonging to Mary O'Hara begins with the period of relocation and ends many years later when she earned enough money to return to Canada. Her departure to Japan in the summer of 1946 is demarcated by an inset title page that reads: "Across the Ocean to Japan Aboard Gen. M.C. Meigs." Two shots of the boat flank an image of O'Hara's first job in Japan (Figure 11).⁴⁶ Similarly, the Izumi album began with the birth of Basil, and closed with the relocation. The intertwining of the personal album narratives with the dates of the relocation and repatriation underscores the impact of state decisions upon the private body. Deeply

⁴⁵ Interview with Marie Katsuno, Japanese Canadian National Museum, Burnaby, B.C. (23 January, 2001).

personal, the album reveals these tensions - portraying stories that are highly individual yet shaped largely by the events in the 1940's.

Beyond redrawing the perimeters of the community, the personal photograph collection attempts to stabilize the ever-shifting position of the subject in relation to the larger society existing outside the boundary. The photograph allows a space of intimacy between the image and the subject, a space denied in political propaganda and the official documentary photographs of Japanese-Canadians at the time. Photographs of Japanese internees by government officials most often represent the Japanese as an anonymous, powerless group (See Figure 22 discussed in the Epilogue) - a problematic representation that personal photography works against. bell hooks, in an essay about her own family's photo collection entitled, "In Our Glory," argues that the ownership of cameras has allowed minority groups a means to participate in the production of images of themselves.⁴⁷ Thus the camera becomes envisioned as a tool of self-definition. Although admittedly a small intervention against the power of the media and the state, these images, within the confinement of the internment camps, may have created possibilities of meaning-making that had a countering effect against internalizing the damages of racism.

In my conversations with her today, Katsuno has testified to the veracity of the album, commenting that the images convey exactly how she felt at the time of its making. Her remark underscores the significance of the album, suggesting her visual and

⁴⁶ The reflection in the centre of this reproduction does not appear in the original photograph.

⁴⁷ hooks, *Art on My Mind*, 57.

psychological narratives were able to maintain a consistent relationship to secure positive feelings about events that undoubtedly sparked a diverse array of emotions. Katsuno's handwritten text within the album underscores these issues. A photo of Katsuno and a friend is captioned "The Pose" (See Figure 6). At the risk of sounding over-determined, Katsuno's caption brings to the fore an awareness of these internalized processes. The parallel images of oppositional texts, the attempted authenticity of "Tashme Home" versus the self-consciousness conveyed in "The Pose," illuminates the performative nature of the photo. Inscribing "pose," seems to offer a kind of reflexivity, perhaps not only in the act of being photographed, but a cognizance of the imaginative framing, an awareness of the self-conscious construction of place and one's subjective relation to it.

Photography and the Production of Space

In the Katsuno album, a poignant photograph sent to Katsuno from a road camp worker resonates with the desire for domestic containment. In it, a valley is pictured, sparsely populated with railroad boxcars, trees, and a small run-off pond. An arrow is marked on the image and the single word "home," is written in black capitals (Figure 12). Susan Stewart remarks, "Writing gives us a device for inscribing space, for inscribing nature... writing serves to caption the world, defining and commenting upon the configurations we choose to textualize."⁴⁸ The attempt to locate "home" seems a sadly ironic gesture, as the arrow directs the viewer to an invisible and undefined area that offers neither companionship nor shelter. Here, the inscription of home resonates with the difficulties of homelessness. Home, in this image, is absent of kin, and contains neither emblems of

⁴⁸ Stewart, *On Longing*, 31.

identity nor spatial demarcations. Printing upon this image, the exiled individual locates himself in an unknown, solitary landscape. Yet while the subject's placement is bleak within the snapshot, its inclusion within the album offers a social repositioning, a place of refuge. Togetherness is enacted spatially and visually, and the isolated men are imaginatively, if not physically, brought close to "home."

Further, the symbolic construction of community within the family album works in conjunction with the social production of space, enabling a sense of control in an insecure environment. Katsuno's white sketches around her photographs act as a domestic enclosure on the page, transcending time and space, literally connecting her to the physically unreachable. Her arrangements and drawing around the inset images in the album may be understood as the production of space for the "imagined community," that is, a blueprint recreating the sense of place that existed in her lost Vancouver home, while negotiating terms of engagement with a displaced community not yet fully formed.

Henri Lefebvre's text, *The Production of Space*, discusses how people attempt to assign separate places for social relations in opposition to spaces of labour, stating that the two sets of relations concomitantly affect one another, yet must be differentiated and defined locally.⁴⁹ He defines three types of space: spatial practice, representations of space, and representational spaces. It is the third category that I find significant to the family photographs I have addressed. Representational space, or lived space, is "space as directly lived through its associated images and symbols, and hence the space of

⁴⁹ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, 1974), 32.

inhabitants and (workers) but also artists... This is the dominant – and hence passively experienced space with which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate. It overlaps physical space, making symbolic use of its objects.”⁵⁰ Taking a picture, then, transforms physical space into representational space, granting the possessor of the image with a sense of control over the representation, and, by extension, over the physical space. Representation can render the unknown knowable, easing the tensions and fears that arise over an unfamiliar situation.

Considering that a community operates in and through the imagination, the place where its social functions transpire must also be linked to imaginative conception. Space is not a thing in itself but rather a set of relations between things.⁵¹ Photographs demonstrate how to exist in an entirely new environment, to coordinate and maneuver through it – physically as well as socially. Family photography often conveys a set of social relations to be performed within a given space. Images from the Katsuno album, while functioning in a variety of ways, also delineate social spaces from spaces of labour production. Work photos are set in the makeshift schoolyard, or in the roadwork camps. Social spaces are captioned as such, and pains are taken to mark out the space of work from the space of play. Family photography positions the body in a specific space, offering a geo-social mapping that integrates the fields of social relations onto a foreign arena. The space of the family is contained and assured within the album, and this negotiation is transferred to an acceptance and sense of control over the newly imposed physical domain.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 39.

⁵¹ Ibid., 84.

Notions of unity and stability conveyed by a family photograph are undermined by an empty space where a photo has been removed from the album (Figure 13). Its absence breaks a link in the chain of images, hinting at the ephemeral condition of the photograph and the lives represented. Spatial relations in portraits are a signifier of status; thus, it follows that empty space (or missing relationships) signifies a notion of depreciated status and loss. In a photograph from the O'Hara collection (Figure 14), O'Hara's mother sits on a chair outside their relocation shelter, her body is centered, a baby boy on her lap and four adolescent children surrounding her. Behind their brothers, O'Hara and her sister stand at the rear, a slight gap between them. The conventional pinnacle of the picture is missing, there is no father to stand proudly behind the girls - his presence is enunciated by his absence. The new eldest male - still a boy - stands rigidly; ironically, he wears trousers almost humorously over-sized, held up by a tightly drawn belt.

Set in front of the "home," here personalized by the addition of floral curtains, the image recalls a common genre of family photographs taken on porches and balconies. However, unlike these other photos which convey material advancement and class establishment, the O'Hara photograph must alter its strategies to cope with the limitations of the internment site. A vertical shot obscures the compressed shacks on either side, elongating the residence and distinguishing it from its neighbors while revealing the curtained window and door behind the subjects. Boards placed upon dirt replace the typical porch, but insufficiently as the three boards cannot support the family of five, and the child on the left places one foot on the dirt, one on the boards, upsetting the symmetrical formality of the portrait. Similarly, economic restraints surface in other

collections; for example, J.T. Izumi began to take two photographs per frame to conserve film (Figure 15). The thick strip divides each shot, segregating the subjects within a reduced private arena that is continuous yet fractured.

The economic and geographic pressures of relocation taxed the traditional familial structure; accordingly, shifts in other social relations attempted to compensate. As families units were separated, peer groups strengthened and took over new social spaces. Young teachers such as Katsuno were sent to New Denver for teacher training, Buddhist youth groups were based in the Church, and *Issei* and *Nisei* groups formed their own practices and meeting places.⁵² Significantly, these new social formations are reflected extensively in the space of the album. In the Katsuno album, for instance, images of friends and co-workers (other young teachers) predominate. Traditional family photos that appear with frequency in the 1930's album have noticeably diminished by the 1940's album. Similarly, when Mary O'Hara was isolated from her family in the New Denver sanitarium, photos of fellow patients take over space in the album that was previously devoted to images of the O'Hara kindred clan. Within the family album, space and its tangential set of relations are conceived, structured and made visible, thereby facilitating the movement of communities into new spaces. Ernst Van Alphen writes of Holocaust survivors: "life in the camps had no precedent and was therefore un-narratable....narrative frameworks allow for an experience of life histories as continuous

⁵² In the video *The Ghost Towns*, minister Kosaburo Shimizu filmed numerous organizations such as the Issei Men's Group, the Issei Women's Group, the Young Buddhists, the Nisei women's group, in various internment locations from 1942-1945. The 8mm film was later transferred onto video, edited and released by his son Ted Shimizu. *The Ghost Towns*. Narrated by Ted Shimizu, filmed by Kosaburo Shimizu. Homevideo (Winnipeg, 2000).

unities.”⁵³ I argue that Japanese-Canadian internment photographs and their positioning in the album function as a blueprint for such narrative frameworks.

⁵³ Ernst Van Alphen, “Symptoms of Discursivity: Experience, Memory and Trauma” in Bal, Crewe, and Spitzer, eds. *Acts of Memory*, 34-35.

CHAPTER TWO:

Trauma & Family Photography

Photographic Mediation: Narratives Through the Album

On the first page of the earliest Izumi album, Basil Izumi's entrance into the world is announced photographically. J.T. Izumi documented the hospital room where his son Basil was born, in 1937, including separate portraits of the nurse and doctor who attended the birth (Figure 16). Every stage of his son's early development is included: his first day of life, first steps, even an intimate image of his wife breast-feeding. Moments of initiation are highlighted, leisure time in Stanley Park and other outings appear frequently while images of work or displeasure are entirely absent. During my interview with him, Basil Izumi pointed out his father's dexterity with camera techniques, indicating a dated photograph where as a very small baby he is posed standing (Figure 17). Proudly, Basil explained that the chair against which the child balanced had been removed from the picture. Izumi's alteration marks a personal moment with his son, a moment that now transcends temporal and spatial constraints to effectuate a connection between the two. His modification of the picture is a point of contact: a symbolic artifact of interaction that is sustained by the ongoing interaction of viewing and narrating.⁵⁴ The thin film is the only trace of himself that J.T. Izumi has left with his family. The album is filled with images of the baby boy but ends when the child is five years old. This void marks the beginning of the Second World War, and the fracturing of the Izumi family.

⁵⁴ For more on the notion of contact see Michael Taussig's *Mimesis and Alterity*. Taussig notes that the Law of Contact holds "that things which have once been in contact with each other continue to act on each other at a distance after the physical contact has been severed." Michael Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 53.

Basil Izumi's mother and father, like many others living in Vancouver, were separated at the outset of the relocation, when John Tadao Izumi was sent to a road work camp. Difficulties from this initial separation were exacerbated when the federal government sent out the so-called "loyalty questionnaire" in August 1945. The questionnaire asked for a pledge of loyalty to Canada, and demanded those that said "yes" to rescind their Japanese citizenship. Rather than a voluntary choice between Japan and Canada, the choice was between repatriation at an unspecified time, or immediate, but not necessarily permanent, resettlement east of the Rockies. Free passage and \$200 per person would be offered to those who chose to leave the country.⁵⁵ Government documents reinforced fears about an uncertain future in Canada, emphasizing that resettlement and employment would be designated by the state. Fallout from the survey was immediate. Written completely in formal English, the questionnaire confused many *Issei*, or first generation immigrants, who spoke little English. Further divisions resulted because most families had relatives in both countries and the prospect of not seeing them again was significant. Deeply personal, the pressing questions around repatriation sent reverberations of anxiety, distrust and partisanship throughout the internment camps. In a move ultimately deemed a war crime by the United Nations in 1953, Canada then attempted to force 10,000 individuals into repatriation based on the results of the survey. Before the ruling was overturned, approximately 3,000 Japanese nationals and Japanese-Canadians were deported to a country demolished by nuclear war and economic devastation. Those returning found their Japanese citizenship also renounced and their acceptance into the

⁵⁵ Ann Gomer Sunahara, *The Politics of Racism: The Uprooting of the Japanese Canadians During the Second World War* (Toronto: James Lorimer and Co., 1981), 119.

country as a whole dubious. Once again, they were forced to carry alien registration cards and live in sub-standard conditions. Basil Izumi's mother was one of the 3,000 who decided to return to Japan. His father had preferred to stay in Canada, but conceded to his wife's wishes.⁵⁶ It was an ill-fated decision. Shortly after their arrival, overwhelmed with the challenges Japan brought, the couple severed their relationship, and Basil never saw his father again. As a boy of twelve, Basil was sent back to Canada alone to be raised by an aunt.

In his interview, Izumi exposed residual anger about these events. Yet when discussing times prior to the internment he expressed nostalgia for "happier times" with his family, recalling memories shaped largely from the family album. Izumi's album was a focal point around which he reconfigured his memories of the past, concurrently transforming his present relationship to the memory of his parents. Throughout the interview, it became clear the degree to which the albums shaped his experience. Sharing an album or photograph creates narrative possibilities because it negotiates meanings between two subjects. Bridging the distance between strangers, the album is a physical mediator between narrator and listener, conjoining the events of looking inward and looking upon. For example, during our interview, before cracking the dusty pages of the album, questions about Izumi's family were answered haltingly and vaguely; yet, once the album opened and we were carried along by the images within, Izumi freely expressed deeply personal thoughts. Interestingly, his comments were also directed toward the photos,

⁵⁶ In the interview Basil stated: "Well, we were in Bay Farm at the time. It was my mom. When the question came about repatriating, it was my mom who decided to go back to Japan. He [Basil's father] wanted to stay. So there was a lot of kerfluffle between my aunts and my grandma who tried to dissuade my mom, change her mind." Interview with Basil Izumi, (Richmond, B.C. January 27, 2001).

reaching me circuitously. Thus rather than the picture alone telling a tale, it was through the photographs that personal experience could be shaped into narrative form.

Mieke Bal examines this phenomenon in *Acts of Memory*, a text on cultural memory and its effects. Trauma, she says, must be integrated into our memories and therefore worked through in the present. Testimony is a means to this recovery. She writes:

... the need for a second person to act as a confirming witness to a painfully elusive past confirmed a notion of memory that is not confined to the individual psyche, but is constituted in the culture in which the traumatized subject lives. This 'second-personhood' of witnessing and facilitating memory is an active choice, just as much as the act of memorizing facilitates. The acts of memory thus become an exchange between first and second person that sets in motion the emergence of the narrative.⁵⁷

Family albums, in cases where individual and collective trauma have occurred, provide the opportunity to formalize this exchange. Presenting the self as subject, the album invites, if not demands, narrative. Strangers can witness the past, sharing the album like a storybook whose characters can be as deeply autobiographical or as removed as the narrator chooses. Moreover, the album or photograph potentially eases the pain of disclosure. Looking is directed onto the structure of the pictures, away from the speaker, the expectation of response minimal so long as there are more pages to be turned.

Photographs can work to validate the narrator's experience and words. Despite the protestations of John Tagg in his text, *The Burden of Representation*, the photograph as an image of "reality" is still a prevailing notion, particularly when the image is possessed

⁵⁷ Bal, "Introduction," in Bal, Crewe, and Spitzer, eds. *Acts of Memory*, x.

and backed by the words of those we trust. Tagg argues: "The indexical nature of the photograph – the causative link between the pre-photographic referent and the sign – is therefore highly complex, irreversible, and can guarantee nothing at the level of meaning."⁵⁸ While I agree with the instability of photographic meaning, I hesitate to deny the existence of certain meanings exchanged through the photograph. If the image is perceived as reality – regardless of whether or not it represents a "reality" – then it wields the power to convince, authenticate or falsify. Furthermore, Tagg maintains that amateur photography offers no challenge to existing power relations,⁵⁹ a problematic concept that equalizes the diversity of amateur family photography. While a portrait of a white, middle class nuclear family *may* reinforce the aspects of a given power structure, portraits of black families in America, for example, can potentially counter the "degrading images of blackness that emerged from racist white imagination and that were circulated widely in the dominant culture."⁶⁰ Japanese-Canadians such as Robert Okazaki documented their experiences in the internment camps and have used amateur photography in anti-racist campaigns and publications.⁶¹ Tagg's assumption neglects the ways photographic meaning shifts in relation to the representations at large. To conclude that amateur photography reinforces power structures dismisses the manifold consequences of photo-narratives, as well as the constant struggles underlying narrative structure.

⁵⁸ John Tagg, *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 3.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 17.

⁶⁰ hooks, *Art on My Mind*, 59.

⁶¹ Robert K. Okazaki, *The Nisei Mass Evacuation and POW Camp 101* (Scarborough: Markham Litho Limited), 1996.

Sharing a family album often initiates disclosure of a traumatic experience. The album situates memories in the past, thereby reinforcing the difference between past and present, and encouraging the “articulatory” practice of photo-narratives. The photographs can also compensate for repression in the narrative. The “authentic” image of the subject / victim may represent that which cannot be sufficiently described. In absence of discussing a traumatizing event, the possessor of the photograph might instead show its representation (usually a less emotionally loaded version of it). During the discussions, interviewees refrained from directly voicing their feelings about internment in general, but shared images that represented at least an element of the restrictive living conditions. Of the seven albums I have included in this study, all included an aerial photograph of an internment camp. Images such as these intimate the need for the viewer / witness to support the victim, thereby developing a relationship of trust and confidence which encourages further disclosure. Albums, then, in their interconnected relationship to narrative and witnessing, potentially play a strong role in working through of personal and communal trauma.

Family photograph albums may encourage one to share moments of trauma, but they can also serve to facilitate repression. Images selected for an album most often portray moments of happiness and self-satisfaction rather than pain and trauma. Photo-narratives can then overlook traumatic events, pushing problems further beneath the surface. Yet in my (albeit brief) experience interviewing informants for this project, it seemed that the narrative can – and usually does – compensate for elisions in the album. Bringing forth a collection that verifies family stability allows one to share deviations from that stability.

Undoing the Album: Counter-narratives

The collection of albums compiled by Mary O'Hara in 1945 from her years at the Lemon Creek internment site bear many similarities to the Katsuno collection. O'Hara's narrative, however, was charged with digressions of trauma. O'Hara's album was compiled after internment, once she had repatriated to Japan - a time that she describes as more difficult than the internment itself. From the opening page of the album personal memories collide with the anonymity of internment. "Memories of the days in L.C." is printed in block letters across the page (Figure 18). In between the words lie two photographs depicting rows of symmetrical internment housing units in the Slocan Valley, each picture a wide-angle shot taken from a different viewpoint. The elevated position of the landscape is suggestive of surveillance. Written starkly across the top of the page, the word "memories" jars in contrast to the impersonal image. Nostalgia seems an alien element within the bleak photograph, where individuals are too distant to be recognizable amidst the homogeneous barracks.

Although these opening photographs keep the unrelated viewer at a distance, during the interview it became immediately evident that they pulled O'Hara closer. Drawing the lacquered album from its aging box, its top decorated with hand-painted cranes, O'Hara commented on its incalculable value. Pictures "were all she had" once she had moved to Japan.⁶² Having saved carefully to purchase the album, O'Hara preserved the space within it with meticulous devotion. Each page contains up to six pictures, their colored frames at times flush against one another. Red, white and blue stickers (in allusion to the

⁶² Interview with Mary O'Hara (Vancouver, B.C. : 11 May 2001).

American occupation) hold the photos in place, appearing audaciously bright against the black and white of the photograph. O'Hara did not actually shoot the pictures she collected, as she did not have a camera. Fondly, she spoke of a man called Wakabayashi (first name unknown) who produced photographs for everyone in Lemon Creek.⁶³ Glancing through the images, it was not surprising to learn that a single photographer's eye was at work: snapshots of friends conform to a specific size, each a vertical full-length shot taken at a medium distance, recalling class photos from a yearbook.

Like the Katsuno album, the O'Hara album is filled with youthful snapshots, signed amateur portraits and family photographs. O'Hara always appears smiling. She and her peers are well dressed, wearing matching ribbons for each outfit. Despite these visual similarities, while Katsuno affirmed that the representations were in her eyes an account of her experience, O'Hara's comments revealed a strong counter-narrative to the one portrayed by her album. Rather than narrating the contents of each picture, or her relationship to those portrayed, O'Hara would often use the images as an entry point to larger emotional issues – issues that often worked against the strategies of harmony and pleasure evoked by the photos. For example, a row of girls in costume on a May Day float implies that times within the camps were not necessarily always grim and difficult (Figure 19). In the interview, rather than confirm what the images suggest – that positive experiences in fact did exist – O'Hara articulated how the pictures represent her difficulties as a youth and the trials of friendship in the restricted arena of the camp.

⁶³ UBC Special Collections also has a large number of photos taken by Mr. Wakabayashi. O'Hara believes he was an amateur who was one of the few with access to photographic equipment from the outset of the

A visual network of friends who have been relocated elsewhere is maintained in the O'Hara album, at times these images were a reminder of class distinctions. Photographs of Vancouver friends whose families had been classified as "self-supporting" and who had moved to Toronto stand in stark contrast to the barren experience of poverty in the internment camps. Unlike the O'Hara family photographs, these Toronto photos are replete with the niceties of urban domesticity. In a wedding portrait from Ontario, a young bride in white gloves and veil smiles and cuts a three-tiered cake while her new husband looks on (Figure 20). Rather than the tar-splattered walls that form the background of many Lemon Creek photos, here the subjects stand before bamboo-patterned wallpaper, between a flower-decked table and upright piano, all comforts and status symbols denied to internees. The cake-cutting photograph is customary, but within the context of the O'Hara album, the image speaks differently. At a time when sugar was rationed and expensive, the photograph represented an unattainable indulgence. Marie Katsuno commented: "when people ask what we missed, it's strange, but it was the pastry shops. I could almost smell the pastry, and I used to dream about it."⁶⁴ O'Hara remarked on her feelings regarding her friends' wedding photos: "You know that girl from Hastings Park? This is when she got married.... Oh I wish (I had gone to Toronto). She was so nice, sending me sugar and candies and her discarded clothes, things she can't use, she would send it to me and it was just so valuable."⁶⁵

From the opening of the album, O'Hara had spoken continuously, identifying everyone and relaying what transpired throughout his or her life. On the seventh page, however,

relocation.

⁶⁴ Interview with Katsuno (January 2001).

she abruptly discontinued her narrative. Below a formal portrait of a man in a business suit, the caption read: "My Dearest Dad" (Figure 21). Echoing these words, O'Hara commented: "that's My Dearest Dad." She was unable to articulate anything but that which could be read clearly from the page. Facing her father's image, the narrative disjointed, ending the creative tale that encircled each photograph, only to resume when the page had again been turned. Later on in the interview, bemoaning her lack of typical "family photographs," O'Hara returned to the narrative of the "Dearest Dad" picture that had earlier been evaded:

My father died...He was the first to go. And there was no facility, they thought that they were prepared for everything, mind you, people were still moving in, they were still building those old shacks. So, my father didn't want to be buried... he wanted to be cremated and have his remains taken back to Japan. So, the elders got together, and some of our relatives, and they built a log pyre...and the last I saw of my father was the gasoline, poured, and just going up in flames. It was a horrible sight. For a 12-year-old, it should never have been seen. And the elders stayed all night, until he was cremated. Next day, there was nothing to put his remains in, and he loved cigarette [sic], and in those days it was cans. I remember taking a can of Ogden tobacco, it's a green can, I'll never forget that, and chopstick[s], and the family picking up bone, and to see that, you know, a few days before, he was alive. Seeing that, in the ash there, it was horrible...that I can't forget. I still get, if I go into depression, I still think about that. It still comes back to haunt me.⁶⁶

"Traumatic memories remain present for the subject with particular vividness and / or totally resist integration" Mieke Bal writes. "In both cases, they cannot become narratives, either because the traumatizing events are mechanically re-enacted as drama rather than synthetically narrated by the memorizing agent who "masters" them, or

⁶⁵ Interview with O'Hara (11 May 2001).

⁶⁶ Ibid.

because they remain “outside” the subject.”⁶⁷ Mary O’Hara’s initial avoidance of the tragedy is symptomatic of traumatic memory, while her disclosure was a form of narrative memory, two elements held in opposition by Bal. Although I am deeply indebted to Bal’s thoughts on trauma and narrative, it seems to me that her definitions, perhaps in the interest of clarity, tend to downplay the subjective processes that involve the simultaneous existence of traumatic *and* narrative memory confirmed in O’Hara’s dialogue. O’Hara suggested these memories still re-occur during periods of depression, indicating a state of non-mastery over her traumatic memories despite her ability to form them into a linear narrative. By sharing her album, O’Hara enacts the process of legitimizing and integrating her traumatic memories.

The Afterlife of the Album

For some, the photographs that recall traumatic memories are taboo and cannot be faced - the images are viewed as a destructive force. The patients of the New Denver Sanitarium, for instance, have muted a collective trauma that took place in the 1940’s during the internment years. Japanese nationals and Japanese-Canadians who had been diagnosed with lung problems – ranging from asthma to a chronic cough – were ordered to remain in the sanitarium for extended periods with other internees who had been perceived as “troublesome.” Citing fears of a tuberculosis outbreak, these patients were not allowed to move to another treatment centre or return to their families until the restrictions on Japanese-Canadians were lifted in 1949. As a result of these decisions, Shirley Omatsu, and many others like her, spent six of her teenage years without seeing

⁶⁷ Mieke Bal, “Introduction,” Bal, Crewe, and Spitzer, eds. *Acts of Memory*, vii.

her father or brother, seeing her mother only once during her confinement. Bitterly, Omatsu stated that not a single death from tuberculosis occurred at the sanitarium, describing the centre as “a holding tank.”⁶⁸

Brimming with pictures of the New Denver institution and its patients, the Omatsu album has become a contentious record. Omatsu’s photographs resemble those of Katsuno’s and O’Hara’s, featuring framed shots of girls posing in trios, or quartets, smiling openly, well-dressed and standing before the interior British Columbia landscape. Controversy is not apparent within the image itself, but emerges once the image is displayed because the photos originate from a painful and unresolved moment in history. Private memories have converged with the public politics of commemoration, as those sharing the collective experience struggle with the issues surrounding memorialization and silencing. The former patients of New Denver sanitarium have urged Omatsu not to show her photos, arguing that the past should be left behind and not discussed. Omatsu has decided not to speak publicly of her time at the New Denver Sanitarium for fear of implicating any of the doctors and nurses with whom she had positive relations. Still, her position is tenuous. Omatsu withheld her photos from inclusion in this and any other project, yet expressed a desire for this unknown history to be told. She said: “My friends have asked me never to show these pictures....Some of the older friends that I made say, no, don’t you dare come out openly, because it could cause too many repercussions. They feel that I am too open, because I am interested in preserving history.”⁶⁹

⁶⁸ Interview with Shirley Omatsu (Vancouver, B.C. 24 May 2001).

⁶⁹ Ibid.

Marie Katsuno's current relationship to her album is exemplary of how relations to the family album are continually re-constituted. Katsuno donated her album because "no one would look at those pictures anymore." Her relationship to the album had changed since her departure from Tashme, when it was one of her most valuable possessions. After her arrival in Japan, Katsuno was interviewed for a Japanese television station about her experiences as an internee. In 1951, following up on the television program, Pierre Berton interviewed her for *Maclean's Magazine*, discussing the challenges of repatriation in an article entitled "Marie went back to the Dark Ages."⁷⁰ Fifty years later, an exhibit in the Japanese Canadian National Museum displays Katsuno's antique brownie camera, the one she used to produce the albums I have addressed. This status – accorded to both Katsuno and the artifacts of her personal history – is, in part, due to her experience as a past victim of the internment and for her production and possession of important historical documentation. Katsuno once kept the album close, an item to be intimately prized. With time, and, as she described, "thousands of other pictures accumulating" the archival value of the photographs began to overtake their personal value.

I have attempted to situate domestic photographs of Japanese-Canadians during the 1942-1949 exile as intersecting with historical crisis and subjective narrative, tracing the possibilities of meaning for both the depicted subjects and the possessor of the images. Speaking to Katsuno, the Izumi family and others has illuminated the shifting discourse of photo-narratives. At a given moment, the faded photographs speak of resilience and closure, fond memories of communal union; and then, turning the leaf, the snapshot

⁷⁰ Pierre Berton, "Marie Went Back to the Dark Ages" *Maclean's Magazine* (15 July 1951): 20-21, 48-49.

opens to another window, exposing pain still too raw to heal, yet perpetually luring one to look. As losses loomed large, family photography was a means to partially fulfill the desire for reunion. Katsuno commented: "We were taking pictures like mad.... Everybody was taking a picture...(we sent photos) especially when (people) went away from Tashme... we had a sense that we wouldn't be together for long."⁷¹ Hence the photograph album worked to fill the void of loss, but incompletely, as longing for the photograph is predicated upon the sustenance of that loss. The album loses its relevance once a position of recovery from past sufferings is reached. When I asked Katsuno why she had donated her once cherished albums to the Japanese-Canadian National Museum, she simply said: "Well, I don't need them anymore." Her comment points to the shifting location of photographic meaning, emphasizing that the locus of meaning does not exist within the object, rather it is transformed and manifested in the narrative of authenticity and transcendence intersecting between the image and the possessor.

⁷¹ Kirsten McAllister, Taped interview with Marie Katsuno (Burnaby, BC.: 12 September, 2000).

Epilogue:

Archiving the Intimate: Photography & Commemorations

Contemporary with the private photos I have discussed in this project were numerous documentary images that take up a very different visual and political agenda. In the 1944 Department of Labour report on Japanese Affairs, images of well cared-for patients in pristine surroundings reinforce the Department's written assurances to "protect the people of British Columbia and the interests of the country as a whole, and at the same time preserve, in whatever we do, the principles of fairness and justice"⁷² (Figure 22). (Strategically, neither the place of origin nor the date for each of the six photographs is provided). In fact, nothing could be further from the truth. New Denver shelters were shingled and made with brick, providing far greater insulation than the tar and paper shacks of Tashme and Lemon Creek. Families that were moved into ghost towns were assigned to houses that had been abandoned for decades, decaying and filled with lice and bedbugs. Situations varied greatly even between neighboring Japanese-Canadian families; for example, those who had moved to Alberta to work in the sugar beet fields were often moved into "renovated" chicken coops, while a few families had guest-rooms.⁷³ In the upper left-hand corner of the Department of Labour report, an attentive class of young children is pictured as they follow an arithmetic lesson on the blackboard. The caption reads: "A Commission School Class." Here the irony of the text is glaring, as the British Columbia Securities Commission had not budgeted for education beyond grade six, and Church groups and community members were forced to fund high school

⁷² Mitchell and Macnamara, *Report of the Department of Labour*, 50.

education programs independently. Furthermore, Katsuno remarked that teachers had to create their own teaching tools, and that essentials like blackboards and books were difficult to obtain. Repeatedly, photos such of these were published in government reports.⁷⁴

In the 1980's, family photographs emerged in the historical battleground of the hotly contested redress debate in Canada. Following the failure of earlier attempts to gain government attention, new campaigns in support of redress began to rely upon the photographic message, constructing and authenticating an "historically accurate" documentation of collective trauma. Recalling the enormous political impact documentary photography of children in Vietnam and Hiroshima had on North American politics, the redress campaign groups relied upon the images of children to convey the injustice of the relocation. A poster publicized across Canada depicts seemingly abandoned children on a gravel road (Figure 23).⁷⁵ One of the boys stands at the front of the frame, staring directly into the camera, with a serious look in his face. In the background, a truckload of people symbolizes the forced movement of bodies and the instability of homelessness. Catchy and poignant, the caption is employed to evoke public support: "IN 1942 CANADA SENT A LOT OF KIDS TO CAMP."

⁷³ LDJC History Book Committee, *Nishiki: Nikkei Tapestry: A History of Southern Alberta Japanese-Canadians* (Lethbridge: Lethbridge and District Japanese Canadian Association, 2001), 11.

⁷⁴ For example, see Humphrey Mitchell, MP and Minister of Labour and Arthur J. Macnamara, Deputy Minister of Labour and Director of National Selective Service. British Columbia Department of Labour. *Report of the Royal Commission on the Provisions Made for the Welfare and Maintenance of Persons of the Japanese Race Resident in Settlements in British Columbia*, Ottawa, 1944.

⁷⁵ Part of this installation photograph has been obscured by a reflection.

This photograph of the children emerges again in the discourse of Japanese-Canadian history as the poster is reprinted for the first exhibition of the newly re-opened Japanese Canadian National Museum in Burnaby, British Columbia in June 2000. Here, both family photographs and documentary photographs are curated in a self-conscious and politically charged exhibit entitled "Re-Shaping Memory, Owning History: Through the Lens of Japanese Canadian Redress." J.T. Izumi's photograph of his family's repatriation back to Japan takes on new meanings, laminated and enlarged for the exhibition space (Figure 24). The image is moved into the public realm, now meant to express the difficulties facing all the 1946 repatriates, rather than intimating the relationship of Basil to his mother and father, as it did when he described it. Inverting the album's drive to recreate domestic stability, the installation includes wooden frameworks like houses without walls, the structure calling up the constriction and lack of domesticity that the British Columbia Securities Commission units imposed (Figures 25, 26). The composition of the exhibit encloses and targets the bodies of the Japanese-Canadian family, thereby legitimizing the need for action, yet teetering on the edge of nostalgic victimization.

Families are perhaps willing to transfer their personal photographs into the archive because they are aware that establishment within the institution assures their longevity (conferring a degree of vicarious immortality), and increases the significance of the photographic content. Others articulate a more overtly political agenda. Inclusion within a public space is a powerful means to bear witness to the past. In the museum, surveillance, normalization and aesthetics intersect and construct an "authentic" narrative that can validate the political and psychological position of the possessor. In so doing,

the museum can facilitate personal and even national recovery but at the risk of generalizing history into a seamless, singular experience with one voice. Formalized through the museum, the state can negotiate fractures in national identity by commemorating the past, and simultaneously eliciting a concerted forgetting.

Previous to the 1980's, a handful of books on the Canadian experience in the 1940's had been published.⁷⁶ With the 1988 Redress settlement, integration of the Japanese-Canadian War experiences into Canadian history strengthened. As the Redress movement sought support, publications such as Roy Ito's *We Went To War: The Story of the Japanese-Canadians Who Served During the First and Second Wars*⁷⁷ and Muriel Kitagawa's *This is My Own: Letters to Wes and Other Writings on Japanese-Canadians*⁷⁸ were released. Following the 1988 public apology, a plethora of books and videos were published on the topic. Communities with a historical connection to the internment, such as Lethbridge and smaller localities in British Columbia produced abundant literature on the history of Japanese-Canadians. The sudden swell of publications occurred for reasons both directly and indirectly linked to the end of the hard-fought battle. An allotment of the government reparations was targeted for educational materials and was made available for publications, and the formality of the apology justified the publication of these materials. Once the government of Canada recognized the injustices of the internment period, discourse about it circulated within the public domain and discussing the events became less controversial. More than 45 years after World War II, the "authentic" history of the Japanese-Canadians emerged in literature such as *Memories of Our Past: A*

⁷⁶ For an example see Broadfoot, *Years of Sorrow, Years of Shame*.

Brief Walking Tour of Powell Street,⁷⁹ *Justice in Our Time*,⁸⁰ and *POW Camp 101*.⁸¹ In addition to these texts, museums increasingly turned to the internment period. In 1992, the Mission City Museum and Archives exhibited “Rites of Passage: The History of the Japanese-Canadian Community in Mission, B.C.” In 1999, the Japanese Canadian National Museum in conjunction with the Richmond Museum mounted “Unearthed from the Silence.” Every year at the Powell Street Festival, the largest Japanese-Canadian festival in Canada, a photographic exhibition is mounted and seen by hundreds of people. A haiku poem written by Roy Miki about the Powell Street Festival situates the role of photography.⁸²

internment photos
hanging on wobbly tent walls
gusts of the camp snow

Here, the ephemeral nature of the festival is tied to the transience of the internment, the chilling winters portrayed in the photo juxtapose with the heat of the annual August festival, held in what was once an area where Japanese-Canadians were confined before being interned or repatriated. This “unearthing” of history marshals photography as evidence.

Very few images from the relocation period have adequately expressed the difficulties of the times; those that are found “suitable” for historical and anti-racist work have

⁷⁷ Ito, *We Went to War*.

⁷⁸ Kitagawa, *This is My Own*.

⁷⁹ Audrey Kobayashi, *Memories of Our Past: A Brief Walking Tour of Powell Street* (Vancouver: NRC Publishing, 1992).

⁸⁰ Miki and Kobayashi, *Justice in Our Time*.

⁸¹ Okazaki, *The Nisei Mass Evacuation*. There are many other books documenting the internment period released in the early 1990’s, such as: Manitoba Japanese Canadian Citizens Association, *The History of the Japanese Canadians in Manitoba* (Winnipeg: MJCCA Publishing, 1996).

⁸² Roy Miki, *Saving Face: Selected Poems, 1976 – 1988* (Vancouver: Turnstone Press, 1991).

reappeared consistently. Documentary photography after 1942 was controlled by the British Columbia Securities Commission, an organization which had a double agenda: to assure the public, the federal government and Japan that internees were being treated fairly and safely all the while asserting that their existence as an organization was necessary to protect Canada from the so-called conspiratorial Japanese in Canada. Images from the Department of Labour and BCSC Commission attempt to conceal the injustices of the relocation that the Japanese experienced. Consequently when an organization such as the National Association of Japanese-Canadians sought images from the 1940's for an exhibit, newsletter or campaign, past media coverage was likewise unusable except to foil racist ideologies of the time. Editorials in mainstream Vancouver newspapers in 1942, for example, were often printed under racist political cartoons which portrayed the Japanese as uneducated and disloyal, their features void but for the slant of the eyes and the protrusion of bucked teeth. Reproducing such images to confirm the racist ideology of the past not only runs the risk of re-opening past wounds (or marking new ones), but would also overlook the efforts of those who had spoken out against the internment.

A photograph discovered in the national archives depicts two anonymous Japanese-Canadian families cooking over an antique stove. The image has garnered attention for thirty years (See Figure 26). Each child in the photo is turned in a different direction, none facing the camera. As one mother leans over the hearth, the other looks at the lens, eyebrows raised in expectancy. Capturing the over-crowded conditions of the Tashme camp, the powerful image persuades us that the relocation had a significant effect on women and children, thereby appealing to one's compassion to protect the family. This

particular image has appeared in numerous books, including *Years of Sorrow, Years of Shame* (1977), *Dream of Riches* (1978) (an exhibition catalogue) and *Justice in Our Time* (1991). Today, the photo is enlarged, greeting visitors as they approach the exhibit at the Japanese Canadian National Museum. In addition to this image, other photographs have had enormous circulation within texts, museums and exhibitions.⁸³ As museums seek out a visual language with which to write this history of difference, the burden upon family photography intensifies. State-sanctioned photography in the 1940's attempted to verify the civilized treatment of internees, while snapshots stabilized the image of the family, leaving a paucity of photographs to illustrate the relocation. Consequently an archeology of images has been taken up, calling once again on the personal photo album to create an authenticating, and in this instance, historicizing narrative of Japanese-Canadian experience. Yet this narrative is also fragmented. Relying on the family photograph to convey public history relies upon the invocation of texts, the re-framing within the museum on local and national levels, and the harrowing task of pulling a strand of meaning from the printed image in order to compose a seamless history. The constant reshaping of narrative and history means that no singular moral or political position is inherent within the representation.

⁸³ Two other images which have appeared in almost every book on the Japanese-Canadian experience are a photograph of men departing for work camps on a train as their families stand on the platform, reaching for the internees, and a photograph of a burial at the Angler prisoner of war camp. The second image is particularly striking as it shows the men in their controversial prisoner uniforms reminiscent of the Japanese flag: prison fatigues with a large red, circle on the back to be used as a target if necessary. Contextualized by the literature, the feelings of loss aroused by the site of a burial are conflated with the losses of the Japanese-Canadians. The first photograph is commonly shown as it represents the emotional difficulties of splitting families apart, as well as portraying the Japanese-Canadians as "civilized and obedient" because the men are all dressed in suits and hats and are boarding the train seemingly voluntarily.

The movement of family photography into the museum signals the uneasy incursion of memory into the realm of history. In Pierre Nora's words, "memory and history, far from being synonymous, appear now to be in fundamental opposition. Memory is life, borne by living societies founded in its name. It remains in permanent evolution, open to the dialectic of remembering and forgetting, unconscious of its successive deformations, vulnerable to manipulation and appropriation..."⁸⁴ Perpetually social, memory is configured by the activity of culture and the fluidity of representation. History, in contrast, often temporally isolates past events from the present, attempting to stabilize them within an authenticating discourse. Contemporary museums have recently sought out the voice and image of private memory, but in so doing, have shrouded memory in history. Family albums begin in subjectivity - fostering and preserving our own image they symbolize self-identity and are intimately bound with our discreet, interior world of recollection. As I have argued, the dialectic relationship between the photograph and the photo-narrative is one of continual birth and burial, of inventive transformation and deliberate disavowal. Transforming memory into history results in its disintegration, the demands of linear progression segregating and compressing the web of narrative, just as the pages of the album are undone, the chain of images isolated, their meanings harnessed to their new pedagogical obligation.

Susan Stewart, addressing how objects are narrated to realize versions of the world, writes: "Whereas the miniature represents closure, interiority, the domestic and the overly cultural, the gigantic represents infinity, exteriority, the public and the overly natural."⁸⁵

⁸⁴ Nora, "Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Memoire*," 8.

⁸⁵ Stewart, *On Longing*, 70.

Japanese-Canadian family photography has been writ large – literally blown up from the inconspicuous snapshot to the life-sized reproduction on the gallery wall. The magnified photograph projects rather than reveals - its overwhelming scale, larger-than-life, transcends the space of the everyday and stifles the personal photo-narrative beneath a historical monologue.

Appendix of Japanese-Canadian Photograph Sources

Japanese Canadian National Museum

6688 Southoaks Crescent, Burnaby, British Columbia

V5E 4M7

Phone: (604) 777-8000

Holdings:

McAllister, Kirsten. Taped interview with Marie Katsuno. Burnaby, BC. Japanese Canadian National Museum. September 12, 2000.

McAllister, Kirsten. Taped interview with Midge Ayukawa. Starbucks, Broadway and Granville, Vancouver, B.C. September 14th, 2000.

McAllister, Kirsten. Transcribed interview with Roy Kunimoto. Interview for the Japanese Canadian Citizen's Association Oral History Project. June 19, 1990

Miki, Roy and Yosh Tanaka. Taped interview with Ian Belcher. Japanese Canadian National Museum. November 3, 1995.

Travel Permit issued to Masao Saito, by RCMP for travel from Winnipeg to Kamloops, 17 August 1948.

Department of National War Services, Directorate of Censorship. Record no. SE 4609-42, 10656/42, 13,194-c-19.

Archived Family Photographs dating between 1939-1949

Donor:	Accession number(s):
Imakura Family collection	97/189.1.103 – 104 97/189.1.205
Shikaze Family Collection	97/189.1.219
Ezaki Family	96/182.1.030 –042
Seki Family	96 /183.001a-b
Tateyama Family	97/189.1.072 97/189.1.085
Sakamoto Family	95/136.1.001a-b
Sugiman Family	95/136.1.002a-b
Kuwabara Family	95/141.1.022
Belcher Family	95/149.1.003a-b
Homma Family	94/88.3.003a-b 94/88.3.005a-b
Yamake Family	94/98.2.082a-b 93/39.1
Kariatsumari Family	95/134.1001a-b 95/134.1.002a-b 94/71.014a-b 94/71.015a-b

Tasaka Family	94/76.014a-b
Okeda Family	94/83.011
Iwa Family	94/45.005a-b
Unknown Donor	94/49.00a-b
	94/71.009a-b
	92/11.1a-b
	92.11.5
Sanmiya Family	94/41.005
	94/41.004a-c
Shimizu Family	92/32.010
Hayashi Family	92/32.016
Marie Katsuno Collection, 2 albums	not accessioned at time of printing

University of British Columbia Special Collections

Main Library
1956 Main Mall
Vancouver, British Columbia
V6T 1Z1
Phone: (604) 822-2521

Holdings:

Donor	Record Number:
Margaret Sage Album	not listed
Kurihara Family	BC1934 /11-13
Masjiro Miyazaki Family	BC1474/ 1-11

Van Driesum, David. Taped Interview with Roy Uyeda. History 303 Oral History Project. No date or place given.

Schell, Ron. Taped interview with Yutaka Mizoguchi. 11800 Moncton, Steveston, British Columbia. March 5th, 1983.

Vancouver City Archives

1150 Chestnut Street
Vancouver, British Columbia
V6J 3J9
Phone: (604) 736-8561

Pacific National Exhibit Fonds (1942-45)	175E-9 to 177B-4
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Mission Community Archives

33215 Second Avenue
P.O. Box 3522
Mission, British Columbia

V2V 4L1

Phone: (604) 820-2621

Holdings:

Rights of Passage 1992 Exhibition Display (including photographs).

Mitsunaga, Tom. "Japanese-Canadian Settlement in Mission, A Brief History."
Unpublished paper, 1992.

Sakaya, Yoshiro Hosui. *Album of Japanese Children Born in Vancouver*. No publication
information provided, 1921.

1992 Questionnaire of Japanese living in Mission in the 1940's.

Sir Alexander Galt Museum and Archives

City of Lethbridge

910-4th avenue south

Lethbridge, Alberta

T1J 0PQ

Phone: (403) 329-7303

Holdings:

Donor:

Takeyasu Family

Accession Number

19790284005 GP

1979 0284001GP

1987 120300 GP

19790284003 GP

Unknown Donor

1979 0253001 GP

19790275006GP

197902750012 GP

Mayanga Family

19790253003 - 4GP

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- Sir Alexander Galt Museum and Archives. 910 4th Avenue South, Lethbridge, Alberta.
- Mission Community Archives. 33215 2nd avenue Street, Mission, British Columbia.
- University of British Columbia Special Collections Photograph Archive, Vancouver, British Columbia.
- City of Vancouver Archives, Vancouver, British Columbia.
- Vancouver Public Library Photograph Archives, Vancouver, British Columbia.
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- Izumi, Basil. Family Album c. 1930.
- Izumi, Basil. Loose Photograph Collection 1940 - 1946
- O'Hara, Mary. Family Album 1942 – 1950
- Omatsu, Shirley. Family Albums 4 (each album period ranges from 1930 to 1950's).
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- Interview with Roy Kunimoto. Japanese Canadian National Museum, 6688 Southoaks Crescent, Burnaby, B.C. January 23, 2001.
- Interview with Marie Katsuno. Japanese Canadian National Museum, 6688 Southoaks Crescent, Burnaby, B.C. January 23, 2001, 10:00 a.m.
- Interview with Emiko Shikaze. Japanese Canadian National Museum, 6688 Southoaks Crescent, Burnaby, B.C. January 23, 2001, 3:00 p.m.
- Interview with Basil Izumi. 6360 Constable Drive, Richmond, B.C. January 27, 2001, 10:00 a.m.
- Interview with Mary O'Hara. 3983 Edinburgh Street, Vancouver, BC. May 11, 2001, 2:00p.m.

Interview with Shirley Omatsu. 1427 Kamloops Street, Vancouver, B.C. May 24th, 2001.
10:00a.m.

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Figure 1
J.T Izumi, Photographer
Izumi Collection
1946
Courtesy of Basil Izumi

Figure 2
J.T. Izumi, Photographer
Izumi Collection
1942-1945
Courtesy of Basil Izumi

Figure 3
Shimomura Family
Kunimoto Family Collection
1936
Courtesy of the Kunimoto Family

Figure 4
"June 1945. New Denver B.C."
J.T. Izumi, Photographer
Izumi Collection
1945
Courtesy of Basil Izumi

Figure 5
“Tashme Home”
Marie Katsuno Collection
2nd album, page 3
c.1945
Courtesy of the Japanese Canadian National Museum

Figure 6
 Marie Katsuno Collection
 2nd album, page 10
 c. 1944
 Courtesy of the Japanese Canadian National Museum

Figure 7
 Marie Katsuno Collection
 1st album, page 42
 c. 1942
 Courtesy of the Japanese Canadian National Museum

Figure 8
Marie Katsuno Collection
2nd album, page 13
c. 1942
Courtesy of the Japanese Canadian National Museum

Figure 9
Marie Katsuno Collection
1st album, page 23
c. 1942
Courtesy of the Japanese Canadian National Museum

Figure 10
Mary O'Hara Collection
Album, page 14
c. 1941
Courtesy of Mary O'Hara

Figure 11

"Across the Ocean to Japan Aboard the General M.C. Meigs"

Mary O'Hara Collection

Album, page 35

c. 1946

Courtesy of Mary O'Hara

Figure 12

"Home"

Marie Katsuno Collection

1st album, page 59

c. 1942

Courtesy of the Japanese Canadian National Museum

Figure 13
Mary O'Hara Collection
Album, page 14
c. 1942
Courtesy of Mary O'Hara

Figure 14
Mary O'Hara Collection
Album, page 17
c. 1942
Courtesy of Mary O'Hara

Figure 15
"Bay Farm, B.C. Canada"
Basil Izumi Collection
J.T. Izumi, photographer
c. 1946
Courtesy of Basil Izumi

Figure 16
 Basil Izumi Collection
 Album, page 1
 J.T. Izumi, photographer
 c. 1937
 Courtesy of Basil Izumi

Figure 17
Basil Izumi Collection
Album, page 7
J.T. Izumi, photographer
c. 1937
Courtesy of Basil Izumi

Figure 18
"Memories in the Days of L.C."
Mary O'Hara Collection
Album, page 1
c. 1942
Courtesy of Mary O'Hara

Figure 19
Mary O'Hara Collection
Album, page 40
c. 1944
Courtesy of Mary O'Hara

Figure 20
Mary O'Hara Collection
Album, page 52
c. 1944
Courtesy of Mary O'Hara

Figure 21
"My Dearest Dad"
Mary O'Hara Collection
Album, page 7
c. 1942
Courtesy Mary O'Hara

A Commission School Class

Patient, Nurse and Doctor

A Housing Centre Store

Hospital Workers

Commission Fuelwood Project

(Photos, Courtesy National Film Board)

A Tailor and His Family

Figure 22
Report of the Department of Labour on the Administration of Japanese Affairs in
Canada.
August, 1944.

Figure 23
"Owning History, Reshaping Memory: Through the Lens
of Japanese Redress"
Japanese Canadian National Museum Exhibition
Installation Photograph
1988 Redress Campaign Poster
June 2000
Courtesy of the Japanese Canadian National Museum

Figure 24

"Owning History, Reshaping Memory: Through the Lens of Japanese Redress"

Japanese Canadian National Museum Exhibition Installation Photograph

June 2000

Courtesy of the Japanese Canadian National Museum

Figure 25
“Owning History, Reshaping Memory: Through the Lens of Japanese Redress”
Japanese Canadian National Museum Exhibition Installation Photograph
June 2000
Courtesy of the Japanese Canadian National Museum

Figure 26
"Owning History, Reshaping Memory: Through the Lens of Japanese Redress"
Japanese Canadian National Museum Exhibition Installation Photograph
June 2000
Courtesy of the Japanese Canadian National Museum